



16 February 2015

Maintaining kindergarten funding in the Commonwealth 'families package' is a no-brainer

Early Learning Association Australia today released its 2015-16 Budget submission to the Australian Government.

"ELAA welcomes the Prime Minister's announcement that a 'families package' will be a big part of the next budget", said Mr Shane Lucas, CEO of ELAA.

"Our principal recommendation for the budget and the package is very clear: keep funding 15 hours of preschool beyond 2015."

The PM has said that the government is prioritising a 'families package' aimed at reducing the cost of childcare for families and increasing the participation of women in the workforce.

Since 2013, Commonwealth funding has enabled the delivery of 15 hours of quality early learning to children in the year before school. This supports the improved educational, economic and social outcomes achieved by those children, as demonstrated by research.

"Commonwealth funding provides one-third of the money for 15 hours preschool – and so provides families with a subsidised, affordable, quality early education *and* care option for their children," said Mr Lucas.

"The availability of 15 hours of preschool also helps parents participate more actively in the workforce prior to children commencing compulsory education.

"So the Commonwealth funding contribution to 15 hours of preschool supports children and families *and* enables greater workforce participation by women: maintaining that funding in the 'families package' is clearly a no-brainer."

ELAA's detailed recommendations for the 2015-2016 Commonwealth Budget are outlined in the submission, including ongoing support of the National Quality Framework and a determination that no policy or funding initiative should leave disadvantaged or vulnerable children worse off.

The Government has also said it will consider the recommendations of a number of recent reviews into the early childhood education and care system - including an extensive study undertaken by the Productivity Commission – in developing the package.

"ELAA members put a lot of work into submissions to the Productivity Commission and these other reviews," Mr Lucas said.

"The Government has had the Commission's report since October, and we believe it is high time the report was publicly released – before the 'families package' is announced – so the community can adequately consider the Commission's recommendations."

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