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## **Early childhood industry welcomes funding for disadvantaged communities**

Funding in the Federal Budget of \$59.4 million for budget based early childhood services was long overdue and would go towards helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, Early Childhood Australia said today.

ECA chief executive officer Pam Cahir said the support this will provide for infrastructure and improvements in staff qualifications is welcome as a direct contribution to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families who use these services.

Ms Cahir said although the extra funding was welcomed, it was disappointing there was nothing in the budget to assist staff working in childcare services to upgrade their qualifications.

“Qualified staff are key to achieving the goals of the government’s own national quality reform agenda. The failure in this budget to support people working in childcare services to upgrade their qualifications is a lost opportunity to underwrite the achievement of these reforms.

“We do however look forward to the recommendations to come out of the Productivity Commission’s study into the Education and Training Workforce, due next year, and hope that this will provide the impetus for investment in early childhood workforce development.”

ECA supports measures in the federal budget to increase regulations for childcare operators with 25 or more services, a welcome further response to the ABC Learning saga. The proposed changes to the childcare rebate were a concern, but would not unfairly disadvantage those who rely on it the most.

“Capping the childcare rebate will not disadvantage low-income families,” Ms Cahir said.

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