

ACCS ELECTION DEMANDS 2013

As a national advocate for the right of Australia's children to access quality not for profit community children's services, Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS) asks the next Australian Government to commit to the following:

CONTINUED FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

Roll out of the next wave of reforms as scheduled and follow through with schedule of the planned review process to 2020

IMPROVED ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

A streamlined model of funding that supports participation of vulnerable families and children.

Innovative place based projects that increase the capacity of education and care services and family support agencies to work collaboratively

GREATER INVESTMENT IN FUNDING FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SERVICES

A 10 year commitment to increased flexible funding for Children and Family Centres and Budget Based Funding services

INCREASED AFFORDABILITY MEASURES

Overhaul of existing funding system that established a nationally consistent funding across service types and consolidates CCB and CCR into one payment

FURTHER INVESTMENT IN THE EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE

Ongoing direct investment in wages. Increased delivery of workforce initiatives including scholarships, employment incentives and HECS exemption for early childhood teachers

INVESTMENT IN AVAILABILITY

Capital grants and no or low interest loans for not for profit children's services to build, extend or remodel services to meet local needs

Increased funding to services that currently provide flexibility including mobile services and occasional care

Further investment in early and middle years service delivery planning

CONTINUED FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The commencement of the National Quality Framework (NQF) on 1 January 2012 has produced ground breaking changes for early and middle childhood education and care services. ACCS believes the implementation of National Quality Standards and the implementation of improved staff: child ratios for children are already providing better quality outcomes for children and families.

ACCS calls for a commitment to the next wave of reforms that will further improve staff: child ratios and increase qualifications of staff in education and care services

2014	All long day care and preschool services to employ a degree qualified early childhood teacher Fifty per cent of educators to have, or to be working towards, a Diploma level or higher qualification All remaining educators to have, or to be working towards, a Certificate III qualification (or equivalent)
2016	1:11 staff to child ratios for children aged 3-5 years
2020	All long day care and preschool services with 60 children or more to employ a second degree qualified early childhood teacher, or another suitably qualified leader

ACCS calls for a commitment to maintain the schedule of these reforms and a commitment to the review process that is already established.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

ACCS believes it is vital that access to quality early and middle childhood education and care services for vulnerable and at risk families is improved. The current processes in place to access Special Child Care Benefit and Inclusion Support Subsidy are onerous, piecemeal, complex and create additional barriers to participation.

ACCS calls for a the development of one streamlined model of funding that will support the participation of at risk or vulnerable families that includes

- Increasing the CCB payment to 90 per cent of the full costs of child care for low income families and 100 per cent of the full costs of child care for at risk or vulnerable children

- Differential CCB for children's services located in areas of vulnerability as defined by SEIFA
- Differential CCB for rural and remote communities.

ACCS calls for the funding of innovative place based projects that

- Take a holistic approach to improving access for vulnerable and at risk families and
- Increase the capacity of early and middle childhood education and care services and local community and family support agencies to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and families.

GREATER INVESTMENT IN FUNDING FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SERVICES

ACCS recognises that the existing 38 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres and 270 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Budget Based Funding services provide critical supports to empower and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

ACCS calls for integrated, holistic sustainable and long term funding for Aboriginal and Torres's Strait Islander early years and family services.

ACCS supports SNAICC's call for a culturally strong, sustainable and effective funding model and calls on the next federal Government to provide a 10-year commitment for an increased, flexible and supported funding model, putting up \$150 million in the first year.

INCREASED AFFORDABILITY MEASURES

All families, regardless of circumstance, need to be able to afford the cost of attending quality children's education and care services. The current system of CCR, CCB and Special Child Care Benefit is complex and burdensome for families and services. ACCS calls for a thorough review and overhaul of the funding system and recommends

- Establishing a nationally consistent system for state and federal investment in all early and middle childhood education and care services including child care, outside school hours care, occasional care, limited hours care, preschools and kindergartens to ensure affordability of children's services
- Rolling the investment of the CCR into the current CCB, consolidating government support to one payment, as recommended by the Henry Tax Review
- Developing the new combined payment to be delivered by one agency and to be accessible and transparent for families and services.

FURTHER INVESTMENT IN THE EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE

The successful implementation of the National Quality Framework depends on having a skilled and qualified workforce.

Urgent action needs to be taken to address the pay and conditions of staff in early and middle childhood education and care services – a sector that has been underpaid and undervalued for decades. ACCS calls for a commitment to

- Funding any pay increases that flow from the United Voice Application to the Fair Work Commission for an Equal Remuneration Order if this is successful.
- Ongoing direct investment in funding wages in early and middle childhood education and care services – investment that unlike the Early Years Quality Fund is universal and does not involve onerous and inequitable application processes
- Increased delivery of workforce initiatives designed to attract new educators and teachers to the sector and to support educators working in education and care services to upgrade their qualifications, including a HECS exemption for early childhood teachers.

INVESTMENT IN AVAILABILITY

Families, regardless of location, should have access to high quality not for profit children's services that meet the community's local needs. ACCS calls for government investment in establishing or extending not for profit education and care services to ensure every community has at least one viable not for profit community children's service available to families.

ACCS calls for investment in children's education and care services through

- Capital grants and no or low interest loans for not for profit services to build, extend or remodel children's services to meet local needs
- Increased equitable funding to services that currently provide flexibility in service delivery including mobile services, occasional care services and limited hours care
- Further investment in early and middle years planning to support local communities undertake needs analysis and develop and implement models of service delivery that meets community needs.