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14 May 2014

Commonwealth Budget silent on the fate of preschool funding beyond 2015

The 2014-15 Federal Budget gave little comfort to children in the early years of their education.

“Tony Abbott’s first budget is silent on the future of 15 hours of early learning for children in the year before school,” Shane Lucas, CEO of Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) said today.

The Commonwealth is reviewing its commitment to the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* that provides the mix of Federal and State funding to deliver 15 hours of preschool / kindergarten for four year olds.

“Last night’s budget contained a contingency to extend the funding under the national partnership until the end of 2015 – effectively rolling the funding over for 12 months – but this funding is not certain and remains subject to negotiations with the States and Territories,” Mr Lucas said.

“Beyond 2015, the budget simply restates what Commonwealth Assistant Education Minister, Sussan Ley, has said many times – that the partnership is under review.

“Given that Minister Ley has also said that preschool is not a Commonwealth responsibility, we remain extremely concerned that the review is just political code for cutting this critical funding to support early childhood education.”

In a recent survey of ELAA members and stakeholders, over 85 per cent of respondents stated that 15 hours of preschool / kindergarten should be maintained.

“Our members and stakeholders have seen the benefits of providing 15 hours early learning for children, especially children from disadvantaged backgrounds,” Mr Lucas said.

“If the Abbott Government cuts the funding – now or next year - preschool hours will drop to as low as 10 per week.

“Parents, early childhood educators, and service providers are acutely aware of the potential impact of a Commonwealth funding cut on children - on parent fees - and on jobs.”

ELAA will continue to advocate to governments at all levels that 15 hours of preschool / kindergarten must be maintained into the future.

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