



media release

24 March 2017

Senate vote will negatively impact thousands of Australian children

Community Child Care Association is outraged that the Senate has passed the Jobs for Families Child Care Package, legislation that will provide a new funding model that effectively winds back access to early learning for children who need it the most. This will mean some children will be excluded from early learning environments before preschool and children in vulnerable circumstances will have their access halved. The package will have negative consequences for thousands of children and families across Australia.

Currently all children can access 2 full days per week (up to 24 hours) of subsidised education and care regardless of whether their family meets an activity test. The legislation passed by the Senate removes this universal access to education and care and takes Australia backwards in the early [and middle] childhood policy arena.

- Families with an income over \$65,710 where one parent does not meet an activity test will no longer receive any subsidy.
- Families with an income of less than \$65,710 where one parent does not meet an activity test will have their access cut in half.

Community Child Care Association's Chairperson Dr Anne Kennedy does not understand how the Australian Government can pass such a flawed piece of legislation.

"There is robust evidence that the Australian Government has been presented with time and again that

- *The period from birth to 3 years is the most significant for brain development and lays down lifelong foundations for children's wellbeing, learning and development*
- *All children benefit from quality early learning environments*
- *Participation in quality early learning environments is a significant protective factor for at-risk children and children from vulnerable backgrounds*
- *Universal provision of education and care is by far the most effective way to ensure participation of children in vulnerable situations*
- *Investment in early education also provides long term economic benefits not just for families but for communities and nations"*



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"It is a travesty that despite this evidence, that the Australian Government does not even dispute, the Senate were presented with a Bill that takes away current provisions for all children to access two days of early learning."

The Jobs for Families Package provides welcome increased investment in education and care that will make child care more affordable for many families, but the Senate has also agreed that the extra \$1.6 billion will be drawn from social security "savings".

Dr Kennedy said: *"The government has used funding for education and care as a political football. Although many of the cuts to income support and welfare that we have been arguing against that were in the appalling Omnibus Bill, appear not to be going ahead, increases to child care subsidies will still come at the expense of people who can least afford it. Freezing family tax benefit rates and increasing waiting periods for parental payments and youth allowance will have a real impact on people's lives"*

The package provides welcome increased investment in education and care, but with a focus only on workforce participation measures it is seriously flawed.

For further comment:

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Community Child Care Association (CCC) is the peak body for community owned and not for profit early and middle childhood education and care services in Victoria. CCC is the Victorian peak body for Outside School Hours Care Services and the Victorian branch of National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHSA). CCC is also the Victorian Branch of the national peak body for community managed and not for profit children's services, Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS)