



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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VISION:
EVERY
YOUNG
CHILD IS
THRIVING
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LEARNING**

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 05 August 2020

NO CERTAINTY FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CHILDCARE MEASURES

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is concerned that the support package announced by Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan this morning fails to provide certainty for families and educators.

The Federal Government's decision to maintain the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) system and provide families with an additional 30 days of allowable absences in financial year 2020/21, is based on the assumption that families are going to maintain their enrolment in early education and care services. The Minister is requesting, rather than compelling, all services to waive the out-of-pocket component of the fee if children are kept at home.

Families will have to confirm that their service will do this and also trust that Centrelink will manage the allowable absences correctly across the year ahead.

'It would make much more sense for the Federal Government to fully subsidise early childhood services across Victoria for the next 6 weeks. This would allow families to focus on the best interests of their children, and it would enable educators and teachers to continue supporting families through this challenging time,' said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

'During the first wave of the pandemic, we saw some exemplary practice in which educators maintained contact with children who were being kept at home. That needs to be our main focus now in Melbourne and Mitchell shire,' Ms Page said.

Early childhood educators are also in a highly uncertain situation.

'The employment guarantee the Minister referred to is simply a headcount clause in a funding contract that discourages providers from laying off educators and teachers. It does not guarantee any minimum wage be paid to those educators and teachers. A minimum income payment should be added to the employment guarantee.'

Even with the 5% increase (15% for Out of School Hours Care), the CCS transition payment is insufficient to cover the payroll of any service, forcing employers to rely on families maintaining their enrolments. This complex interdependency could be avoided. Both families and early learning services will also face the challenge of assessing eligibility under Victoria's 'permitted worker scheme'.

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Other employees across Australia are receiving the JobKeeper payment, ensuring they have a minimum income to survive. The decision to remove early childhood educators from this scheme was risky and potentially leaves the financial wellbeing of thousands of educators in Victoria in jeopardy.

Once again, this pandemic highlights the need for substantial reform in the way we finance and staff early education in Australia – other developed countries are well ahead of us with early education seen as a critical investment in long term educational outcomes.

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ECA CEO Sam Page is available for comment. For interviews, contact ECA Media Officer: Katie Golding
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Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight years, their families and early childhood professionals.