



MEDIA RELEASE

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NOT-FOR-PROFIT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PROVIDERS CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS BY REINSTATING JOBKEEPER

DATE: THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2020

An Alliance of ACT not-for-profit early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers have urged the Government to ensure all children can access the benefits of early learning and reverse its decision to remove JobKeeper from the ECEC workforce.

The ECEC sector in the ACT has been at crisis point during the COVID-19 pandemic. As local providers of ECEC services members have seen firsthand the economic and social consequences of COVID-19. ECEC staff have seen the immediate stress and devastation that COVID-19 has had on families across the Canberra region. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recent Labor Force seasonally adjusted figures show a decrease in the number of employed persons in the ACT. The number of employed persons in the ACT dropped by 3,600 people between April and May 2020 and women accounted for 2,300 of those.¹

The free-fee period for ECEC is due to end of 12 July, which will create another period of uncertainty for families and services across Canberra. The assumption that families will be in a position to pay, while the nation enters a recession will result in some children and families missing out on the benefits of ECEC.

Co-Chair of the Alliance and CEO of Communities Services #1 Amanda Tobler said "All children deserve the best start in life. We need to be doing all we can ensure that all children are able to access quality education and care, particularly at a time when families are experiencing financial and employment stresses."

The vital role early education and care and its workforce plays in children lives has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the COVID-19 pandemic Alliance members have seen early childhood educators come to work every day and continue to provide quality education and care for children.

The removal of JobKeeper from the ECEC workforce has provided another significant challenge for the sector. Removing JobKeeper from the ECEC workforce will result in hundreds of employees across Alliance member organisations not being eligible. These employees will be majority women, many work part time and JobKeeper has been a boost for them and their families.

Co-Chair of the Alliance and CEO of Communities@Work Lee Maiden said “It is disappointing that the Government has removed the JobKeeper payment from the ECEC workforce at a time where they are more critical than ever. We need to ensure we are supporting our ECEC workforce and showing them that the work they are doing is some of the most important in our community, caring and educating for our future generations.”

The Alliance has also written to the ACT Government calling on them to support the call for JobKeeper to be reinstated for the ECEC workforce at National Cabinet. Early childhood educators are some of the most vital workers in the country, and this decision has created significant confusion and uncertainty. Their valuable contribution to our children lives and our communities needs to be recognised.

Alliance Co-Chair Amanda Tobler said “We need to be working together with all levels Government to ensure that all children have access to quality ECEC and that we are supporting our workforce to make this a reality. Early childhood educators have continued to carry out one of the most important jobs in our community during these challenges times - caring for and educating young children.”

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Co-Chairs Amanda Tobler, CEO Community Services #1 and Lee Maiden, CEO of Communities@Work 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 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, Capital Region Community Services (CRCS), 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

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, May 2020. Table 11a. Retrieved from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0May%202020?OpenDocument>