



media release

3 May 2018

Victorian State Budget: Investment in our early childhood workforce is a step in the right direction

The Victorian Government has announced a welcome \$8 million investment over the next three years in scholarships to attract new teachers to the early childhood workforce, and to support educators who wish to upskill to a teaching qualification.

'Recruiting and retaining early childhood teachers in education and care settings is one of our sector's biggest challenges. These scholarships will help address this workforce issue and provide welcome support for career progression for educators,' says Linda Davison, Chairperson of Community Child Care Association (CCC).

The State Government is also to be commended for its significant investment in vocational education and the TAFE system. This includes funding 30 priority TAFE courses, some of which will result in more support for the children, families and communities who need it most. It is, however, concerning that education and care qualifications are not included in this list.

'Whilst there have been large numbers of people completing the relevant Diploma or Certificate III level qualifications, this has not solved the recruitment issues our members experience. Services frequently struggle to find candidates with the appropriate skills and knowledge to fill staff vacancies, as poor quality training offered by some private Registered Training Organisations results in graduates who are often nowhere near work ready. This is in stark contrast to graduates from TAFE and other not-for-profit organisations.'

'With another 10 free TAFE courses still to be announced, we are hopeful that Diploma and Certificate III qualifications in early childhood and school-age education and care will be included.'

Community Child Care Association believes that the recruitment issues facing the sector are not only a product of access to funded quality qualifications 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 in children's education and care services, Victoria will not have the outstanding early childhood education system we are aspiring to.'

'Given the disparities and unfair wages and conditions in the education and care sector, we sometimes feel that we are exploiting one group of women so that another group of women can



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work. As for community social services, state and commonwealth government will need to provide funds to address this inequity.'

Alongside an ongoing commitment to kindergarten and school readiness funding, the 2018/19 budget includes welcome and significant levels of investment in new and ongoing initiatives in the early years:

- \$10.5 million to build and upgrade early learning facilities
- \$3.3 million to deliver languages classes and bilingual delivery in kindergarten programs
- \$2.1 million for Early Start Kindergarten programs for children in vulnerable circumstances

For further comment:

Linda Davison

Chairperson, Community Child Care Association

0417 052 061