



Tuesday 18 August 2026

MEDIA RELEASE

New campaign shines a light on small business early learning centres

A new campaign celebrating Australia's 3,000 independently owned early learning centres is shining a spotlight on the 79% of providers that operate just a single service.

Launched today, *Proudly Independent, Proudly Local*, has been developed by the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA), the national peak body representing independent providers, to celebrate the vital role these family-owned, community-focused small businesses play in supporting children, families and local communities.

Public perception of early childhood education and care is often mixed, characterised by rising concerns over affordability and safety, contrasted with a strong, fundamental recognition of its vital role in children's early cognitive development and parental workforce participation.

Every school day in Australia, 1.3 million children attend a childcare centre, supporting more than 950,000 families. On average, a child under the age of five spends approximately three days a week in early learning.

ACA President Paul Mondo said locally owned, independent services play a vital role in Australia's early childhood education and care sector.

"These services support children and families within their local communities, employ local educators and contribute to the social and economic fabric of the communities they serve.

"Many have spent years - and in some cases generations - building trusted relationships with families, educators and local communities. They are deeply embedded in their neighbourhoods, connected with local schools and businesses, and understand the children, families and communities around them.

"Yet too often, policy and funding frameworks treat the sector as one homogenised group without recognition of the unique complexities of the various operating models, especially for those independently operated."

☎ 0411 587 170

✉ president@childcarealliance.org.au

🌐 www.childcarealliance.org.au

Level 1, 1535 Dandenong Rd
Oakleigh VIC 3166



This is not only an early learning issue; it is a small business issue. The Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA) has consistently called for governments to properly assess how new policies, regulations and funding arrangements will affect small businesses before they are introduced.

Early learning policy should be subject to the same test, recognising that an independently operated local centre does not have the same scale, resources or capacity to absorb change.

“When we fail to differentiate between the many types of providers that make up Australia’s early learning sector, we inadvertently tip the scales. If we lose the independent early learning providers, we lose the choice and diversity of the sector. All parts of the sector should be valued and understood because the sector’s diversity is its strength, giving parents the choice they need,” Mr Mondo said.

COSBOA CEO Skye Cappuccio said: “Independent early learning providers are small businesses in every sense of the word. They employ local people, invest in their communities and help families thrive, yet their role as small businesses is not always recognised. Like every Australian small business, they deserve a fair go and the opportunity to continue growing, employing local people and supporting the communities that rely on them.”

For more information, visit: www.proudlylocal.org.au

ENDS

☎ 0411 587 170

✉ president@childcarealliance.org.au

🌐 www.childcarealliance.org.au

Level 1, 1535 Dandenong Rd
Oakleigh VIC 3166