



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 15 August, 2017

Tasmanian government acts in the best interest of children of families

Early Childhood Australia (Tasmanian Branch) today welcomed the Tasmanian Government's decision to ensure the State's most vulnerable children and families will have access to quality affordable early learning.

ECA Tasmanian President Jo Walsh said the Minister for Education and Training Jeremy Rockliff deserved recognition for his strength and leadership and thanked him for listening to the sector and valuing the important work that education and care services do.

"ECA commends Minister Rockliff, Secretary Jenny Gale and the Hodgman Liberal Government for their integrity and leadership in this matter," Ms Walsh said.

"Minister Rockliff's decision not to pursue the optional earlier school starting age demonstrated his recognition of the significant impact this change would have on the education and care sector.

"This became evident through the consultation process and the report to Government by Secretary Gale following an independent analysis of the effect of lowering the school starting age on the sector.

"In doing so, Minister Rockliff acknowledged the sector had undergone a long period of significant change with further change imminent in line with the Australian Government Child Care Package. A change to the school entry age for kindergarten and prep would have had a significant negative impact."

Ms Walsh said Minister Rockliff has recognised increasing participation in quality early learning is one of the most effective ways that Government can address the inequities faced by children from vulnerable and disadvantaged families.

"The funding allocated to support the implementation of the earlier school starting age has now been redirected to support vulnerable and children and families to access early learning programs in appropriate settings.

"This has been previously problematic due to affordability and availability of services.

"Minister's Rockliff's decision provides the opportunity for the school and education and care sector to work together to support a holistic and integrated approach to supporting children and families during the most critical years of a child's development."

Ms Walsh said ECA has met with Department of Education and been an active participant in all key consultation groups.

"The Secretary has consistently articulated a strong commitment to children, support for the National Quality Framework and focused on an inclusive partnership approach to the education and care of young children.

"We look forward to continued collaboration with the Department to support the development and delivery of quality programs for young children and their families in line with this new direction.

"It is children who will benefit from this decision and we will see the social and economic gains well into the future."

Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight, their families and early childhood professionals

For more information contact: Mark Thomas in Tasmania 0422 006 732

National Office 3/16 Mildura Street Fyshwick ACT 2609 T: 02 6242 1800 E: eca@earlychildhood.org.au W: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
Patron His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia