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ADELAIDE HILLS, FLEURIEU AND KANGAROO ISLAND

Media release

Community input critical to understand real childcare needs

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Families, carers, employers and early learning providers across the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island are being asked to share their experiences accessing early childhood education and care as part of a new regional study.

While preliminary desktop analysis suggests childcare availability varies across the region, community input is critical to understand whether the numbers match reality on the ground.

Regional Development Australia Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island (RDA AHFKI) has partnered with RDA Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains (RDA BGLAP) to examine early childhood care needs across Adelaide's peri-urban regions. The project is funded by the SA Government's Office for Early Childhood Development, with Community Early Learning Australia engaged to assess supply, demand and service gaps.

Population across Adelaide's outer regions is expected to grow significantly over the next 20 to 30 years, with new housing developments planned across both RDA regions. As communities expand, demand for essential services will increase, including early childhood education and care that supports families and enables parents to work.

Initial analysis using national attendance patterns shows some areas may have sufficient childcare places on paper. However, this doesn't account for waitlists, actual demand for more than two days per week, operating hours that don't match work schedules, or services that are technically available but not practically accessible.

The research also supports South Australia's move to universal three-year-old preschool by 2032, which is expected to increase demand for early learning services, particularly in growth areas.

The study will examine where unmet needs exist including preferences for different care models, economic and social impacts when childcare is difficult to access, barriers to expansion for providers, and opportunities to grow the early learning workforce locally.

Community members across the Hills, Fleurieu and KI can complete the survey and find details of upcoming consultation sessions at rdahc.com.au/now-open or via the RDA AHFKI newsletter.

“Childcare availability is a real issue for families and businesses in our region. Parents are struggling to find places that fit their work schedules, and employers tell us it's affecting their ability to attract staff.

Desktop analysis gives us a starting point, but we need to hear from families about what's actually happening. Are they on waitlists? Do available hours match work schedules? Are centres too far away? This feedback will help us identify the real gaps and give government the evidence they need to make informed decisions about where to invest.”

~ David Ridley, Economic Development Officer, RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island

“Community input is at the heart of effective early childhood planning. By sharing your experiences, you can help shape services that reflect local needs, support working families, and give children access to quality early education opportunities.”

~ Michele Carnegie, CEO, Community Early Learning Australia

Media contact

David Ridley

Economic Development Officer

Regional Development Australia Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu & Kangaroo Island

M: 0400 871 847

E: davidr@rdahc.com.au