



**MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday 11 May, 2021

**FEDERAL BUDGET: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR EARLY EDUCATION**

Tonight's Federal Budget lays foundations for improvement in the early education and care sector but more work needs to be done urgently.

Australia has the potential to have a world-class system that delivers high-quality early education to every young child, in every community, at an affordable cost for every family.

ECA CEO Samantha Page said, 'We see the \$1.7 billion promised investment in the Child Care Subsidy over five years as a modest investment. It will benefit less than a quarter of the approximately one million Australian families using early childhood education, and doesn't start until July 2022.'

ECA welcomes the commitment of \$2 billion in ongoing funding for preschools through a four-year Strategic Reform Agreement. Longer-term funding for preschool providers ensures every child will receive at least 15 hours a week of early learning in the year before school. Ultimately we want this to be extended to younger children, in line with international best practice.

ECA supports the enhancement of data collection and improved outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. We are however concerned about measuring children's readiness for school.

ECA and many early childhood education experts have concerns about testing young children and urge the government to carefully consider their approach.

'ECA will seek to work with governments to ensure the outcome measure is holistic and appropriate to early years pedagogy.' added Ms Page.

ECA welcomes the investment of \$17.9 million to create a new National Early Childhood Program for Children with Disability or Developmental Concerns as well as \$100.8 million in mental health funding to support parents and early intervention, and establish child mental health and wellbeing hubs with the states and territories.

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We are also pleased to see the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council, but were expecting to see significant investment for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Years Strategy and hope this will be properly addressed. ECA supports the call from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations for a long-term, secure approach to funding early years education and parenting support programs.

For Australia to reach its potential in early childhood education ECA believes investment is needed to ensure:

- all three year old children to have access to a quality preschool program for two years before they transition to school, regardless of parental workforce activity;
- all families can access affordable early learning for their children; and
- sufficient numbers of qualified educators and teachers in the early childhood workforce nationwide.

'If the government truly believes that early education "is a vital time in a child's development and prepares them for the educational journey ahead" we are going to need to see more substantial investment in early education and care,' concluded Ms Page.

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

For a downloadable PDF version of the media release: [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/media](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/media)

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