



Early Learning **EVERYONE BENEFITS**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Labor's childcare policy is a good start: but more work still to do

The Australian Labor Party's election announcement today supports early childhood educators and would make childcare more affordable for parents, but more is needed to secure investment in early learning for our future, says Shane Lucas, Campaign spokesperson for Early Learning Everyone Benefits.

Early Learning Everyone Benefits is a campaign by early childhood peak bodies, service providers, researchers and parents in support of quality early childhood education and care and was launched in May by former Governor-General, the Hon Dame Quentin Bryce.

"We welcome Labor's commitments to provide immediate support to make child care more affordable – by increasing the Childcare Rebate cap to \$10,000 a year and increasing the Child Care Benefit by 15 per cent," Mr Lucas said.

"Affordability is a major barrier to the participation of children in childcare and this commitment would help in the short term to ensure more children have access to quality early learning and care that boosts their development.

"But while this fee relief from 1 January next year would be welcome, long term reforms are still required to provide children with access to the early learning that makes a difference to their long term outcomes, and to Australia's future prosperity," said Mr Lucas.

The Coalition has committed to invest \$3 billion in a reformed child care subsidy system to support families to access child care, but has delayed implementation until July 2018. This means under the current Coalition policy, parents will have to wait for another two years to see affordability of care improved," Mr Lucas said.

"We also welcome Labor's commitment to increase support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Budget Base Funded Services by 15 per cent, in line with the increase to the Child Care Benefit.

"Two in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are vulnerable in key areas of child development, and to turn this around we need to provide children with better access to high quality early learning."

Labor's commitment of \$150 million investment to develop the early education workforce is also welcome.

"Quality early learning for our children builds a quality future for Australia and early childhood professionals are the most important factor in creating high-quality early learning environments," Mr Lucas said.

Mr Lucas noted that neither major party has yet committed to the future of the National Partnership on Universal Access, the agreement that provides the mix of Commonwealth and State funding that ensures all Australian children are able to access 15 hours of preschool (for forty weeks) in the year before school.

"The Universal Access agreement is not guaranteed beyond 2017 and we want all political parties to commit to the future of this critical funding that sets children up for a lifetime of educational achievement."

To boost Australia's educational performance, the major parties also need to outline how they will increase the participation rate of three year olds in quality early learning.

Australia currently sits in the bottom third of countries ranked by the OECD in the participation of three year olds with only 62% participation. Research links participation at this age to improved educational outcomes.

Everyone Benefits Campaign 2016 election platform: http://bit.ly/ELEB_ElectionPlatform

For more information visit www.everyonebenefits.org.au

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The logo features a stylized graphic of three overlapping triangles in yellow, green, and blue, positioned to the right of the text.

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Early Learning: Everyone Benefits is a campaign leading Australians to value the benefits of quality early learning for all children under 5, and for Australia's future prosperity. The campaign seeks political commitment to increase access to quality programs that amplify children's development and is supported by:

Early Childhood Australia; Early Learning Association Australia; Family Day Care Australia; Goodstart Early Learning; Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange (REAIE); UnitingCare Australia; Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS); Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People (ARACY); The Benevolent Society; The Centre for Community Child Health at Murdoch Children's Research Institute; C&K; KU Children's Services and The Parenthood.