



MEDIA RELEASE

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NOT-FOR-PROFIT EARLY EDUCATION PROVIDERS CALL FOR EQUITY SCHOLARSHIPS AND INNOVATION FUND FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

DATE: Thursday 18 January 2018

A network of not-for-profit Early Childhood Education and Care providers has called on the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government to establish equity scholarships and an innovation fund for children experiencing disadvantage.

One in five children in the ACT are developmentally vulnerable on at least one measure when starting school. While the rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is double this, with two in five children being developmentally vulnerable on at least one measure when starting school.

Amanda Tobler, CEO Community Services #1, and Co-Chair of the Children First Alliance said, "Children who start school at a disadvantage are more likely to fall further behind throughout their schooling."

"Children who have access to Early Childhood Education and Care are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable when starting school."

In their Pre-Budget Submission to the ACT Government, the Children First Alliance (the Alliance), is calling for matched funding for equity scholarships for children falling through the gaps, and for an innovation fund to implement evidence-based programs that improve access for children experiencing disadvantage.

Darren Black, CEO of YMCA Canberra and Alliance Co-Chair said, "The reasons that children and families don't access Early Childhood Education and Care are complex and varied."

"For these families, additional support is required and this support has to take into consideration the local and specific needs of different communities."

The Alliance has also called for funding for professional development support for early childhood educators, and modelling to examine the costs of possible models for extending free access to preschool education to three year olds.

Ms Tobler added, “As part of the ACT Government’s Future of Education review process, the focus should be on big picture thinking and reaching children in the community who are experiencing the most disadvantage.”

“If the ACT Government makes these small investments in Early Childhood Education and Care in the next Budget, we can ensure that all children in the ACT have access to early childhood education and care now and into the future.”

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Co-Chairs Darren Black, CEO YMCA Canberra and Amanda Tobler, CEO Community Services #1 are available for interview.

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About the Children First Alliance: The ACT Children First Alliance (the Alliance) is a network of longstanding not-for-profit providers of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the ACT. The Alliance was established to develop and communicate a shared vision for ECEC in the ACT and to ensure that all children have access to ECEC. The Alliance has ten members: Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT, Belconnen Community Services, Communities@Work, Community Services #1, Goodstart Early Learning ACT, MOCCA, Northside Community Service, Woden Community Service, YMCA Canberra, and YWCA Canberra. The ten members have 46 early learning centres with 3,543 places for children.

For more information about the Alliance visit: www.childrenfirstalliance.org