



# The First 2000 Days

- an approach to supporting the  
early development of children in  
local and targeted ways.

Brisbane south areas identified as high-risk communities for child developmental vulnerability.<sup>1&2</sup>





Early childhood is a critical time for health, development and establishing the foundations for future wellbeing. The skills developed by children in the early years of life contribute significantly to their long-term health and wellbeing, and ability to realise their aspirations. Most Australian children are healthy, safe and doing well. However, childhood is also a time of vulnerability and a child's outcomes can vary depending on circumstances. The healthy development of children is crucial to the future wellbeing of all community members.

'We now know the in-utero experience of a baby, followed by a child's early life experience predicts their chances of succeeding at school, of doing well in life and of having chronic diseases as an adult.'<sup>3</sup>

**The healthy development of children is crucial to the future wellbeing of all community members.**

The evidence is clear that differences in social determinants impact on the long-term health and development of young children.<sup>4</sup> More than ever, we know that how a child is supported in their first years will impact on how they participate in education, the workforce and, in some cases, crime.

In the Brisbane south region, while many children are doing well and will start school with the ability to progress, there are areas where trends of developmental vulnerability are well above the state average.

In some parts of Brisbane south more than 1 in 3 children need help with their development. This compares to 1 in 5 children nationally.<sup>1</sup>

Systemic inequality has been ongoing for decades, resulting in children not starting school ready. With what we now know about child development, these are inequalities that we cannot allow to continue.

In the past, children and families in less-advantaged communities have experienced challenges and reduced access to the system. This situation is changing.





At both a state and federal government level, there is a strong focus on supporting the early years of life, through the Federal Government’s Early Years Strategy and the Queensland Government’s Advancing Queensland Priorities – A Great Start for all Children (whole of government strategy).

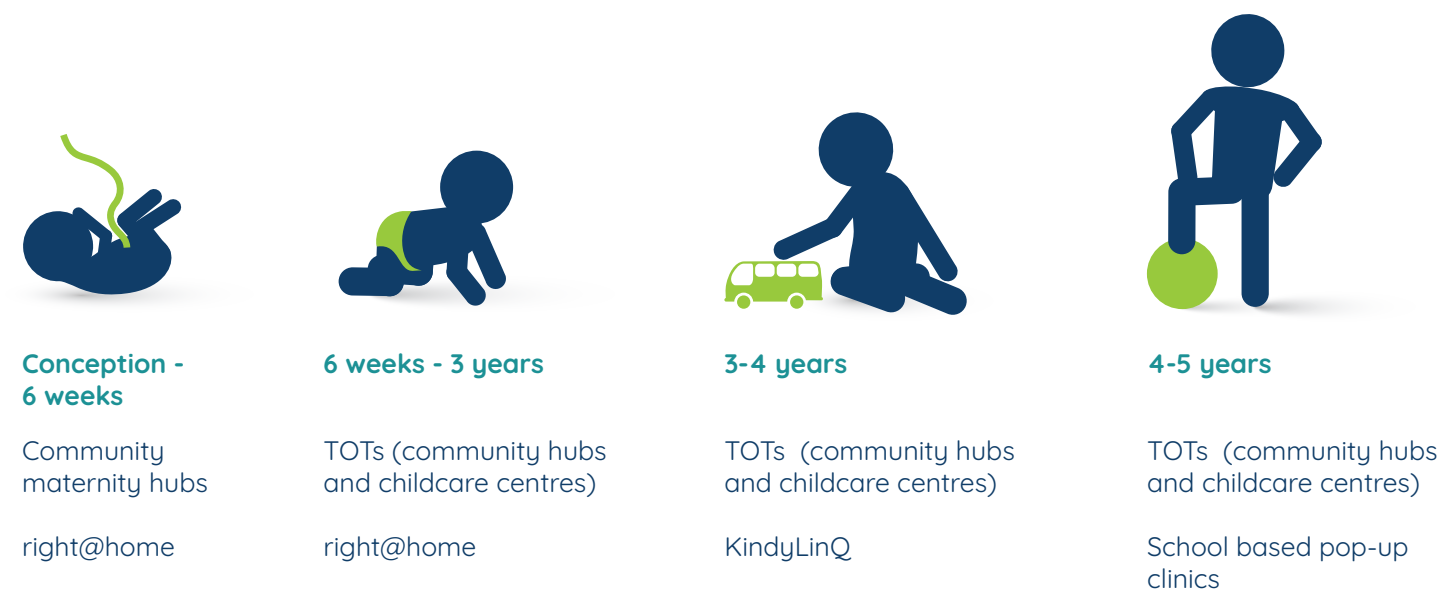
There are also a number of philanthropic and research partnerships focusing on the early years that seek to improve policy, systemic responses and investment from government into fundamental early childhood supports.

The above are all critical components to a system approach, however we need to now put the strategies, policies and research into action, to actually understand whether they work.

So, in a significant new initiative, Brisbane South PHN, partners and Logan community leaders have collaborated on a First 2000 Days approach to early child development. It’s innovative and it’s working.

This is through relationship-based maternity care in trusted community hubs; child health and development support in hubs, at home or in child care centres and kindergartens; as well as support in the first year of school - tied together through practical support.

The following diagram provides a picture of the early development ecosystem that has been built since 2015 in Logan and the extent of the partnerships involved.



Its success is based on placed-based ways of working that have been built over time, such as community engagement and collaboration; human-centric design in the context of community; and local learnings and evaluation. We’ve also taken the time to work with the communities to build trust and agree on what is important to their children’s development.

## First 2000 Days

Community maternity hubs	Right@home	TOTs - Thriving and on Track (childcare centres, community hubs and schools)	KindyLinQ
<p>Midwifery-led continuity of maternity care in trusted community hubs.</p> <p>Wrap around, holistic support for families through community connectors.</p> <p>Midwifery support from antenatal to 6 weeks post birth.</p> <p>Supported transition of families to child health service.</p>	<p>Nurse home visiting program targeting women in early stages of pregnancy to 2 years post-natal, who need extra support.</p>	<p>Early development support program implemented in over 80 childcare centres, 7 community hubs and 4 schools in locations in Logan, Redlands and Inala.</p> <p>Wrap around, holistic support for complex needs families through community connectors (e.g. may include links to support services, transport, advocacy, etc.).</p> <p>Identification of developmental delays and engagement with early intervention services .</p> <p>Participation in supportive early childhood environments (e.g. playgroups, etc.)</p> <p>Provision of child health and allied health services in community.</p> <p>Workforce capability building including educators and health professionals (e.g. GPs).</p>	<p>Facilitated playgroup program for 3-year-old children and their families targeting increased kindy attendance for children in identified locations (with higher levels of developmental vulnerability at school entry).</p>



Our First 2000 Days approach is working. Overall it has:

- improved access to early intervention for children and their families to ensure children are ready to do well at school – this cannot currently be achieved at an individual program level – including:<sup>5</sup>

over  
**2700**  
child development  
screenings conducted  
by educators

over  
**650**  
child health assessments  
conducted in childcare  
centres

over  
**370**  
children identified  
with developmental  
delays

over  
**700**  
referrals to early  
intervention  
services

over  
**85**  
vulnerable families supported  
through the Child Health  
Champion program to access  
the services they need

over  
**50**  
children supported through  
the school pop-up clinics to  
access child health  
assessment and early  
intervention services.

across  
**40**

KindyLinQ sites the number of family registrations was between 390-490 with an average of 10 families per site. On average, schools reported that 75% of children registered for KindyLinQ in 2021 were enrolled in Kindergarten programs in 2022.<sup>6</sup>

- improved maternity care through a:<sup>7</sup>

**42%↓** decrease in the number of birth-parents receiving no or inadequate antenatal care – from 478 to 201 birth parents between June 2020 to July 2021 – via maternity hubs

**13%** saving (\$178K) to Logan Hospital (2020-21) on projected costs without the maternity hub model being in place. Savings were delivered through improved birthing outcomes (i.e. reduced number of caesarean interventions, inductions, epidurals and special care admissions).

- supported 470 families enrolled in the right@home program (July 2020 to June 2021). Families participating in the right@home program are experiencing high and disproportionate levels of risk and adversity. 88% of parents and carers reported greater enablement regarding parenting ability, confidence and coping, as a result of their right@home visits.

In some locations, including Browns Plains, 1 in 2 children are now receiving support through TOTs. We also found that less than 10% of children identified through TOTs had accessed the child health system in the past 12 months.<sup>5</sup>

TOTs is also being trialed with children and families across the 0-5 year age group, with the goal of full expansion in late 2023.

The research is clear: children and families across the Brisbane south region need a stronger and sustainable early development support system if we are to see long-term meaningful change.

This will provide an opportunity for less-advantaged children and families to have full support from maternity to school.



The evidence is clear: the First 2000 Days approach - and its programs such as TOTs - proves that collaborative place-based approaches work, and are changing lives and futures. Griffith University has also agreed to support a longitudinal research approach to this work, so we can see the impact over a longer course of time.

However, we risk losing all this progress when funding for the TOTs program ends in June 2023, meaning less-advantaged children in Brisbane south will miss out on the support they need to meet their aspirations in life. It would also significantly impact the trust and established working relationships TOTs has with local childcare centres, service providers and the community.

*'The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families.'* James J. Heckman, Nobel Prize winning economist.<sup>8</sup>

To ensure the First 2000 Days is sustainable and can be delivered at scale, we need investment.

We need \$7.05 million per annum to continue funding the First 2000 Days approach (excluding additional partner contributions). This long-term investment would enable us to continue making meaningful change for less-advantaged children.

First 2000 Days - Future investment	
<b>Community Maternity and Child Health hubs</b>  \$3.8 million per annum <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>meaning the maternity hubs will collectively support 40% of all births in Logan Hospital (1600/4000 births)</li></ul>	<b>TOTs - Thriving and on Track</b>  \$3.25 million per annum <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>allied health and community connectors in child care centres and community hubs</li><li>child health nurses in childcare centres and school pop ups</li><li>family support</li><li>project management</li></ul>
<b>Total \$7.05M/annum</b> = support for 80 childcare centres, over 20 community/school sites, over 3000 children (mostly in Logan's least-advantaged communities) and 35%-40% of all births in Logan Hospital (1600 births) per annum.	

*'The greatest investment we can make in the future of our country.'* (Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services, on the Albanese Government's commitment to invest in the early years).<sup>9</sup>

We need to break the cycle of inequality in the Brisbane south region by investing in our children, today. Investment in the First 2000 Days has the potential to save billions of dollars of government funding over the life span of the children who receive it.<sup>10</sup> Children who will work, live, spend and contribute to their communities. We look forward to discussing this opportunity with you.

*'We know that when developmental challenges are addressed in early childhood there is a minimum 7:1 return on investment.'*<sup>8</sup> (Heckman)



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Our First 2000 Days approach is led by Brisbane South PHN and involves communities, local service providers and government, including Children's Health Qld, Metro South Health, Department of Education Queensland, Logan Together, The Salvation Army, Mission Australia, Griffith University, SMBI Listeners, Village Connect, The Benevolent Society, ACCESS Community Services and Gunga Meta. We thank them and many more.

References: visit <https://bit.ly/3s6d7Ss>



