

MEDIA ALERT

Sunday 29th March 2020

Western Australian Early Learning Centres (Childcare) need assistance NOW

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 to support 99,180 Western Australian children and the thousands of educators who care for them.

We appreciate the Prime Minister's acknowledgment of the essential service childcare plays "**as a very high-to the top of priority**" consideration and that we are an "**integral part of our economy**". **What we need is support packages put in place immediately to keep centres viable.**

This week alone, we have attendances drop to the point of no return. Childcare centres have hit a financial wall and bankruptcy looms.

Services are unable to waive Gap Fee payments (co-contribution for families) unless they are directed to close. We need the 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 – and must be enacted NOW

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

With mass exodus of families from Early Learning Services this week alone, services are closing, and job losses will top 200,000 across the country unless funding is made available **NOW**.

Whilst the Government has offered a range of financial support packages – the administration of the application process means that the funds are being delayed by weeks. The Government needs to assist services to not only assist in paying staff but to operate day to day. The CCS alone without the Gap Fee is not enough to continue to pay staff and operating costs.

Families need to know in this time that when they return to work, that their children will come back to the same service, staff and high-quality care that they have relied upon. The mental wellbeing of our children during and after this time is of the highest priority, for this to happen Government needs to step in **NOW**. Early Learning (childcare) is one of the linchpins of our economy – enabling parents to work and contribute to our society and economy. If significant support is not offered immediately, these essential support services will be forced to close, with a mass lay off of educators, and many are unlikely to ever re-open. The economic impact for the State to recover will be even harder without these essential services.

ACAWA calls upon both the Federal Government as well as the State Government to step in immediately to support the sector.

Media enquiries: Rachele Tucker 0433 498 147/ Neshia Hutchinson 0412 085 068

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.