

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate Release

23 March 2017

### **15 hours is a must**

“Today provides a landmark opportunity for the Government and crossbench 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 Government’s Jobs for Families package.” ACA President Paul Mondo has announced today.

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 Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector and remains the case.

“However, the package is not perfect.” Mr Mondo said. “It is vitally important that the workforce participation objectives of the package are counter balanced with a focus on the outcomes for children and their development. We believe this can be achieved with a few minor tweaks to the policy.”

ACA calls on the crossbench to insist on the sectors proposed amendments being incorporated into the legislation in your negotiations with the government.

“The ECEC 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. These changes are imperative and without them up to 100,000 children will be worse off.”

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

- Increasing the minimum level of access from 12 to 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 to ECEC services. In Australia 1 in 5 children will start school developmentally vulnerable, with ATSI children twice as likely to start school developmentally vulnerable.

“I would like to remind the crossbench that many lower income families will be impacted by not legislating these changes. In states like South Australia with impending job losses due to industry closures, there will be many children from these families who will be missing out on access to ECEC.” Mr Mondo said.

In regional, rural and remote communities, where jobs are scarce, meeting the activity test becomes even more difficult. The benefits for these children of engaging in ECEC are profound and significantly reduce the risk of developmental vulnerability at the commencement of school.

#### **Australian Childcare Alliance**

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#### **State Presidents**

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| SA      | Kerry Mahony        | 0419 819 754 |

“ACA calls on the Senate to urge the government to ensure that these amendments are included in the final legislation, and make a difference in the access and educational outcomes of Australia’s young children.” Mr Mondo concluded.

**ENDS**

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## BACKGROUND

As the national peak body in the Australian Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) represents more than 2,500 members and approximately 360,000 families throughout Australia.

We work on behalf of long day care service owners and operators, predominantly private, to ensure families have an opportunity to access affordable, quality ECEC throughout Australia.

The ACA has existed in various forms for more than 30 years and has extensive experience in the fields of early childhood, education, training and management. Our experience means that we understand the critical role a quality ECEC program plays in the life of families and the importance of a viable long day care sector in preparing children for the best start in life and learning.

The ACA's national and state bodies work collaboratively with all levels of government, regulatory bodies and other stakeholders to ensure that families are supported into the future with a sustainable, affordable and viable sector, with a focus on the best interests of Australia's young children.

Over the past four years the ACA has been closely involved in the development of the JfF package, making submissions to the Productivity Commission Inquiry, supporting consultation with the sector and with families, and providing advice to the federal government on the proposed reforms via two Senate enquiries.

More recently, in September 2016 ACA provided a submission regarding this package to the Senate Employment and Education Legislation Committee, along with a joint submission developed in conjunction with Early Childhood Australia, Goodstart Early Learning and Early Learning and Care Council Australia.

Key items for review include the income threshold for the base entitlement, the activity test, and access to early learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children.

The complete list of key recommendations is set out in the *ACA Response to Senate Inquiry Into Provisions of Jobs for Families Child Care Package Bill 2016*, available from the [ACA website](#).

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