

## **MEDIA ALERT**

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020

### **Western Australian Early Learning Centres (Childcare) on the brink of collapse**

#### **Government called on to provide an urgent lifeline to children, parents and educators and the Early Learning Sector (Childcare).**

Over 70,830 Western Australian families are facing the immediate (and potentially permanent) collapse of early learning (Childcare) services, as providers fight to keep their doors open for the sake of the 99,180 Western Australian children and the thousands of educators who care for them.

Early learning services are deemed safe places (by the Chief Medical Officer) for young children and educators, with exceptionally high levels of personal hygiene practices, that were in place already. Yet families are being told to keep their children at home if they can.

In the past weeks alone, we have attendances drop on average 30-50% with some over 90% and this week has seen the biggest drop of attendances the sector has seen, with the average for this week well over 70%.

Services are unable to waive Gap Fee payments (co-contribution for families) unless they are directed to close. We need Government to scrap the co-contribution (Gap Fee) for families immediately and to pay the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for **all** of the children who were attending our centres from March 01. This simple first step comes at no additional cost to the Government.

Services and families being hurt by non-attendance on last day of care. We need Government to waive this condition NOW to help families that have removed their child/ren as per Ministers instructions.

Services are being told to stay open, yet Ministers are telling parents to keep children home.

With mass exodus of families from Early Learning Services this week alone services will close, and job losses will be in the thousands unless funding is made available now. We need Government to assist services NOW to stay open as we have been asked to do.

The economic impact for the State to recover will be even harder without these essential services.

The Early Learning Sector although an 'essential' service is being left with no choice, if we close our doors there is no funding, if we continue to operate in this climate with limited families accessing our services we also cannot survive.

The lack of understanding and support for our sector during this time from Government is extremely disappointing.

We as a country will get through this, but if you do not support your essential services to build our economy it will take much longer.

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#### **BACKGROUND**

*As the Western Australian peak body. The Australian Childcare Alliance WA represents approximately 70% of the Early Learning (Childcare) sector in WA, we represent Long Day Care, Outside School Hours Care/Vacation Care, & 3-year-old Kindergartens, Private, NFP, & Local Government services our members services are all over Western Australia from Metropolitan to Remote.*