



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister Birmingham please deliver a fair Childcare Package

The much awaited Federal Government's childcare package must support both the participation of children in early learning and working families to access stable and affordable childcare services, says Early Childhood Australia, the peak organisation for early childhood services.

"Australian families need confidence that the Childcare Package the government delivers is fair and allows them to have stable, affordable access to quality services," says Samatha Page, CEO of Early Childhood Australia (ECA).

To be fair and ensure all children will benefit from access to early learning the package must:

- Subsidise families to access two days per week of childcare
- Only apply a work/study activity test beyond two days per week

The current system provides 24 hours per week of subsidised childcare and under the proposed Childcare Package it will only provide half these hours (24 hours per fortnight).

"Currently 12 hours would typically cover just one day worth of long day care and this is just not enough to cover children's needs. Early Childhood Australia urges the government to preserve two days per week of subsidy for all children regardless of their parent's stability in work. Then apply an activity test above that – for three or more days.

"We know that children will benefit from two days a week and ultimately everyone benefits from children accessing good early learning. This also gives parents stability to engage in job seeking, study or volunteering.

"We are concerned that the currently proposed activity test and safety net programs are overly complicated which will potentially lead to a lot of confusion. There are many families with at least one parent in highly variable work – casual, irregular, seasonal – and those children could miss out."

Children's access to early childhood education led by qualified educators amplifies their achievement at school. Research shows that children who attended early childhood education and care score 18 to 20 points higher in reading, spelling and numeracy and 13 points higher in writing compared to children who do not attend early childhood education and care.

Investment in early learning will also increase our future prosperity as a nation. Research by Price Waterhouse Coopers last year shows that increasing participation in quality early learning by vulnerable children would add more than \$13 billion to GDP by 2050.

"It is encouraging that the Federal Government and Education Minister Simon Birmingham see the value in investing in early childhood support, we just urge the government to get the balance right to ensure everyone benefits from our children being able to access quality early learning," concluded Ms Page.

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