Global Developmental Delay (GDD)

What does it mean?
All children develop different skills that help them to move, communicate, behave and learn about the world around them. These skills can develop at different rates. Some children develop skills more slowly than their same age peers and if delays are observed in two or more areas of development, the term Global Developmental Delay can be used.

Who can diagnose?
Most children will receive a diagnosis of Global Developmental Delay from their Paediatrician. This may follow assessment from a range of health professionals such as maternal child health nurse, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapist, speech pathologists or early childhood educators.

What are the causes?
Often there is no identifiable cause for Global Developmental Delay. Some medical conditions that may be associated with this diagnosis include a child born prematurely, inherited disorders (e.g. Fragile X syndrome), chronic illness (e.g. epilepsy), infections, hearing and vision difficulties. Environmental factors may also contribute to observed delays in development. Some children with Global Developmental Delay may also have an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

How can I support my child with global developmental delay?
Parents report that it can be very helpful to obtain a clear picture of their child’s developmental strengths and areas of concern to assist in focusing on relevant goals to support their child. Families are encouraged to consult their Maternal Child Health Nurse, Paediatrician or Early Childhood Intervention Practitioner for more information on further supports.

Tuning in to your child’s interests and supporting them with exploring their world is a great way to build on your child’s ability to move, communicate, behave and learn.

Providing lots of opportunities for you and your child to have fun in your everyday routines; sharing praise and encouragement, using visuals, communicating with your child using simple language and instructions are some examples of strategies that have been shown to be effective in promoting learning and development.

Will my child catch up?
Development in early childhood can be variable and often hard to predict. All children have the capacity to learn and develop. At the time of entering school, children are often assessed for eligibility for additional support. At this time some children with Global Developmental Delay may go on to receive a diagnosis of a specific disability such as an Intellectual Disability or Severe Language Disorder. Regardless of whether children receive such a diagnosis, many children with Global Developmental Delay will continue to need individual support and monitoring to maximise their learning potential.

Resources:
Visual resources are available on the resources hub on the EPIC website: www.epic.edu.au
Department of Education and Training: (DET): www.education.vic.gov.au
Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA): www.eciacvic.org.au