



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

**OUR
VISION:
EVERY
YOUNG
CHILD IS
THRIVING
AND
LEARNING**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia needs a vision for early learning

National children's peak body Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has welcomed the release of the Productivity Commission Final Report from its Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning.

The Final Report of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning provides a comprehensive review of the current system, including the failings of the financing or subsidy system that is in clear need of reform.

Early Childhood Australia CEO, Samantha Page said the Productivity Commission's Report shows that the Government will need to make significant modifications in order to deliver a package of reforms that makes child care more 'flexible, affordable and accessible.'

However, the report doesn't establish a clear enough vision for children and families that would serve as a rationale for reforms and future investment. Australia is under-invested in early childhood education and as a result there are children starting school who have missed out on quality early learning, and we have relatively low rates of workforce participation amongst women with young children.

'In response to this report we will be seeking to work with Government to identify system improvements that will deliver tangible outcomes for children and families. This includes the development of a new early childhood funding system that improves access to quality early childhood education and care for all children.

'There is a strong case for further investment in early childhood education and care in Australia, and building a system that is easier to navigate and affordable for all families.

'If we genuinely want to increase access and affordability, and improve our nation's prosperity, further investment will be required beyond current funding levels.'

Ms Page said she was concerned with the Productivity Commission's proposed benchmark price, capping the amount of subsidy families can receive at \$7.20 per hour or \$72 per day (for children aged three to five). Ms Page said that while the average family might be better off under the proposed model, the sector was particularly concerned about the impact on families living in major Australian cities where prices were higher.

'Parents living in higher cost areas, where the price of early childhood education and care is higher than the benchmark, would not be subsidised for higher prices under the proposed subsidy.

'This means that many families on low, middle and high incomes will be worse off than the current system, potentially making it harder for children and families to maintain access early childhood education and care.'

Another issue is the proposed activity test which would reduce subsidised access to early childhood education and care, for children families whose parents were not working, from 24 hours per week down to 10 hours per week.

‘Children from low income families have the most to benefit from access to quality early childhood education and care.

‘Access to only 10 hours of early childhood education and care per week is not enough for children to be able to form an attachment with their educator, and engage in a meaningful early learning experience.

‘At least 15 hours of early childhood education and care per week is the evidence-based standard that we know (from the EPPE Study in the UK) supports good development outcomes for children.’

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