TO: PRINCIPALS, PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS AND REGIONAL DIRECTORS

RE: NEW PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

I am pleased to provide you with the new DECD Parent Complaints Policy.

The policy and associated procedure have been developed to provide parents and leaders with an overarching policy framework, supported by detailed procedural information, for managing concerns and complaints made by parents of children and young people attending DECD preschools and schools. This policy and procedure can be found at: http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/policy/pages/OSPP/policy_index. You will find them under ‘P’.

To further support the resolution of concerns and complaints, the department has also established a Parent Complaint Unit. The unit has a dual function:

- to provide advice and support to parents regarding their concern or complaint and
- to undertake objective and impartial reviews of complaints that have not been resolved at the local or regional level.

The DECD parent complaint process indicates that a child’s preschool or school should be the first point of contact for parents, followed by the regional office and then the Parent Complaint Unit if the complaint cannot be resolved at the local level.

Parents may contact the Parent Complaint Unit at any stage of the process for support and advice. A free call hotline has been established for parents on 1800 677 435. The unit may also be contacted by email at DECD.ParentComplaint@sa.gov.au

The existing ‘Responding to concerns and complaints from parents and caregivers: A guide for DECD preschools and schools’ document is also being updated to reflect the new policy and procedure and departmental name change and will be released in the near future. This document provides a practical guide for preschools and schools about approaches and issues to consider when managing parent concerns and complaints.

To ensure that all complaints are dealt with appropriately, sites are required to develop their own process for managing parent complaints at the local level. These must be consistent with the department’s parent complaint policy and procedure. Suggested templates and other support documentation will be sent to your school or
preschool shortly. Policies must be completed, verified by the regional or assistant regional director responsible for the site and published clearly on the school or preschool website by the end of Term 1, 2012.

In addition, each school or preschool website will have a link added to it which will take parents straight to the DECD Parent Complaints Policy and support materials. This link will be added to each website progressively over the next few weeks. Further information and support will be provided in the package of information to be sent to you shortly.

While not all complaints raised by parents can be resolved, it is important that we approach the management and resolution of these issues in a positive and proactive manner and that as an organisation we recognise that complaints provide an opportunity for learning and improvement.

In dealing with complaints, I ask that you listen, carefully assess the concern and take appropriate action to resolve matters as quickly as possible. I further ask that you draw the attention of your staff and parent community to the new policy and procedure.

I believe the DECD parent complaint resolution process will strengthen partnerships between our schools, preschools and parents and ultimately lead to improvements for all South Australian children and young people and their families.

Keith Bartley  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  

15 March 2012