

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 2 April 2019

Federal budget positive but stops short of ongoing Universal Access commitment

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA), the peak body for early learning services, commends the government for extending the **national agreement designed to give every child access to a quality preschool education for 600 hours (15 hours a week) in the year before school.**

The existing funding, provided under the *Universal Access National Partnership*, was set to expire at the end of 2019. The latest budget announced today includes \$450 million dedicated to **an additional year** of the Universal Access program.

“We’ve been actively calling for this funding to be extended, so whilst we’re pleased that the budget includes another year of Universal Access funding, **we’d really like to see an ongoing commitment to this program.**” ACA President Paul Mondo said.

ACA has also been advocating for a better funding model that follows the child, thus allowing for an **equitable distribution** of the funding to **all children**, regardless of which early learning service type their parents choose.

“The existing funding model is seriously flawed in implementation, with each state/territory government taking a different approach to implementation since inception of the agreement.” Mr Mondo explained.

“This has lead to grossly inequitable outcomes for children, families and service providers alike. For example. in NSW, only a small percentage of this funding goes to long day care service providers, with the majority reserved for the government-run services. Meanwhile in WA none of this funding goes to the long day care sector.”

“With over 10,000 early learning services delivering kindergarten/preschool programs across Australia, and over 60% (over 6,800 services) of these programs being delivered by long day care centres, it’s **imperative** that this funding is distributed equitably to reach **all children.**”

“We’re really heartened that the government recognises the benefits of providing quality early learning programs to all Australian children, through the 12 month extension of this funding.” Mr Mondo said. “However, we’re disappointed that the opportunity for a **long term commitment** to early learning has not been taken up.”

“We welcome the opportunity to work with the government and the relevant stakeholders to ensure that an equitable distribution to all states and service types, to ensure that **every child** in Australia has the **best start in life.**” Mr Mondo concluded

ENDS

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Australian Childcare Alliance

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BACKGROUND

As the national peak body in the Australian Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) represents more than 2,500 members and approximately 360,000 families throughout Australia.

We work on behalf of long day care service owners and operators, to ensure families have the opportunity to access affordable, quality ECEC throughout Australia.

The ACA has existed in various forms for more than 30 years and has extensive experience in the fields of early childhood, education, training and management. Our experience means that we understand the critical role a quality ECEC program plays in the life of families and the importance of a viable long day care sector in preparing children for the best start in life and learning.

ACA's national and state bodies work collaboratively with all levels of government, regulatory bodies and other stakeholders to ensure that families are supported into the future with a sustainable, affordable and viable sector, with a focus on the best interests of Australia's young children.

*ACA's pre-election **Policy Paper: Let's Give Our Children The Best Start In Life** is available at www.BestStartInLife.org.au .*

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