



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

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Labor's childcare fee relief promise welcome, but long term reform still needed

Early Childhood Australia, the peak advocacy organisation for children under eight, their families and early childhood professionals, welcomes the Australian Labor Party's election promise to boost childcare subsidies and other measures, and urges both parties to ensure full reform of the Child Care system to support all children to access at least two days per week of early learning.

"Increasing the Child Care Benefit by 15 per cent for all families and raising the cap on the Child Care Rebate to \$10,000 would bring very welcome immediate relief to all families using child care," said Early Childhood Australia National President Ros Cornish.

"This is a substantial boost within the current system, which will help all families meet the increasing costs of child care in the short term."

"While we welcome this commitment by Labor, whichever party forms government after July 2 will need to finalise longer term reforms to build a better system for Australian children and families," said Ms Cornish.

The Coalition Government delayed their proposed \$3 billion reform package until July 2018, and Labor is now saying they won't continue with this program of reform 'because of the number of families that will be worse off, the unfair activity test and the impact on vulnerable children.

"Early Childhood Australia believes families need immediate fee support and that full reform of the subsidy system must ensure that all children have access to a minimum of two days per week of quality early learning, regardless of their parents' ability to work or study," said Ms Cornish

Modelling of the government's proposed reform package by ANU's Centre for Social Research and Methods, commissioned by ECA, found that one in three families would be worse off, and that 130,000 children would be at risk of losing access to childcare because their parents would fail to meet the activity test.

"We are pleased to see that Labor is committed to reforming the child care subsidy system, and to a full and open consultation process to achieve the best outcome for parents and children.

"We stand ready to work with both parties on long term reform to ensure that children can participate in high quality early learning experiences that boost their development," said Ms Cornish.

"Labor's commitment of \$150 million to develop the early childhood education workforce is very important and welcome to continue improving the quality of early learning that children receive," said Ms Cornish.

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Patron His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

“We are still waiting to hear what the Coalition Government plans to do in this regard. We are especially concerned that the current Early Childhood Workforce Strategy winds up at the end of this year with no word on whether it will continue.

“Labor’s promise to increase funding for indigenous early childhood services by 15 per cent is very welcome and necessary.

“Currently two out of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are developmentally vulnerable when they start school and Early Childhood services make a huge difference to improving the chances of success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.”

Ms Cornish said that ECA would like to see all of the parties full election policies before the election date, especially how they will address funding for access to preschool and kindergarten.

“We would like to see both major parties commit to enduring funding arrangements beyond 2017 for universal access in the year before school, and to taking steps to improve the participation of three year olds in a high quality early learning program delivered through a range of education and care settings,” concluded Ms Cornish.