



MEDIA RELEASE

CHILDREN FIRST ALLIANCE LAUNCHES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

DATE: Friday 22 September, 2017

Today the ACT Government Deputy Chief Minister, Yvette Berry, will officially launch the ACT Children First Alliance (the Alliance), a network of not-for-profit children's services providers in the ACT, at Treehouse in the Park in Turner.

The Alliance comprises 10 member organisations that have come together to develop a shared vision for early childhood education in the ACT and to ensure that all children have access.

Amanda Tobler, CEO Community Services #1, and Alliance Co-Chair said, "Quality early childhood education makes a significant and lasting impact on children throughout their lives, resulting in them being more likely to succeed in education, economically and socially".

"Despite this, Australia lags well behind the rest of the world in investment in early childhood education, and sadly, this shows in the early educational outcomes of our children".

"One in five children in the ACT start school developmentally vulnerable, and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, two in five children enter school developmentally vulnerable," she said.

Today's event will feature the release of the Alliance's policy paper, which provides a plan for action and a suite of evidence-based policy measures to improve the accessibility, quality, and equity of early childhood education in the ACT.

Darren Black, CEO of YMCA Canberra and Alliance Co-Chair said, "The Children First Alliance has outlined a five point plan to improve access to early childhood education, including developing an ACT Early Years Strategy, providing ongoing funding for preschool for four year olds and extending access to three year olds, and providing equity scholarships for disadvantaged children".

"The launch of the Alliance coincides with the ACT Government's Future of Education reform process, and the development of an ACT Early Childhood Strategy, which provides an opportunity for us to establish a plan for early childhood education and ensure that no child is left behind," he said.

The Alliance members operate 46 early learning centres across the ACT, offering 3,543 places for children. They also support children in Canberra who are experiencing disadvantage.

Amanda Tobler, CEO Community Services #1, and Alliance Co-Chair said, “Not-for-profit early childhood education providers are embedded in their communities and many provide wrap around support for children experiencing disadvantage and their families. Providing quality early childhood education that is affordable and accessible is one way that we can immunise against future disadvantage and harm.”

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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