
For Immediate Release: 3 May 2021

Communities@Work welcomes Federal Government's investment in Early Education and Care

Families struggling with the widening gap between childcare costs and the government-provided childcare subsidy may find some welcome relief in the Federal Government's announcement of their investment in early education and care. This \$1.7 billion boost to funding will increase the maximum Child Care Subsidy (CCS) rate from 85% to 95% for families with more than one child in long day early education and care services, and will also remove the annual fee cap.

Communities@Work welcomes the Federal Government's announcement, but CEO Lee Maiden is hoping for more.

"Communities@Work supports all policies that help families and children access affordable, high-quality early education and care. We welcome the changes announced to the Child Care Subsidy system, which will remove some of the disincentives for participation in the workforce and provide many families – especially women – more opportunity to build their careers.

Unfortunately, many low-income families and children will miss out on the benefits of this investment.

Children experiencing disadvantage are much less likely to attend Early Education and Care due to the costs. For vulnerable children already experiencing disadvantage, the social, emotional, and economic benefits of quality early education and care are profound. Unfortunately for many vulnerable children and families, the Federal Government's changes to the Child Care Subsidy will not help."

"We would really like to see further simplification and improvement to the Child Care Subsidy system, with a special focus on reducing out of pocket expenses for low-income families with vulnerable children. Currently in the ACT, one in five children are developmentally vulnerable when entering school.

For our community, family and children, the return on investment from consistent and sustainable public investment in the early education and care sector is one of the highest returns from any form of public investment in education or social services."

Another important issue is the workforce crisis that is currently hitting the Early Education and Care sector.

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Kellie Stewart, Communities@Work's Director of Children's Services is battling with the current shortage of qualified educators, and she is not alone as this workforce crisis is impacting the early education and care sector across Australia.

"It's really unfortunate, but sometimes we simply cannot offer families a place in our service or we can't offer all of the days their children require. We are continually recruiting and training new educators, but we are simply unable to keep up with demand."

Communities@Work invests significantly in training and ongoing professional development through its Registered Training Organisation. They have also established mentoring and coaching networks for educators, and have won the Large Employer of the Year at the ACT Training Awards two years running.

"We work hard to ensure we attract, train and retain the highest quality educators, and we strive to be an employer of choice, offering values-based employment, with meaningful and appealing employee benefits", says Communities@Work CEO Lee Maiden.

"With this announcement, we anticipate more families will be wanting education and care, and to ensure we can meet this growing demand, we need further investment to support the ongoing training and professional development of educators.

"Communities@Work will continue to support families and our community in as many ways as possible. For instance, we are investing in expanding our community food pantries and other support services to meet anticipated growing demand. We have launched new outreach and connection programs to empower people to build community capacity and resilience. And we will support families and children right across our Children's Services.

We encourage the Australian Government to further simplify and support this sector, with the goal of every Australian child being able to access high-quality early education and care."

ABOUT COMMUNITIES@WORK

Communities@Work is Canberra's largest not-for-profit community organisation, and is the largest local provider of Early Education and Care and one of Canberra's largest employers, employing over 600 staff locally. Communities@Work works with the community to support positive educational outcomes, and build resilient, sustainable, and socially inclusive communities in the ACT and capital region. To find out more please visit www.commsatwork.org

For more information about Communities@Work social impact, please see their [2019-20 Annual Report](#).

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