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## MEDIA RELEASE

### ACA calls for all parties to ensure equitable, affordable access to early learning services as the 2022 federal election approaches

As the 2022 federal election draws nearer, Australia's peak body for early learning (childcare) services is urging all political candidates to recognise the need for high-quality, well-resourced, affordable early learning (childcare) services Australia-wide.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has pulled the curtain back on the essential role the early learning sector plays in supporting the recovery and growth of our economy while allowing all working parents – emergency and healthcare workers amongst them – to continue in the workforce," said ACA President Paul Mondo.

"Developmentally, the benefits to our children are also clear – children who enjoy quality early learning are likely to be well socialised, confident, inquisitive about the world, accepting of diversity, resilient to manage challenges and also to be life-long learners."

"However universal accessibility will be under threat without major national policy reform."

Sadly the early learning sector has reached a national workforce crisis, with service providers struggling to meet demand, as framed by the regulatory requirements for the child-educator ratios. This workforce shortage is impacting equitable family access to their local service. This in turn, has significant implications on the mid-long term economic recovery of the country, whilst disadvantaging our young children.

Resolving our national workforce crisis must be an economic priority - without educators, long day childcare services must reduce their places, forcing mostly mothers out of the workplace.

"We need to ensure that all families – including those with only one child in early learning and those with special needs – have ongoing, equitable and affordable access to world class early learning (childcare)," said Mr Mondo. "No child should be allowed to fall through the cracks."

"The long day care sector is **pivotal** to the recovery and growth of our economy. We enable all working parents – emergency and healthcare workers amongst them – to continue in the workforce.

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) would like to see the next Australian Government prioritise the following four recommendations:

1. Increase affordability for all families
2. End the educator shortage crisis
3. Improve support for children with disability

"Without a sustainable, affordable early learning (childcare) sector, the economy falters and women are the first to be forced out of their jobs, to stay home and care for otherwise well children," Mr Mondo concluded.

"By engaging with key political stakeholders from all political parties, we can ensure that our incoming Australian Government and Members of Parliament recognise that a strong and sustainable early learning sector is **critical** to the economic health of this nation, as well as the wellbeing of our youngest generation.

#### Australian Childcare Alliance

**A:** Suites 1&2, 10A Atherton Road, Oakleigh VIC 3166

**E:** [president@childcarealliance.org.au](mailto:president@childcarealliance.org.au)

**W:** [www.childcarealliance.org.au](http://www.childcarealliance.org.au)



With the right policy and financial frameworks in place, we can ensure that every child in Australia has access to high quality, affordable and sustainable early learning services.

We look forward to working with the incoming Australian Government to ensure that **every child in Australia** – regardless of their family background, residential location or personal learning needs - has the **best start in life**.

## ENDS

### Media enquiries:

ACA President, Paul Mondo 0411 587 170

ACA Vice President, Nesha Hutchinson 0412 085 068

### 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.

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**.

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