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National Association of Community Based Children's Services

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FEDERAL BUDGET 2004

CALL FOR A PRACTICAL COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY OWNED CHILD CARE

The National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) calls on the Australian Government to invest in the future by funding a universally available and affordable high quality range of children's services which foster children's development, support families and build community.

Lynne Wannan, National Convenor said today "Parents are suffering on long waiting lists because there are not enough childcare places. The Australia Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that more childcare places are needed for around 175,000 children. Almost 50,000 children need more before and after school care, 45,000 children need more long day care and occasional care is needed by 37,000 children."

"The non-profit community-run child care sector is starved of capital funding and this is holding back the setting up of new centres, especially in regional and poorer areas where private providers can't see a profit."

The Government should fund:

- one community owned and managed early childhood service, offering a full range of care and developmental opportunities, for every 800 children under the age of 5 years
- capital funding for the development of community managed services in areas of particular economic and social disadvantage

For further information contact:

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Attachment: *NACBCS – A National Policy for Australia – 2004 and Beyond*

**NACBCS - A NATIONAL POLICY FOR AUSTRALIA
– 2004 and beyond**

It is the view of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) that a clever Australian Government would grasp the opportunity to develop a world's best children's services system in recognition of the importance for the future nation, for the economy and for today's children and their families. Australia has the foundations for such a world class system. There is a need to recognise the shortcomings of the system now and move quickly to develop a much needed and better system of universally available children's services that provide care, education and support.

The following is a blue print for the national policy NACBCS will support for Australia in the year 2004 and beyond.

1. NACBCS VISION

The Australian Government will have the goal of:

- Delivering a universally available and affordable high quality range of children's services which foster children's development, support families and build community

The Australian Government will:

- Invest in a range of services for the first five years of childhood in recognition of their importance for optimal development of all children
- Develop a system of early childhood services that not only supports child development but breaks down the isolation of families
- Develop a system of early childhood services that helps build and strengthen communities and contributes to the building of a healthy democracy
- Provide additional funding to ensure access to services by disadvantaged children
- Fund local communities to develop a better integrated and co-ordinated system of child and family support services

The Australian Government will develop an early childhood system based on the recognition of:

- the critical role of the community managed sector in building community and strengthening democracy
- the need for a full range of children's services that supports children and their families
- the need to break down the barriers between different types of early childhood services to better utilise community resources
- the true cost of delivering high quality early childhood services that meet children's diverse needs including cultural and developmental differences
- the importance of having well remunerated staff capable of providing the high quality care and educational opportunities critical in the early years
- the limited capacity of many Australians to pay significant fees for early childhood services
- the varying capacity of geographic communities to develop and sustain quality early childhood services
- the need to provide Government funding to ensure that Australia has a high quality children's services system

2. STRATEGIES FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Achievement of the above system of early childhood services needed by Australian families, their children and the Australian economy, requires the Federal Government to put in place strategies which deliver:

- an investment of at least 1% GDP in services for children up to 5 years of age
- a fee assistance scheme that limits parent contributions to a maximum of 15% of nett household income
- in every community sufficient high quality early childhood services, offering care and developmental opportunities over a long day for either part-time, full time or occasional usage, to provide at least 2 days per week access to every child under school entry age.
- participation by early childhood services in receipt of Government funds, either directly or through income support, in local networks of child and family support services so that families can be connected with the supports they need for child health, early intervention and family support.
- one community owned and managed early childhood service, offering a full range of care and developmental opportunities, for every 800 children under the age of 5 years funded to enable the volunteer committees of management to undertake their obligations related to community building, family strengthening and community participation.
- capital funding made available for the development of community managed services in areas of particular economic and social disadvantage with ongoing recurrent funding tied to achievement of defined Government outcomes related to community building achievements
- Federal Government commitment to early childhood service funding to be enshrined in Legislation
- partnerships with the community to develop and deliver a quality children's services system through establishment of a National Advisory Council
- a nationally consistent system of high quality, affordable and accessible early childhood services including Community Building Officers funded in each region to facilitate regional planning committees and capital funding to disadvantaged areas
- an appropriate remuneration package for early childhood workers with funding to meet this cost
- services with staff:child ratios not less than:
1:4 for children under 12 months
1:6 for children 12-23 months
1:8 for children 24-71 months
- at least one-tenth of the working week of children's services staff recognised as non contact time for preparation and on-going training and professional development
- an improved quality improvement and assurance system with alternative review methods including spot checks and imposing penalties for non-compliance
- targets for all funded services, including those whose families receive Child Care Benefit, to ensure that disadvantaged children and those with special need are accessing services
- increased funding to enable participation by children with special needs in early childhood services
- an appropriately remunerated and funded package for specially trained and experienced early childhood workers to work with children with special needs