

**Press Release**

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**GOVERNMENT URGED TO STAND FIRM ON CHILDCARE QUALITY**

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) today called on the Federal Government to stand strong on its reform agenda for early childhood education and care and said cost should not be a barrier to reform.

ECA National President Margaret Young said improved quality standards in childcare were long over-due, and if cost increases were necessary to fund quality improvements, they would be gradual.

“The Federal Government and States and Territories in COAG have proposed a reform agenda for the future wellbeing of Australian young children in early childhood education and care services.

Now we need solid national quality standards and a carefully planned and staged implementation process to ensure those quality standards are met.

“By having a long-term implementation process for these reforms, any increase in cost will be gradual.

“It will be up to State, Territory and the Federal Governments to commit to sharing the costs of improvements with parents and ensure that low-income families can access high-quality services,” Margaret Young said.

ECA said it was important to recognise that a number of childcare centres around the country were already on their way to reaching the government’s quality standards.

“Many childcare centres are already more than half-way there, and increases in costs will depend on what each childcare centre needs to do in order to meet the quality standards.

“There will be challenges along the way for some service providers, who will be faced with attracting and retaining qualified staff and adjusting group or enrolment sizes, but it can be done.

“Worries about cost should not be a barrier to reform.

“We need to take a long term and positive view of planning in early childhood education and care, and put our energy into planning a good way forward for children and parents instead of frightening people with generalised predictions about cost,” Margaret Young said.

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