

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate Release

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### **ACA Calls For Improvements To Jobs For Families Package**

Following recent reports, the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA), the peak body for privately owned Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services in Australia, remains optimistic that the Jobs for Families (JfF) package may have successful passage through Parliament.

“With the anticipated changes to the proposed cost savings measures, we are hopeful that the Senate will proceed with the passage of the JfF package, albeit our preference would be that the bill is split from the omnibus bill.” ACA President Paul Mondo said today.

The ACA believes the JfF package stands on its own merits and will pay for itself through increased workforce participation, improved outcomes for children engaging with early childhood education and care (ECEC), and a myriad of other cuts and reduction in projected expenditure due to the government’s crackdown on roting, predominantly in family day care.

“Despite the introduction of the National Quality Framework and subsequent increase in costs to families, there has been no increase in government subsidy over the past nine years” said Mr Mondo.

“Whilst we support the positive impact on outcomes for children as a result of the increased staff qualification and ratios, parents have borne the cost so far – so we are supportive of this policy which addresses day to day costs for families. Our ongoing aim is to ensure that all young Australians have access to high quality, affordable early childhood education and care.”

“We are heartened by Minister Birmingham’s comments today, acknowledging the views of the sector that a minimum of two days of ECEC a week per child are required in order to achieve the proven benefits of ECEC. We are encouraged that he is willing to work with the ECEC sector with a view to developing a package that meets the ECEC needs of all young Australians, regardless of their life circumstances.

The ACA continues to have regular discussions with government about these proposed changes to ensure that families are not adversely impacted by the proposed changes to family support or child care subsidies.

In particular, the ACA continues to recommend the following amendments:

- Increase the minimum level of access from 12 to 15 hours per week where one parent does not meet the activity test
- Increase the income threshold from \$65,710 to \$100,000 before the activity test is applicable
- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families are provided with the access required based on the advice of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), in particular additional support for Budget Based Funded (BBF) program services
- Provide a 6 week transition period when parents circumstances change, to ensure continuity of access for children and allow parents to address the change in circumstances before having to withdraw their children from ECEC

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“The ACA’s support of the JfF in its own right remains contingent upon the incorporation of our suggested amendments.” Mr Mondo said.

Meanwhile the ACA maintains its concern for the immediate financial pressures facing families that rely on ECEC services.

“We would like to see additional support introduced as soon as possible, with the new legislation taking effect no later than the anticipated implementation date of July 2018, whilst at the same time ensuring that the new package provides more equitable access to early childhood education in the majority of circumstances.”

“Australian families need financial assistance now; they don’t need more time wasted on inquiries and discussions that delay the path to positive child care reforms.”

## **ENDS**

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