



29 November 2016

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I write to introduce the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) CEOs Group and to seek a meeting regarding the future of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (NPA-UA).

ELAA established the CEOs Group in November 2015 as a quarterly forum through which senior executives and thought leaders across our membership meet regularly to discuss strategic issues of State and National importance to the early learning sector.

At its most recent meeting on 17 November 2016, the group expressed concerns about the uncertainty of the Australian Government's commitment to the NPA-UA and its critical funding contribution to the provision of 15 hours of preschool (for 40 weeks in the year before school) for every Australian child.

As you know, in 2016 the early learning sector has successfully implemented new educator-to-child ratios as part of the National Quality Framework. These ratios are improving educational outcomes for children – particularly vulnerable children – assisting them to acquire the skills, talents and strengths they need to be both ready for school, and in the longer term to contribute to our future social and economic prosperity. Access to preschool develops the foundational cognitive and social-emotional skills which will bring about advancements in Australia's educational performance.

As we head into 2017, the uncertainty about ongoing Commonwealth funding under the NPA-UA impacts the ability of services to attract and retain quality staff and maintain quality services – the vital components of a quality early learning system overall – and generates significant anxiety for parents and families looking to give their child the very best educational start in life.

I understand that decisions about the NPA-UA and related funding arrangements will be made early in the New Year and we would like to meet with you at the earliest practicable time to discuss these important issues.

Yours sincerely

Shane Lucas
Chief Executive Officer