

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 4 November 2011

SA children to benefit from early childhood reform process

Early Childhood Australia, the peak body representing Australian children, said today efforts to stall the quality reforms for early childhood education and care were not in the best interests of children.

South Australian children will benefit from new reforms to be introduced over the next decade. The changes being made underpin the development of children's confidence and self esteem and provide a platform for all other learning.

"The evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of high quality early childhood education and care. It's good for children, good for families and ultimately it will be good for the economy," said ECA CEO Pam Cahir.

"There is a campaign being run that is misleading and misrepresents the reforms that will be introduced next year.

"The fact is, we need to start the process towards better quality early childhood education and care as soon as possible. That's why the reform process is a staged process that gives services time to tool up and plan for these reforms. Many services have done this already.

"Next year the only change to staff-to-child ratios will be for babies (birth to 24 months) that will be going from 1:5 to 1:4. This is a modest improvement and vital to the health and wellbeing of little ones.

"It won't be until 2014 that we start to see other reforms being introduced such as an early childhood teacher in every centre and improved ratios for older children.

"The reforms will ensure all education and care services are working towards the same high quality standard regardless of location or service type. This is what children in South Australia deserve.

"Come January, South Australian services will also be rated under a new system that will give parents a better understanding of the quality of education and care their child is receiving.

"The regulations will also better support educators in early childhood services so they have a clearer idea of what is expected of them and are no longer confused by the myriad of rules currently out there."

Ms Cahir said costs could increase as a result of the reforms, but the Child Care Rebate was available to all parents, which pays 50 per cent of out of pocket expenses for childcare up to \$7,500 per child.

"Many centres are already meeting these standards and are still offering affordable, high quality early childhood education and care. Shouldn't all children have that opportunity?" asked Ms Cahir.

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