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ALP early years funding announcements are a big win for service providers and families

Early Learning Association Australia welcomes today's policy announcement from Federal ALP leader, Bill Shorten, on extending access to 15 hours of subsidised early learning to three-year-old preschool children and ensuring that the Commonwealth portion of the funding will be ongoing – for children in both four and three-year-old funded kindergarten programs.

We also welcome the announcement by Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, that a re-elected Victorian Labor Government will commit almost \$5 billion over the next decade to ensure all three-year-old children in Victoria can attend up to 15 hours a week of 3-year-old kindergarten either at no cost (depending family income) or at a significantly subsidised rate (up to 65 percent).

"These policy announcements are good news for early learning providers, parents, our children, early childhood workers, and the nation's prosperity," said ELAA CEO, David Worland.

"We are thrilled that Mr Shorten has signalled his party's intent to honour the true intent of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education by indicating that two years of early childhood education will be 'permanently embedded' into our education system.

"These policy announcements will mean that, after more than eight years of research and debate, early learning service providers and families will finally have some certainty on 15 hours – families will be able to confidently plan for things like both parents returning to work and providers will be able to accurately budget and recruit more than 12 months ahead.

"However, preschool funding relies on a combination of State and Federal funding, so we are looking forward to bi-partisan collaboration between the States and Commonwealth to ensure this policy is successfully implemented."

ELAA is also heartened to see that ALP policy on early childhood education and care now seems to be heeding contemporary expert opinion. In their December 2017 Report - *Lifting Our Game: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools Through Early Childhood Interventions* - Susan Pascoe and Prof Deborah Brennan noted that all children's school results improve with two years of preschool and Australia's declining performance in international benchmark testing would be turned around. They also noted that attending preschool is equivalent to an additional 10 to 20 NAPLAN points or an additional 15-20 weeks of schooling at Year 3 of Primary School.

"This will help ALL Australian children to realise their academic potential and lead fulfilling lives," said Mr Worland. "And for children who are challenged in their learning, starting preschool at aged

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three is the one time in life when they have a real chance of catching up to their peers. One in five children are developmentally vulnerable when starting school in Australia.

“We welcome today’s announcements from Federal and Victorian Labor and look forward to receiving more detail on just how these policies will be rolled out, especially with regard to supporting workforce development, infrastructure capacity, and quality regulation.”

ENDS

Media contact: David Worland, CEO, ELAA 0499 411 299 or 03 9489 3500