


[HOME](#)
[COMMITTEES](#)
[MEMBERS](#)
[QUICK LINKS](#)
[VISIT](#)


Hansard Daily

[Hansard Search](#) / [Search Results](#) / [Hansard Daily](#)

Legislative Council: Wednesday, June 01, 2022

[Daily](#) [Xml](#)

Contents

[Xml](#)

- + Commencement
- + Parliamentary Committees
- + Ministerial Statement
- + Question Time
- Matters of Interest
 - + Nuclear Energy
 - + Hydrogen Future
 - + State Budget
 - + Domestic and Family Violence
 - + Poker Machines
 - **Acorn Program**
 - The Hon. E.S. BOURKE
 - + National Reconciliation Week
- + Members
- + Motions
- + Bills
- + Motions
- + Address in Reply

ACORN PROGRAM

The Hon. E.S. BOURKE (15:51): I think all of us in this chamber can agree the first 1,000 days of a child's life are critical to their development. For better or worse, a child's experience in their first 1,000 days shapes the way their brains and bodies develop for the rest of their lives.

We want all children to be cared for and nurtured in those first 1,000 days so they can reach their full potential, but almost one-quarter of children in South Australia are behind their expected development milestones by the time they start school—one-quarter. That is one in four kids who have not had access to all the resources and support they need to develop physically and socially, and it is indicative of concerning numbers of families having fallen through the cracks.

We on this side of the chamber believe that the first 1,000 days are a period of unique opportunity to shape children's lives for the better. We believe that mothers, especially new mothers and especially vulnerable mothers, need access to adequate support services, health services and education services, because we believe that no child, regardless of the circumstances into which they are born, should be left behind.

That is why we will establish a royal commission into early childhood education and care. We want South Australian kids to have access to two years of preschool and we want those preschools to be affordable and accessible and to deliver high-quality early education, so that by the time kids get to five years old they are well placed to start school. We are listening to experts, who tell us that the first 1,000 days are critical, who tell us that 90 per cent of a person's brain development happens in the first five years of life, who tell us that nurturing and access to quality education from a young age are of vital, lifelong importance.

Along with the Hon. Katrine Hildyard from the other place, the Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Women, I recently attended MeB4three's launch of the Acorn Program. The Acorn Program provides an opportunity for mothers of children aged zero to three years who are struggling with mental ill health to come together in a group. Australian research suggests that about one in five women experience prenatal or postnatal depression or anxiety. Some women suffer from serious mental disorders such as psychosis, PTSD or schizophrenia following pregnancy or childbirth.

Mental ill health does not discriminate. It can affect anyone, no matter their circumstances. Pregnancy is commonly the first time for many mothers to suffer from mental ill health. Having a child totally changes your life.

The Acorn Program is an early intervention program that allows mothers to support each other and to reinforce through their collective experiences of childbearing and motherhood that their emotions and struggles are normal and are okay. It helps mothers to learn parenting skills and strategies, to learn to connect with and teach their children through play, to reflect on their experiences and their own growth, and ultimately to strengthen their capacity as parents and their relationship with their child.

The program's motto is 'From small things, big things grow'. It is clear from the program's success that a little bit of the right kind of support can go a long way in improving the wellbeing of mothers and facilitating the development of their relationship with their children. It has helped over 500 women from all walks of life since its inception.

One mother who participated in the Acorn Program described the distress she felt when she brought her baby home from hospital for the very first time and did not know how to interact with her child. She shut down emotionally. She knew that as a mother she must love her child, but she did not feel like she could love her child. Through the Acorn Program, she learned how to bond with her daughter in a way that she says would not have been possible otherwise.

Another mother only realised that she was not alone in the issues she was facing when she joined the Acorn Program. She found a community who knew what she was going through because they were going through similar experiences. Her mental health improved and so did her relationship with her child.

Another mother arrived at the Acorn Program with such severe mental ill health that she had completely shut down. She felt like she could not speak, but before long she was overcome with relief and was able to open up when she heard the other mothers speaking and sharing very similar stories. She realised that her struggles were not hers on her own and she felt that she could find a new community to belong to. These stories are so important because while a lot of learning happens at preschool and at school, a lot of learning and development happens at home too.

[◀ Poker Machines](#)
[National Reconciliation Week ▶](#)

PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

[Hansard \(Record of Debate\)](#)
[Bills](#)
[Committees](#)

MEMBERS

[Current Members](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Former Members](#)
[Electoralates](#)

GET INVOLVED

[See Parliament Live](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Voting Procedure](#)

ABOUT PARLIAMENT

[House of Assembly](#)
[Legislative Council](#)
[Parliament House Building](#)
[Today in Parliament](#)
[Careers](#)
[History](#)

VISIT

[See Parliament Live](#)
[Planning a Visit](#)
[Public Tours](#)
[Educational Tours & Programs](#)

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

[Legislative Council](#)
[Members](#)
[Bills](#)
[Questions](#)

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

[House of Assembly](#)
[Members](#)
[Chamber Map](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Members Entitlements Reports](#)
[Bills](#)
[Questions](#)

CONTACT

[Contact a Member](#)
[Feedback](#)
[Contact a Member](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)
[YouTube](#)
[Legislative Council Twitter](#)