



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

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

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday, 23 April 2021

### **INVESTMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS SHOULD BE A FEDERAL BUDGET PRIORITY**

Longer paid parental leave and more affordable early education and care should be at the top of the agenda for Prime Minister Scott Morrison's cabinet taskforce to address the economic security and financial equality of women in Australia.

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) CEO Samantha Page says investing in the early years is one of the best investments we can make as a nation.

'Early education gives children the best possible start in life and supports women's workforce participation. The flow-on benefits accrue to everyone through economic stimulus and reduced underemployment.'

ECA pleased to see a diverse group of advocates, including the Business Council Australia (BCA), calling for the Commonwealth's universal Paid Parental Leave scheme to be extended to 26 weeks.

'Our current system of paid parental leave from the Commonwealth Government does not encourage diversity in carer responsibilities between women and men,' states the [BCA Pre-Budget Submission 2021–22](#).

Without financial support, a declining number of families can take time out of paid work to spend with infants. The development of a secure attachment between a child and their parents or carers, in the first year following birth, is critical for the child's longer-term development, health and wellbeing. It also builds a stronger sense of shared parental responsibility in the long term.

Consensus has also been building among economists, workforce experts and education leaders in support of increased investment in early education to benefit children, women and Australia's economic recovery from COVID-19. This is evident in many of the 2021–22 Pre-Budget Submissions.

'The goal of fully realising the benefits of early learning for all children in Australia hasn't yet been reached. When children have inclusive, positive and rich early learning experiences, they are more likely to go on to become successful learners, with high levels of wellbeing,' said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

**CONTINUES OVER**

‘While the federal government’s Child Care Subsidy (CCS) has improved affordability for some families, there are still significant gaps and many vulnerable children are missing out.

‘We know that affordability is a significant barrier to children accessing early education and care, particularly for families in precarious, irregular or temporary employment. The three-tiered activity test, the compulsory co-payment and the cap on subsidy rates for some income levels make the system unnecessarily complicated.

‘One of the measures the government can take to make early education and care more accessible for all Australian children is increasing the Child Care Subsidy to 95% for low-income families,’ added Ms Page.

Thrive by Five, Chief Executive Women, ARACY and many others agree that increasing the CCS will also re-open the economy and boost women’s workforce participation.

‘When all households can access more affordable early childhood services, more parents (particularly women) will have the opportunity to work additional days and increase their household budget. By supporting more people to return to work, sooner and for more hours, businesses will benefit from a better utilised workforce and access to a broad pool of talent,’ states the [Chief Executive Women Pre-Budget Submission 2021-22](#).

ECA urges the federal government, with its new focus on women, to seriously consider ECA’s recommendations and the recommendations of other organisations, which offer evidence-based ideas to improve the lives of children and families.

### **Organisations calling for more public investment in Paid Parental Leave and/or Early Education**

- Early Childhood Australia
- Business Council of Australia (BCA)
- Chief Executive Women
- Thrive by Five
- Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS)
- Goodstart Early Learning
- Child Care Alliance
- Social Ventures Australia
- The Front Project
- Every Child
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
- Family Day Care Australia
- The Parenthood
- Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA)

### **ENDS**

ECA CEO Samantha Page is available for comment. For interviews, contact ECA Media Officer Katie Golding: 0475 554 999.

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