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MEDIA RELEASE

ACA welcomes the Government's new measures to build universal early education and care system

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) has welcomed new measures announced by the Federal Government to begin a pathway to a universal early education and care (ECEC) system – while cautioning the need to ensure any decisions are evidence-based.

The Government has announced a suite of new measures, including a \$1 billion fund to build ECEC centres including in the outer suburbs and regional Australia; an entitlement for all children to have at least three days' subsidised ECEC each week; and a \$10.4 million project to establish a data-driven understanding of the reasonable costs for ECEC service delivery. A new \$10 million grant has also been declared, designed to maximise uptake of the worker retention payment.

ACA president Paul Mondo said he is “optimistic” about what the announcements could mean for the sector.

“In particular, ACA commends the Government's decision to guarantee all families at least 72 hours of subsidise care per fortnight, regardless of their activity levels as part of the early education guarantee.

“ACA has long advocated for the removal of the activity test, which the Productivity Commission report found to be a barrier to access for low-income families and does little to incentivise labour force participation. The 72 hours of subsidised care will be a very positive step forwards in improving outcomes for vulnerable children.”

“In places where the market isn't working, ACA has called for more government intervention to ensure adequate supply in unviable locations. ACA looks forward to receiving more detail about what these proposals entail, and to supporting the Government with design and implementation.”

“ACA has previously called for more funding which reflects the increased costs for building and operating services in remote areas. To target funding appropriately for centres in the outer suburbs and regional Australia, consultation with the sector and local communities will be critical. It is also crucial funds are allocated to truly underserved areas with legitimate needs.”

“The Government's promise reflects ACA's position that future policies must recognise the complex needs of our sector, as opposed to a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. This includes ensuring that any new funding model is designed with a strong evidence base reflecting the unique needs of each part of Australia.

“ACA will continue to work closely with the Government to make sure that any policy decisions reflect changing operating environments across the country, and targets areas in genuine need. This will be imperative to ensuring the delivery of high-quality services continues.”

ENDS

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About the Australian Childcare Alliance

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) works on behalf of early learning (long day care) service owners and operators to ensure families have an opportunity to access affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) throughout Australia. We represent over 3,000 early learning service providers across the country.

Our national and state bodies work collaboratively with all levels of government, regulatory authorities and other stakeholders with an evidence-based approach, to ensure that families are supported into the future with a sustainable, affordable and viable ECEC sector.

ACA believes that with the right policy and financial frameworks in place, we could ensure that every child in Australia has access to high quality, affordable and sustainable early learning (childcare) services, and therefore the **best start in life**.