



# Let's make sure no child is left behind.

## #BestStartInLife

Every child in Australia should have access to high quality, affordable and sustainable early learning services, giving them the **best start in life**.

We must look after our most **vulnerable and disadvantaged** children

### NEW CHILD CARE SUBSIDY – IT MUST BE INCLUSIVE

- The new Child Care Subsidy (CCS) was designed, mainly, to increase workforce participation, rather than harnessing the benefits of early childhood education.
- Children are missing out on a **minimum level of subsidised access** because their often struggling families **do not meet the activity test**, reducing their capacity to afford early learning services.
- The **activity test**, is difficult for families to navigate.

The solution is simple:

- **Amend** the new CCS to support **all Australian children**, allowing **all families** access to high quality, affordable early learning services.



## EARLY PARTICIPATION IN KINDERGARTEN/ PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Children benefit, enormously from high quality kindergarten/preschool programs which focus on play-based, experiential learning<sup>1</sup>.
- A second year of preschool/kindergarten gives our children a stronger start in life<sup>2</sup>.
- More than 60% of children, accessing early learning programs in the two years before school, do so in a long day care centre<sup>3</sup>.
- Co-locating early childhood education programs at schools **puts the needs of the children aged 0–5 years last** in these environments.
- **All children** should have access to quality kindergarten/preschool programs, and parents must have a **choice** of early learning service type that **best suits their work/life needs**.

## WHY LONG DAY CARE GIVES OUR CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE

It is the ideal learning environment for children in their two years before school.

1. The **infrastructure already exists and can help keep costs low for taxpayers**. With 93% of long day care centres reporting vacancies<sup>4</sup>, they have the capacity to meet the needs of families with minimal further investment by Government.
2. **Long day care** offers the ideal learning environment for 0–5 year olds. It delivers age-appropriate, tailored and culturally appropriate, physical early learning environments where children can also be bathed, have nappies changed and sleep.
3. **Long day care** is highly regulated. It is delivered under the National Quality Framework and the Early Learning Years Framework.
4. **Long day care** offers trained educators, both from the nurturing and education aspect. Our staff are well trained with centres having at least one Early Childhood Teacher or more. Next year, this will increase to at least two Early Childhood Teachers<sup>5</sup>.

- The Federal Government's **Universal Access funding model is seriously flawed**, with no national uniformity, leading to grossly inequitable outcomes for children, families and service providers.
- **No federal funding currently exists specifically to support kindergarten/preschool programs for children two years before school (ie. 3 year old children)**.
- Federal Labor has committed to 15 hours per week of subsidised kindergarten/preschool to all three-year-olds in all service types if they win the next federal election. This is a significant investment that must **be equitably distributed by the state governments to all service types**, in order to support all Australian children.
- **Long day care** must be recognised, and funded properly, as the **key provider** of three-year-old preschool/kindergarten programs across Australia to help families, with children aged three and under. A lack of funding for this age group is putting families and the sector under enormous financial strain.

In the year before school, **all Australian children** must have access to **15 hours per week** of a quality kindergarten/preschool program and these must be made available to children in long day care services with access to tertiary-qualified early childhood teachers.

With over 360,000 families in our care, ACA calls on all parties to make this commitment to ensure all of Australia's children have the **best start in life** and no child is left behind.



1 Collection of academic research supporting the benefits of early learning and a play-based learning environment – [www.BestStartInLife.org.au/Resources](http://www.BestStartInLife.org.au/Resources)

2 *Preschool: Two Years Are Better Than One*, Mitchell Institute, <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/two-years-preschool/>

3 *Report on Government Services 2018*, PART B, CHAPTER 3, Early childhood education and care, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2018/child-care-education-and-training/early-childhood-education-and-care>

4 *Federal Department of Education Early Childhood and Child Care in Summary Report 2018*

5 Or 'suitably trained' staff