



media release

10 May 2018

Federal Budget – Young children miss out again!

The education and care sector was hoping for one key action from the Federal Government for young children – a commitment to long-term kindergarten funding, especially to enable funded early childhood education to be delivered to children for two years prior to school.

Alas, the sector and Victorian children have again been let down by the Federal Government.

The Budget contained no allocation for funding under the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Education* other than the inadequate one-year extension of the Partnership already announced by Education Minister Birmingham till the end of the 2019 calendar year and no extension for three-year-olds.

What does this mean for Victorian children? Chairperson of Community Child Care Association Linda Davison explains, *'The Victorian Government funds 10 hours of kindergarten education per week for each child in the year before school. The Federal Government funds the other five hours. The lack of certainty about funding beyond next year means services cannot adequately plan for the future, and families cannot plan for their children's early education. It means that there is a very real possibility that Federal funding will cease in 2019 and Victoria's children will miss out.'*

The *Lifting our Game* report found that quality early childhood education makes a significant contribution to achieving educational excellence in schools and that high quality early childhood education also has broader impacts; it is linked with higher levels of employment, income and financial security, improved health outcomes and reduced crime.

'Without the Federal Government's commitment to supporting early education, those benefits to Victoria and Victorian children will be diminished. This is absolutely shameful.'

Community Child Care Association notes with great concern that the Federal Government appears to be walking away from the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Although funding under this partnership was never large (around \$20 million in the last two years) it was a highly symbolic and important partnership. It now means each state and territory must cover the full cost of regulating and assessing education and care services themselves and there is no longer a joint national commitment to improving the quality of education and care services.



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'This important, long-standing partnership (almost ten years) is Australia's commitment to improving the quality of education and care along with educational and developmental outcomes for children through an integrated and unified national system. Without the partnership, there is uncertainty about the future of the unified system, at a time when Australia's expenditure on early learning and participation rates are well below countries such as New Zealand and France.'

The Federal Government again made much of its new Child Care Package that is to start in July after being deferred 12 months in the last Budget.

'Given that the Government has admitted that 25% of families will be worse off under the new Child Care Subsidy, it is hard to see this as the winning centrepiece of the Budget for children and families.'

Community Child Care Association believes that the recruitment issues facing the sector are not only a product of access to funded quality qualifications and professional learning but also a result of an undervalued and under-remunerated workforce. With a predominantly female workforce, this is reflective of broader gender bias in pay and conditions.

'Support to attain qualifications is just the tip of the iceberg. Until there is ongoing, direct investment in funding wages and professional development in children's education and care services, Victoria will not have the outstanding early childhood education system we are aspiring to.'

'All in all, the Budget is a clear miss for Victorian children, their families and the services that help educate and care for them.'

For further comment:

Linda Davison Chairperson, Community Child Care Association

0417 052 061