



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 20 May 2019

ECA urges action on child poverty and educational disadvantage

ECA congratulates the re-elected Liberal–National Coalition Government, and urges Prime Minister Scott Morrison to harness his majority in the Australian Parliament to take action on reducing child poverty and educational disadvantage.

‘As Australia’s peak advocacy organisation for children from birth to eight years, ECA believes that the time has come for national action on child poverty and educational disadvantage’, said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

It is estimated that 731 000 children are living in poverty—the negative impact of this can last a lifetime. Single-parent families locked out of paid work are at a particularly high risk of poverty. Around 40 per cent of all children suffering poverty in Australia live in single-parent households (ACOSS, 2017).

One in five young children are developmentally vulnerable when they start school, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are twice as likely to experience disadvantage in educational settings. In 2018, over 40 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were found to be developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school, according to the Australian Early Development Census.

‘There is clearly more work to be done in this regard. ECA seeks to work with the Morrison government to turn this around’, said Ms Page.

‘A recent position paper released jointly by Early Childhood Australia and SNAICC—National Voice for our Children—*Working together to ensure equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years*—can serve as a good starting point. We hope that this term will see the Coalition Government act on the recommendations identified in this report that have been endorsed by more than forty leading child welfare, education and research organisations. Specifically, we call on the government to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receive quality early learning and family support’.

‘We welcome the Coalition’s commitment to continue providing funds so all children can attend 15 hours per week of preschool in the year before school. We hope that this will eventually be extended to two years before school, as this has the potential to substantially reduce the proportion of children at risk of experiencing difficulties at school’, added Ms Page.

‘We will continue to advocate for changes to the Child Care Subsidy to improve access to quality early learning for children at risk of educational disadvantage, and to improve continuity of access for families with uncertain or irregular employment engagement. As the architects of the subsidy system, the Coalition is well placed to make much-needed changes and to address challenges such as workforce shortages and inconsistencies in quality regulation’.

‘ECA has been working with other national organisations to build the case for a National Early Language and Literacy Strategy. Early language and literacy difficulties are three times more common in children from disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby perpetuating social inequities across generations. There is an opportunity for the next Federal Education Minister to take a leadership role in this important issue’, concluded Ms Page.

Reference

Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). (2017).

Early Childhood Australia (ECA), & SNAICC—National Voice for our Children. (2019). *Working together to ensure equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years*. Canberra, ACT: ECA and SNAICC.

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For 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.

