



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED 12:01AM WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2019

NEW SURVEY SHARES PARENTS PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY LEARNING CENTRES IN THE ACT

DATE: WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2019

A survey of 786 parents of children attending Early Learning Centres (ELCs) in Canberra has explored the perceptions and experiences of families who attend Early Childhood Education and Care (Early Childhood Education and Care).

The survey was carried out by the Children First Alliance; a network of ACT not-for-profit ECEC and is being released to coincide with Universal Children's Day and the release of the Children First Alliance's new Policy Statement.

The majority of parents surveyed reported a number of positive outcomes for their children as a result of attending an ELC, including positive social skills (83%), greater independence (68%), improved communication skills (64%) and greater confidence (58%).

Co-Chair of the Alliance and CEO of Community Services #1 Ms Amanda Tobler said "Social connection, independence, communication and improved confidence are skills that are vital to children. The survey has reaffirmed that quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) contributes to the development of these lifelong skills that give children the best start in life."

The survey also supported evidence from the ACT Government's own reviews and reports from providers of ECEC, by demonstrating that there may be an oversupply of ELCs in the ACT, with almost three-quarters (74%) of parents surveyed indicating that they didn't find it difficult to find a place in an ELC in the ACT for their child or children. Of these parents, more than one third (35%) of parents found it easy to find a place for their child or children in an ELC, 10% found it very easy and 29% were neutral.

Co-Chair of the Alliance and CEO of Communities@Work Ms Lee Maiden said "We're hearing from parents that they are no longer finding it difficult to find places in Early Learning Centres across Canberra, demonstrating that there is no longer a shortage of places for children and suggesting that there may be an oversupply, which is something that we have been seeing for several years. Planning needs to reflect community need for Early Learning Centres in the same way that planning for schools considers community need. This will ensure that children get the best possible education and care and that our hard working workforce and resources will be used in the most effective way."

The majority of parents (80%) also support the extension of free Government preschool to three-year-old children in the ACT.

The Children First Alliance Policy Statement has four priority areas: supporting children and families experiencing disadvantage to access and engage in ECEC, providing ongoing universal access to ECEC for four-year-old children and continuing work to extend access to three-year-old children, valuing and investing in the ECEC workforce and ensuring that planning processes support the development of a strong ECEC sector.

Alliance Co-Chair Amanda Tobler said “Canberra parents are very supportive of the ACT Government’s move to introduce universal early childhood education to three-year-old children. This is a measure that will ensure that no child misses out on important education and care that can result in life-long impacts. The ACT Government should be commended for working towards the implementation of this important measure.”

The survey and the Children’s First Alliance’s new Policy Priorities will be released at an event to be held at Southern Cross Early Childhood School, 33 Wirraway Cres, Scullin at 10am on 20 November.

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Summary of Survey Key Findings

- 786 parents of children in an Early Learning Centre (ELCs) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) were surveyed about their experience and perceptions of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).
- The majority of parents surveyed (83%) indicated that they have seen positive outcomes in the social skills of their children, as a result of them attending an ELC.
- A majority of parents also identified greater independence (68%), communication skills (64%) and greater confidence (58%) as positive outcomes of attendance at an ELC.
- More than two thirds (69%) of parents surveyed considered being close to home as a factor in choosing their child or children’s ELC, with more than half of all parents surveyed (56%) considering staff in their decision about an ELC.
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of parents surveyed indicating that they didn’t find it difficult to find a place in an ELC in the ACT for their child or children.
- The majority of parents (80%) support the extension of free Government preschool to three-year-old children in the ACT.

Co-Chairs Amanda Tobler, CEO Community Services #1 and Lee Maiden, CEO of Communities@Work are available for interview.

Media contact: Amy Ferguson, 0405 330 357, amy@forpurpose.com.au

About the Children First Alliance: The ACT Children First Alliance (the Alliance) is a network of longstanding for purpose providers of children’s service in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), including early learning centres (ELCs), family day care, preschool and outside school hours care. 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 nine members: Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT, Belconnen Community Service, Communities@Work, Community Services #1, Goodstart Early Learning ACT, MOCCA, Woden Community Service, YMCA Canberra and YWCA Canberra. The nine members operate 43 ELCs with 3,491 places to children.

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