



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday 2 April 2019

### **Budget fails to deliver for young children and early education**

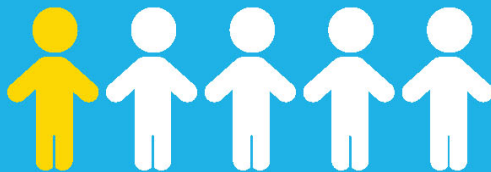
Early Childhood Australia is concerned that the Budget has missed the opportunity to address problems with the Child Care Subsidy, and to provide a long-term commitment for preschool funding.

'It's disappointing that the Federal Government has ignored the strong and consistent evidence that Australia needs to increase investment in early childhood development. This Budget delivers a minimal investment, despite the government knowing that there is so much more that needs to be done', said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

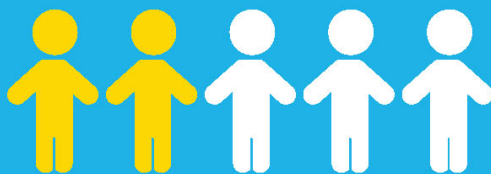
The latest data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) confirms that one in five Australian children start school developmentally vulnerable. This won't shift without dramatic change.

#### **DEVELOPMENTAL VULNERABILITY IN CHILDREN STARTING SCHOOL**

Some children in Australia are starting school vulnerable in areas of social, emotional, language, general knowledge, cognitive and physical development.



One in five children were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain(s) when they started school.



Two in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain(s) when they started school.

There are serious shortcomings of the Child Care Subsidy system that are not being addressed. It's estimated that one in four families are worse off under the new system introduced in July last year. Many children who would have benefitted the most from quality early learning are missing out due to the complexity of the new activity test and problems with the Additional Child Care Subsidy for children at risk.

The government has yet again ignored economists and education experts who consistently recommend lifting participation in early education for delivering social and economic benefits over the medium and long term. Australia can improve its education outcomes, lift women's workforce participation and reduce childhood disadvantage. These benefits can easily be realised by providing every child with a base entitlement to at least 18 hours of early education per week at an affordable cost to families.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are known to be at double the risk of disadvantage—two in five start school developmentally vulnerable. A measure allocating only \$4.9 million over two years to develop and implement strategies for increasing preschool attendance rates among disadvantaged and Indigenous children is inadequate. It fails to consider the clear advice from Indigenous organisations, such as the childcare peak body SNAICC—National Voice for our Children, that have called for community engagement and control in the delivery of services.

‘In the Budget tonight, the treasurer announced \$453.1 million to extend till the end of 2020 the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, in the year before school. This fails to provide certainty and long-term planning for preschool and kindergarten. ECA and most early childhood organisations have consistently urged the government to adopt the recommendation of the *Lifting Our Game* report to extend funding to preschool for three-year-olds’, said Ms Page.

‘The budget also provides nothing to improve the quality of early education, or to address the serious workforce challenges in the early childhood sector’, added Ms Page.

‘ECA will continue to call for a cross-portfolio ‘Early Years Strategy’ to recognise the importance of early childhood development, family support and play-based early learning across home, community and early childhood settings. And for a Workforce Development Strategy to address quality and capacity issues’, concluded Ms Page.

**To download our Early Learning 2019 Election Briefing, [click here](#)..**

**For the Australian Early Development Census report, [click here](#), and select 2018 AEDC results from the menu on the left.**

**For more information and interviews with CEO Samantha Page, please contact Paige Pollard on: 0475 554 999.**

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