

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 23rd March 2020

ACA commends government decision to change legislation and support families during Coronavirus crisis

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA), the peak body for early learning services, applauds today's announcement from the Federal Government on changing the legislation surrounding the Child Care Subsidy to allow a continued flow of financial support during the Coronavirus health crisis.

"Without this change, families would have not received the CCS for those days in childcare that their child may have missed as a result of the Coronavirus self-isolation rules. This update means that those families won't be financially penalised and will continue to receive the CCS." ACA President Paul Mondo said.

The revisions will also mean that early learning services that may face a temporary mandatory closure due to the Coronavirus will continue to receive Federal funding, allowing them to pay their staff, remain viable and re-open when it is safe to do so.

The changes will allow this by giving families access to additional absences beyond the currently allowable 42 days, without the need for evidence, in relation to COVID-19, and by waiving the current obligation of childcare services to require a family to pay gap fees if the service is forced to close.

These amendments will apply only to childcare services that have to close based on public health advice, not where a centre closes voluntarily.

"ACA has been actively engaging with the Australian Government on the potential impact of the Coronavirus on our sector for weeks now. Today's announcement is welcomed and a great starting point for supporting families and early learning services through these unprecedented times, while prioritising the health and safety of Australia's children and early learning workforce," Mr Mondo explained.

"We will continue to work with the government on the suitability of these and other measures, should the situation continue to escalate, to ensure that our families are protected and the sector receives the guidance, and support required to prevent the spread of the disease and ensure the ongoing viability of Australia's vital early learning sector."

Early childhood education and care services play a critical role in ensuring that Australia's essential services and the economy continue to operate. Australia's emergency, healthcare and essential services workers need to know that their children are in safe hand and are able to maintain their routines with familiar, trusted educators as much as possible.

"Our engagement with the government on these details is also vital for ensuring that Australia's essential frontline workers receive the childcare support they need so they can continue working in their important roles," Mr Mondo continued.

Australian Childcare Alliance

A Suite 6, 539 Highett Road, Highett VIC 3190 P 03 9532 2017

President Paul Mondo (VIC) 0411 587 170 President@childcarealliance.org.au

Vice President Nesha Hutchinson (WA) 0412 085 068 Nesha.Hutchinson@childcarealliance.org.au

State Presidents

QLD/ACT	Majella Fitzsimmons	0410 526 136
NSW	Lyn Connolly	0425 225 275
VIC	Paul Mondo	0411 587 170
WA	Ann Chemello	0408 935 703
SA	Kerry Mahony	0419 819 754

Meanwhile the sector is seeking certainty from 'one source of authority' around potential closures if required.

"We continue to receive numerous calls daily from concerned members seeking advice on when to ask families and staff to self-isolate, workplace relations issues and whether they can seek financial support in the event of mandatory centre closures."

ACA has provided a range of resources and materials to its members to provide the necessary tools to assist their support their decision making as the COVID-19 situation unfolds.

"With over **845,000 children** attending early learning services across the country, ACA believes the sector has done an incredible job to date in terms of preventing the spread of this disease. Australian families need to know their children remain safe in our services and in the best care possible" Mr Mondo concluded.

ENDS

Media enquiries: Paul Mondo 0411 587 170 or Nesha Hutchinson 0412 085 068

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 Policy Paper: Lets Give Our Children The Best Start In Life is available at www.BestStartInLife.org.au .

Australian Childcare Alliance

A Suite 6, 539 Highett Road, Highett VIC 3190 P 03 9532 2017

President Paul Mondo (VIC) 0411 587 170 President@childcarealliance.org.au

Vice President Nesha Hutchinson (WA) 0412 085 068 Nesha.Hutchinson@childcarealliance.org.au

State Presidents

QLD/ACT	Majella Fitzsimmons	0410 526 136
NSW	Lyn Connolly	0425 225 275
VIC	Paul Mondo	0411 587 170
WA	Ann Chemello	0408 935 703
SA	Kerry Mahony	0419 819 754