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Communities@Work Extends Childcare Fee Freeze to Help Canberra Families

Families struggling with the economic fallout of COVID-19 and the widening gap between childcare costs and the government-provided childcare subsidy, may find some welcome relief as Canberra's largest provider of children's services, Communities@Work, announces it will extend its freeze of childcare fees into 2021.

In 2020, Communities@Work kept its children's services open throughout 2020 and provided essential supervision and support at the Safe and Supervised School sites during Term 2 of remote learning.

And importantly for many families, the organisation made the decision to freeze fees across all its children's services, which helped families access crucial early childhood education and care services. This included its 12 Early Education and Care Centres and 17 Out of School Hours Care services. Additionally, Communities@Work supported (and will continue to support) its 85 self-employed Family Day Care and 5 In-Home Care educators, with no fee increases to the service levy these educators pay to Communities@Work.

Yet many families are still anxious about their financial futures, and reports of the Education Department predicting childcare fees to rise 4.1 per cent a year for the next four years - far outstripping inflation - has compounded this anxiety.*

In response, Communities@Work has decided to extend its freeze on childcare fees into 2021. "2020 was a tough year," says Communities@Work CEO, Lee Maiden. "We know that rising unemployment and a slowing economy has hit many people hard. Many are experiencing hardship for the first time through job losses or reduced incomes. Rising out-of-pocket childcare costs is also increasingly reducing the benefits of the government childcare subsidy that was introduced in 2018.

"When we first let families know that we were freezing fees, they said it was such a relief not to have another thing to worry about on top of everything else that was happening last year. They appreciated having additional money in their pockets to pay bills. By continuing to freeze our childcare fees we can continue giving families that relief."

Rene Garland, a parent at the Communities@Work Out of School Hours Care in Fadden, has certainly appreciated the support the organisation has provided to both her family and others. "We have always felt that Communities@Work have been in touch with the families they work with in the local community. They strive to meet the needs of the children in their care and education services and also work to ensure they provide support to families in a number of different ways. They have their 'ear to the ground' and respond to the changing needs of the community and the challenges faced by everyday families.

Communities@Work

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“By freezing fee increases, Communities@Work are helping families balance the range of financial commitments that come along with having young children”, Rene said. “They provide the reassurance that despite the ups and downs the last few years have brought with them, families are still able to access high quality early childhood education services to support their children’s emotional and physical development without worrying about finding additional money in family budgets.

“We would like to thank Communities@Work for being an organisation that commits to family well-being and for holding that true old fashioned value of standing together in times of challenges. It really does take a village to raise a child and we are glad to have Communities@Work as part of our family’s village.”

Reflecting on the past 12 months, Communities@Work CEO Lee Maiden says that the organisation is proud to have stepped up to play a leading role in supporting the Canberra community through the fire and smoke emergency and COVID-19 health crisis.

“This past year was full of ups and downs, but ultimately, it showed us what we’re capable of when we pull together as a community and put people and their needs at the heart of everything we do.”

“The future is still uncertain,” says Ms Maiden.

“That’s why Communities@Work will continue to support families and those in need in as many ways as possible. For instance, we are investing in expanding our community food pantries and other support services to meet anticipated demand in 2021. We are launching new outreach and connection programs to empower people to build community capacity and resilience. And we are committed to continuing to ensure we deliver the greatest outcomes for our community.”

ABOUT COMMUNITIES@WORK

Communities@Work is Canberra’s largest not-for-profit community organisation, working 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 the impact Communities@Work had had in the community please see their [2019-20 Annual Report](#).

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*[*Childcare savings eaten up as fees rise faster than subsidies \(smh.com.au\)](http://smh.com.au)*