



MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 3am AEST, Thursday 3 February

**GREATER SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR:
MODEST INCREASES WILL DELIVER ONLY MODEST PROGRESS**

The Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services, [released today](#), is a timely reminder that Australia needs a bigger vision that prioritises children and the early childhood education and care sector (ECEC).

The continued gains in participation of children in CCS approved services overall, high levels of enrolment in a preschool program for at least 15 hours per week for all children (96.6%) and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (96.4%) are promising, particularly when considering the challenges faced throughout the pandemic.

While government spending on ECEC is increasing, we know that more can be done to bring Australia into line with international spending on Early Childhood Education and Care (see 2021 [OECD Education at a Glance report](#)). Modest increases in funding can only deliver modest progress of children's outcomes.

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) CEO Samantha Page welcomed these gains but cautioned there are still gaps that need to be addressed.

'The data tells us that there is more work to do to ensure greater access to early childhood education and care for children from low socioeconomic areas, children from non-English speaking backgrounds and children with a disability – whose participation is lagging when compared to their representation in our communities.' It is, however, promising to see that progress can be made with targeted effort.'

'Our Child Care Subsidy system remains complicated and is largely ambivalent to delivering benefits to children, instead prioritising parent eligibility to service and provider compliance.'

'Small changes to the way in which the CCS is administered—focusing on children's eligibility to high-quality, play-based ECEC as a core deliverable rather than parent eligibility through their work-like activity—would effectively re-orient the system to be child-facing while balancing the imperative of workforce participation for families.'

'Simplifying the system would also allow for greater predictability out of pocket expenses, which currently impact households' income levels inconsistently.'

ECA also continues to be concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 on children and the ECEC workforce.

'We keenly anticipate the release of the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data and the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census, which will help to shed light on the impact of the pandemic on children's development and access to early childhood education and care along with the impacts on the workforce.'

'As always, we welcome the opportunity to work with governments, the sector and stakeholders to ensure that we seize every opportunity to improve the system that supports children in Australia,' added Ms Page.

ENDS

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