

Thursday, 23 March 2017

OPEN LETTER TO OUR SENATORS

Dear Senators,

Today provides a landmark opportunity for you to have a positive impact on the lives of children impacted by the proposed reduction in access to low income families as part of the Federal Government's Jobs for Families Package.

In its current form, the Jobs for Families child care reforms will positively impact affordability issues in households where each parent works. This has been endorsed and recognised by the sector and remains the case.

However, the package is not perfect and it is our view that it is vitally important the workforce participation objectives of the package are counter balanced by the need that children's developmental outcomes are recognised and it is our belief that this can be achieved with a few minor tweaks to the policy.

ACA calls on you to make a difference in the access and educational outcomes of children by insisting on the sectors proposed amendments being incorporated into the legislation in your negotiations with Government. The sector cannot be satisfied with the current reduction in access for low income families and the modest amendments proposed by the ACA and the sector are affordable and reasonable.

What does the package need to make in impact in children's lives?

- **Increasing the minimum level of access from 12 hours to at least 15 hours per week where one parent does not meet the activity test.**
- **Increasing the income threshold from \$65,710 to \$100,000 before the activity test is applicable**
- **Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families are provided with the access required based on the advice of the SNAICC.**

The reality is that without these changes many children who are identified as developmentally vulnerable will have significantly reduced access. In Australia 1 in 5 children will start school developmentally vulnerable, ATSI children are twice as likely to start school developmentally vulnerable.

Many of the vulnerable families in your states will be the ones to suffer at the hand of any decision not to incorporate these amendments into the legislation. These will be communities where industries are closing and regional, rural and remote communities where jobs are scarce.

The benefits for these children of engaging in ECEC are profound and significantly reduce the risk of developmental vulnerability at the commencement of school.



ACA calls on you to recognise the importance of these amendments and urge the government to ensure that these amendments are included in the final legislation.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Mondo'.

Paul Mondo
President