SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
ALLIED HEALTH PROVIDERS GROUP
Many Practices. One Voice.

Address

Via email:

Dear,

RE: Protecting Family Choice and Local Capacity in the "Thriving Kids in South Australia" Initiative

I am writing to urgently seek your advocacy regarding the design and commissioning of the State Government's *Thriving Kids in South Australia* initiative.

The members of SAAHPG, comprising private, sole, and small-to-medium allied health practices, are the backbone of paediatric developmental support across metropolitan, regional, and rural South Australia. We do not just operate in these communities; we live in them. We provide highly flexible, place-based care in clinics, homes, and schools, building multi-year relationships of trust with vulnerable children and their families.

While we support the objective of improving access to developmental services, the current commissioning trajectory risks dismantling the state's existing clinical infrastructure. Early signals suggest commissioning may favour a centralised, large-scale model dominated by a few large providers, this strategy threatens to exclude local private practitioners, restrict family choice, and disrupt vital continuity of care.

When public policy prioritises administrative convenience over established community capacity, the consequences for South Australian children and the health and disability sector are profound:

- **The Trauma of Disrupted Care:** For neurodivergent children or those experiencing developmental delays and trauma, the therapeutic relationship *is* the intervention. Forcing the termination of long-standing clinical relationships due to bureaucratic commissioning shifts can cause immediate developmental regression and places immense distress on families.

- **Decline of Regional and Local Capacity:** Private, community-based practices act as local hubs. They understand the specific social and educational ecosystem of the child. Replacing these local, embedded providers with centralised or remote services destroys

the continuity necessary for effective and cost efficient outcomes. Private allied health practices are long standing and often the sole providers of paediatric services in regional and peri-urban LGAs. Excluding these practices from the *Thriving Kids* framework threatens their economic viability and risks the permanent loss of vital infrastructure embedded in the LGAs.

- **Systemic Fragmentation:** Without clear integration between *Thriving Kids* and the NDIS, families face a clinical "cliff." Children risk falling into a service vacuum, disconnected from their trusted local therapists before any centralised alternative is operational. Furthermore, the lack of a clear, integrated pathway will leave general practitioners and paediatricians highly confused about where to direct families. This creates referral paralysis, overwhelming them with the clinical pressure of managing complex developmental cases without essential allied health supports.

Private allied health providers represent a ready-made, highly efficient solution. We do not require the costly establishment of new government-funded infrastructure; we require a commissioning model that values place-based expertise and allows small-business providers a fair, proportionate opportunity to participate.

We urge you to raise these priorities with the Minister for Human Services and champion the following three priorities:

- **A "Continuity of Care" Guarantee:** Ensure no child is forced to abandon an effective, established clinical relationship due to government procurement changes.
- **Plurality of Providers:** Advocate for a commissioning framework that actively includes sole and small-mid size local and regional practices, preserving family choice and local economic sustainability.
- **Genuine Clinical Consultation:** Demand transparent, structured consultation with grassroots private providers, not just large non-government organisations, before service pathways are finalised.

I have attached our Position Statement, which outlines these issues and offers constructive, practical solutions. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we can safeguard effective early intervention, local services, and ensure *Thriving Kids* delivers genuine, stable outcomes for South Australian families.

Thank you for your time and your support for families in our community.

Yours sincerely,