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Early Childhood Experts Call on Coalition to Commit to Quality Funds

An examination of the policies of the two major parties reveals that over half a billion dollars would be at risk for early childhood education and care should the Coalition take power says Early Childhood Australia.

The Coalition has announced that the National Quality Reform Agenda will be subject to review under a Coalition government, calling into question the \$533.7 million that the Labor Government has committed.

ECA CEO Pam Cahir welcomed a commitment from Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Childcare, Sharman Stone to ensure high quality standards for children but said that these were only good intentions unless backed up by funding commitments.

“The National Quality Reform Agenda was a visionary step forward for Australian children and for the country. It is crucial that its implementation is not impeded in any way.

“All parties say they are committed to its principles of improved staff-to-child ratios and increased qualifications for staff but Australians deserve to know before the election how each party will put this into practice.”

The Labor government has committed the following amounts in the following areas:

- \$53.9m for additional places in university Early Childhood Education courses
- \$12.4m in HECS-HELP debts waivers for qualified early childhood teachers working in areas of disadvantage
- \$115m for the removal of TAFE fees for child care diplomas and advanced diplomas.
- \$59.4 million over four years to improve the quality of 140 Budget Based Funded early childhood services - the vast majority of which are in remote Indigenous communities
- \$293 million to establish 38 Children and Family Centres under the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement.

Ms Cahir says these policies and the funding allocated to them are necessary to ensure that the quality of early childhood education and care is brought up to acceptable standards in Australia.

“It is not clear to me, for example, how staff can improve their qualifications without increased course places and support with study fees from the government.

“Additionally, the funding allocated to the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement is badly needed to ensure these children are getting equal access to quality services.

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