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Media statement

Central Great Southern Shires to benefit from 10-year Early Years Initiative

New ways to deliver more effective, evidence-informed child development services will be forged through an innovative community partnership in the Central Great Southern.

Announced as the first of four locations in Western Australia's unprecedented Early Years Initiative, the Central Great Southern Shires of Katanning, Broomehill-Tambellup, Kojonup and Gnowangerup will work with State Government services and researchers to develop new ways to improve the health and wellbeing of its youngest residents.

The Early Years Initiative was formed through a 10-year agreement between the State Government and CoLab – a partnership between the Minderoo Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute.

Over a decade, the Early Years Initiative will try, test and deliver evidence-informed community-led approaches to child development in four communities across metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote Western Australia.

Early Years Initiative Board Co-Chairs Dr Sue Gordon and Sue Ash said work would now begin in the Central Great Southern to combine local insights with State Government organisations and services.

"Research tells us the first four years of a child's life are critical in creating the platform for their future success," Dr Gordon said.

"The Early Years Initiative will change the way government agencies work with our communities to achieve real change in the health, learning and development of children from conception to four years."

Ms Ash said despite significant effort, the developmental gap between our least and most disadvantaged children had continued to widen.

"The enthusiasm of the Central Great Southern shires to be involved in this unprecedented initiative demonstrates the strong desire for this kind of commitment to change for children," she said.

"The Early Years Initiative will work with communities like those in the Central Great Southern to discover the best approaches to improving the health, learning and development of our children. Our goal is to achieve real and lasting progress and then apply our learnings across the board for the benefit of the whole state."

The chosen communities will develop and implement their own strategies, backed by evidence, to improve child development and outcomes.

The remaining three communities will be announced during 2019.

More information about the Early Years Initiative, including Board details, is available on the [Department of Communities website](#).



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