

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 2nd April 2020

ACA applauds the Australian Government for responding to early learning sector crisis

Parents have all fees waived

Canberra: Australia's peak body for early learning (childcare) services, the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA), has commended the Australian Government for its extraordinary 'rescue package' to the sector. Struggling providers will be able keep their doors open to vulnerable children and those parents who need to keep working, particularly those on the healthcare frontline.

The Prime Minister today waived the gap in fees that all parents must pay their providers (backdated to March 23), and the Government committed to fund 50% of the total fees for providers for the fortnight ending March 1 2020. Every service provider is now eligible for the groundbreaking [JobKeeper Payment package](#), announced earlier this week.

The announcement comes, as an overnight survey by ACA, showed 30% of providers faced closure this week due to a massive, shock withdrawal of families (either from fear or unemployment) and another 25% were not sure they could ever recover, even once the virus crisis has passed.

The Prime Minister today reaffirmed the importance of the early learning sector to the Australian economy.

ACA has been working closely with Education Minister, the Hon Dan Tehan, in helping to design the new early learning 'lifeline' package and to ensure the Government understood the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on the early learning sector, and the critical role it plays in supporting working families, and vulnerable children.

While the detail is still being worked through, ACA President, Mr Paul Mondo said members feel privileged to have solidified a positive, working partnership with the Minister for Education, Mr Dan Tehan and the Treasurer, Mr Josh Frydenberg and their respective teams.

"We would like to wholeheartedly thank Minister Tehan, the Treasurer and the Prime Minister for listening to our sector and recognising the importance of ensuring that we survive," Mr Mondo said. "Australian families can be comforted that when Australia's economy emerges from this terrible global crisis, our early learning sector will also emerge strong and ready to continue to nurture their children and ensure they can confidently return to the workforce.

"Whilst we are still working through the details, ACA and the early learning sector applaud the Government's commitment to providing this **immediate relief** for our service providers, and in turn, our highly valued early learning sector workforce," ACA President Paul Mondo explained.

"We believe the new financial measures, coupled with the **JobKeeper Payment**, and the other existing support mechanisms, will allow the early learning sector to continue playing its essential role in educating and caring for Australia's young children.

Australian Childcare Alliance

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“The last few weeks have been an extremely stressful, challenging time for our families, our educators and our providers,” Mr Mondo said. “This latest round of financial support, specifically for our sector, is tremendously positive news.”

“We look forward to understanding all the details around these new financial measures and working with Minister Tehan and the Australian Government on its implementation.” ACA President Paul Mondo concluded.

“On behalf of the **360,000 families and the vulnerable children** who rely on these safe and essential services to stay open, we thank the Government for their timely support.”

ENDS

More details will be issued by the Government later today but as a snap shot:

- The Government will pay 50% of all fees based on attendance at services in fortnight ending 1 March 2020.
- Services can waive gap fees from Monday 23 March.
- No income and activity tests apply during this 6 month period.
- The new system replaces the existing Child Care Subsidy system for a period of 6 months, consistent with the JobKeeper Payment package.
- It will be reviewed after one month to ensure it is working effectively.
- the key aim is to support working families and vulnerable children.
- Services will still be supported during forced closure.

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

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