



3 April, 2019

Another Federal Budget 'Groundhog Day' for Early Childhood Education and Care

Early Childhood Education and Care service providers, teachers, and parents could be forgiven for thinking they are stuck in the same revolving alternate reality occupied by the Bill Murray character 'Phil Connors' in the 1993 film *Groundhog Day*.

"With the Federal Government confirming in yesterday's Budget that funding for its portion of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education will only be extended to the end of 2020, it seems that we have been hearing the same thing over and over since 2014," said Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) Acting CEO, Tina Martin.

Every year, ELAA and other early childhood sector peak bodies cite expert opinion that demonstrates the educational, social and economic value of investing in early childhood education and care. And every year, the Federal Government responds with a stop gap funding solution that does not provide any certainty for service providers, parents, and most importantly – our children.

"You wouldn't tell a primary school child in Year 4 that she may not be able to complete Year 6 because funding was in doubt," added Ms Martin. "An ongoing funding commitment to preschool is long overdue."

ELAA is also disappointed that the Government does not appear to have heeded expert advice, most notably the *Lifting Our Game Report* published in 2018, that funding for universal access should be extended to children in three-year-old kindergarten programs.

The lack of action on three-year-old funding is particularly worrying for children with learning challenges and from disadvantaged backgrounds. 2018 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data estimates one in five Australian Children are starting school developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain(s) and this number jumps to two in five or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

"The data presented in the AEDC report is a national challenge and what's needed is all the states and territories to work with a Federal Government that is prepared to tackle the problem through coordinated policy and realistic funding," said Ms Martin.

"We are also concerned that the Federal Budget does not address issues with the Child Care Subsidy such as a quarter of families being worse off, mostly due to issues with the activity test, and does not include any extra help for families from disadvantaged backgrounds who stand to benefit the most from early learning programs.

"We were also hoping this year's budget would include improved support for regulation and quality in early years services plus funds to develop a new national strategy for attracting, developing and

Media Release



EARLY
LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA – THE VOICE FOR PARENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

retaining the early learning workforce of the future. However, it seems another year has passed and the early years sector's repeated calls for such support have, again, gone unanswered."

For more information or to arrange an interview with ELAA Acting CEO, Tina Martin, contact James Gardener 0413 483 182.

ENDS