

Dear editor,

Greater investment in early intervention is required

The opinion piece about the care of children, (*Adoption makes more sense than out-of-home care*) pits adoption against out-of-home-care with no reference to the long-term social and economic benefits of early intervention to support families care for their children. Good early intervention services can remove the need to take children from their parents in the first place.

While we acknowledge the number and rate of children and young people in out-of-home-care has doubled over the past decade this begs the question what more must the State do at an earlier stage to support parents to care for their children?

Studies in the United States have highlighted that for an initial investment of just over US\$15,000 per child in early intervention programs for parents and their preschoolers, this could bring an economic return of over US\$244,000 per child into adulthood, including through reduction of interactions with the criminal justice system. A similar intensive early intervention program in Australia costs \$10,500 a year per family.

In our experience, vulnerable women, including those recovering from domestic violence, are not given sufficient support from the State to avoid the removal of their children from their care. Greater investment in early intervention is required.

Yours faithfully,
Janet Loughman
Principal Solicitor, Women's Legal Services NSW