



DAVID MORRIS MP

**Member for Mornington
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment
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More Places Essential for Successful Early Intervention Legislative Assembly 23rd March 2010

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Providing the services necessary to give our children the best possible start in life is the core business of government, and it is doubly so when a child has developmental delays or a disability. We know that early childhood intervention works and that it works best when it is provided early.

The issue I raise this evening is for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. The action I seek from the minister is that she provide additional early childhood intervention places to assist in meeting the higher demand currently being experienced in the southern metropolitan region.

In the last couple of years the minister has announced almost 1000 extra places, and of course that is a good thing. However, the distribution of those places has meant that the southern region has received only 40 of those 1000 places. That compares with some 290 in the western metropolitan region, 344 in the northern metropolitan region and 94 in the Loddon Mallee region.

I do not have any precise knowledge of the needs of those regions, but I am very concerned about the imbalance between the proportion of the population in the southern region and the number of places provided.

On 2008 figures the City of Casey, the City of Frankston, the City of Greater Dandenong, the City of Kingston and the Mornington Peninsula Shire between them have approximately 16 per cent of children in Victoria aged zero to 4 years of age, and 15.8 per cent of children aged between 5 years and 9 years of age. If you add Cardinia Shire into the equation that figure goes up to 17.5 per cent. But we have had only 4 per cent of the places provided.

I am sure the member for Frankston would be concerned that over that two-year period only three places have been provided in Frankston, given that there are some 8300 children under four years of age in that area. I am sure he shares my concern. There are other pressures on the providers.

The Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants Award, which came into effect on 3 May last year, added considerable cost to providers, but the government is providing extra funding only from 27 January this year. The award also provides for a further three rises in May this year and again in 2011 and in 2012.

The award came into effect on 3 May last year, but the money is being provided only from 1 July, so there are cost pressures as well. There is considerable unmet demand on the Mornington Peninsula for early childhood intervention places.

I know our local providers could fill 20 spaces tomorrow if the capacity was there, so I urge the minister to look at the challenges we have and see whether further places can be made available.
