

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Thriving Kids model is risky and leans on families**

The peak body for all psychologists says the proposed Thriving Kids model is risky, placing early identification of developmental delay in the hands of a non-health, non-clinical workforce.

Chief Psychologist of the Australian Association of Psychologists, Amanda Curran, said the proposed model risked relying too heavily on a non-clinical workforce to identify developmental concerns, without sufficiently embedding qualified, regulated health professionals in assessment and care pathways.

“Psychologists play a critical role in early identification, assessment, and evidence-based intervention for developmental delay, autism, ADHD, and emerging mental health concerns,” she said.

“Their expertise is essential not only for accurate assessment, but for guiding families through what can be an overwhelming and emotionally demanding process.”

Ms Curran said the model also put significant responsibility back onto parents, despite the reality that families have often already spent months or years advocating, researching, and attempting to access support before delays become formally recognised.

“A model that limits access to allied health support to short, time-bound interventions risks adding pressure to families rather than relieving it.

“We are also concerned that this model risks shifting additional responsibility onto schools and early learning settings, at a time when educators are already under significant strain. Expecting overburdened teachers to take on more identification, monitoring, and coordination responsibilities without the necessary resourcing or specialist support is simply not sustainable.”

Ms Curran said a more effective approach would embed psychologists earlier in the pathway, ensure timely access to qualified health professionals, and allow for intervention of sufficient duration to support meaningful developmental change. “This approach would reduce pressure on families, support carers to remain engaged in the workforce, and improve long-term outcomes for children,” she said.

“Early childhood reform must strengthen, not dilute, access to psychological expertise. If we are genuinely committed to helping children thrive, we need a

model that recognises the central role of psychologists in delivering safe, effective, and developmentally informed care.”

### **About the Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi)**

*The AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for all psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of passionate grassroots psychologists, the AAPi’s primary goal is to address inequality in the profession and represent all psychologists and their clients equally to government and funding bodies. Its primary mission is to lobby for equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services such as Medicare Better Access Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.*