

**MEDIA RELEASE 05/02/15 Prediction of child care fee rises over inflated**

In 2016 the National Education and Care Services Law will require all services to operate with a minimum of 1:5 educators for children 2 – 3 years and 1:11 for children 3 – 5 years. In some States and Territories mandatory higher ratios for some age groups are already in place. In Victoria for example there is already a minimum ratio 1:4 for all children under 3 and NSW and Western Australia are already operating at 1:10 for children in the 3 – 5 age group. The 2016 requirements have been touted by the media and some commercial providers as likely to lead to huge increases in childcare fees. This is untrue. What will the real impact of the 2016 changes on fees be? For many families the answer is zero.

Dr Anne Kennedy National Secretary of Australian Community Childrens' Services (ACCS) said the vast majority of community based education and care centres were already operating at these ratios or better. Many families will experience no fee rise as a result of the 2016 changes.

Results from a national survey of over 450 child care centres across Australia, conducted by ACCS in June 2014 show that over 80% of these centres were already operating at 1:11 for children over 3 years – in fact 71% were operating at 1:10 or better.

Dr Kennedy thinks there are 3 simple reasons why the 2016 changes will not result in fee increases for thousands of families

- Many community owned education and care services have operated at better ratios for years. They understand the huge difference that increased educator: child ratios make for children and families and they have not been factoring in a profit margin.
- Introduction of the 2016 ratio changes have been part of the National Law since 2012. Services have had years to plan for increased staffing, with many of them doing so well ahead of schedule. Any fee rises associated with this have already happened.
- Variations between States and Territories have meant that in some jurisdictions the “new” ratios have been mandatory for years.

*“Improved staff: child ratios have long been understood by the community sector to result in better outcomes for young children. The community sector has a history of employing more staff and better qualified staff than required. That is what happens when the bottom line is controlled by what is best for children and families and not by profit. How much are our nations’ children worth?”*

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