



Productivity Commission Report recommendation could put an end to ‘child care deserts’

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‘Child care Deserts’ could be a thing of the past if one of the key recommendations from the Australian Government’s Productivity Commission Report into *A path to universal early childhood education and care* is implemented.

In May of this year Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) made its Submission to the Productivity Commission.

“One of our key recommendations was that dedicated preschools be given access to Child Care Subsidy (CCS) which would free them up to offer extended hours of care outside their formally funded kindergarten sessions,” said ELAA CEO, Andrew Cameron.

“We think yesterday’s draft Productivity Commission report into child care gets it right with its recommendation that Australia’s Family Assistance Law be amended to allow dedicated preschools to claim the CCS for additional non-preschool hours.”

Despite significant funding reforms to kindergarten and child care by the state and federal governments over the past three years, Australia is still not optimising the potential benefits of quality universal child care. One of the key reasons for this is the lack of available infrastructure in rural and regional areas. By adjusting the Child Care Subsidy to fund extended hours of education and care outside of kindergarten or preschool programs, we could see over 3000 existing services across Australia have the potential to make additional hours of care available to families within a relatively short space of time.

Regional and rural parents have told ELAA about the significant benefits an extension of CCS to non-funded kindergarten hours would make to their lives.

“If CCS covered hours outside of funded kindergarten this would mean an added \$900 added back into our annual household budget. It would mean that it would increase our food budget or perhaps go towards our kinder child accessing an extracurricular activity like swimming lessons,” said Amelia, a parent with a child in a rural kindergarten.

“ELAA has spoken to farmers who travel an hour and a half each way to drop a child at kinder but for many rural and regional families this is just not feasible if their child can’t spend a full day at the early learning service,” said Andrew Cameron.

“This simple change to the Family Assistance Law could be key to unlocking access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) across Australia. This would create far more options for regional and rural families. Suddenly, attending kindergarten combined with child care would

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become logistically and financially viable, meaning more regional and rural children could benefit from ECEC and, where appropriate, enable parents to devote additional full days to employment.”

To arrange an interview with ELAA CEO, Andrew Cameron, please contact ELAA’s Communications and Marketing Specialist, James Gardener, at jgardener@ela.org.au or 0413483182.

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ELAA is the national peak body for not-for-profit providers of early childhood education and care. Our vision is Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care. www.ela.org.au