



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

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

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday 24 March, 2017

# **New child care scheme leaves vulnerable children behind**

Early Childhood Australia is disappointed that the Senate passed the Jobs for Families Childcare Package, without amendments that would have protected the early educational needs of our most vulnerable children, including indigenous children.

The Government failed heed calls from the sector for the baseline level of care to be set at 15 hours, which could have supported two days of care for children – something that we know is in the best interests of children and sets them up for their best chance at school and success later in life.

“Whilst seventy-five percent of families will be better off under the Childcare Package, without these important amendments, families on low incomes will have their access to subsidised early education cut in half, while other families will miss out altogether,” said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

This is a bad outcome for vulnerable children. Modelling by ANU estimated that more than 30,000 children could lose access to early learning because their parents would fail the Activity Test.

“Sadly the new package will impact most negatively on those families who don’t have regular work, or are in and out of the workforce, potentially have health issues or other difficulties, such as family member to care or they may simply live in a highly volatile local economy where work is just not secure.

This bill will make it harder for children from those families to receive access to the stable early learning environment that they would clearly benefit from,” said Ms Page.

Families with only one partner working and earning more than \$65,000 per year will receive ZERO child care subsidies and face the full cost of child care fees.

“It is also unrealistic to suggest that parents will return to work before they have their childcare arranged – anyone who has young children will know this usually needs to happen the other way around,” said Ms Page.

The Government also failed to step up and deliver the 22.5 hours a week of subsidised care for indigenous children, who are twice as likely to start school developmentally vulnerable.

“Considering the challenges that the Government is facing meeting the Closing the Gap targets, and given that we know the benefits that early education can deliver to vulnerable children, it is very disappointing that the Government couldn’t ensure the right level of early education for Indigenous children.

While ECA acknowledges that support will increase under the reforms for many families – with a higher rate of subsidy up to 85% of fees, and an extension to the annual cap from \$7500 to \$10,000 per annum, it is a shame that the benefits do not extend to those who need it most.

*Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children under eight, their families and early childhood professionals.*

### **Download Joint Submission to Senate Inquiry [no 14]:**

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/OmnibusSavingsReform/Submissions](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/OmnibusSavingsReform/Submissions)

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