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What WA Parents Want. What our Children need

ACA WA calls on all parties to commit to its election policy manifesto

Perth: As Western Australia emerges from under the crippling COVID-19 pandemic; the peak body for the state's early learning (childcare) services, has called on both parties to commit to election policies that prioritise the needs of over 71,000 WA children and the educators who nurture them.

The Australian Childcare Alliance Western Australia (ACA WA) has presented all parties with its non-partisan election policy manifesto "**What WA parents want. What our children need**". If adopted, these cost effective policies will:

- deliver affordable access to high quality and flexible early learning services for ALL working parents;
- stem the critical workforce shortage of more than 1000 educators, in particular those needed in regional and rural Australia;
- offer certainty of employment for early childhood educators/teachers;
- create more financial headroom for early learning (childcare) services to employ more educators and keep downward pressure on costs for families;
- empower families to choose which quality early learning (childcare) service they want their child to attend kindergarten in and end the discrimination against working parents;
- place the needs of parents ahead of the profits of property developers; and
- empower parents to decide when their child is ready for school and mitigate the long term damage of childhood anxiety and developmental delays.

The President of ACA WA, Ms Ann Marie Chemello, said early learning services has proved the bedrock of the Western Australian economy, particularly during the height of this shocking pandemic.

"Our member services have successfully kept children in their education and care, safe and calm, whilst they continued to learn and develop," Ms Chemello said. "But the pandemic has exacerbated a workforce shortage that now needs to be urgently addressed."

If not resolved, WA children may miss out on places as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services are forced to meet strict educator-child ratios. Further, WA educators, wanting to undertake a traineeship to upskill to become Diploma qualified, face exorbitant costs and significantly more than their counterparts in other states, this is up to \$10,000.

80% of respondents of WA services surveyed say they cannot fill educator roles, despite offering significant financial and professional development incentives.

"Working WA parents need the next State Government to commit to policies that help attract, train and retain good educators for their young children," Ms Chemello said.

As well as a suite of training-employment subsidy policies, ACA WA is calling on all parties to commit to other initiatives that are needed to keep downward pressure on costs for WA families and ensure the long term sustainability of the ECEC sector.

This includes directing Commonwealth Universal Access funding to follow the child, attending kindergarten (the year before school), and ending the discrimination against those working parents who need more flexible options, beyond the state school system. If all WA ECEC services can access this funding, as is the practice in other states; more educators could be employed.

Affordable access for WA families and the engagement of more educators can also be delivered by the next state government if it permanently waives payroll tax for all educational services and introduces proper planning oversight to ensure ECEC services are opened in areas of need.

“Our parents want to be reassured that their children will be nurtured by the best educators possible, in a high quality, flexible and affordable early learning service, that allows them to stay in the workforce and to have a voice over when their child is ready for school,” Ms Chemello said.

“On behalf of all of WA families, we are committing these cost effective policies for the next government to adopt and to build a stronger future for our families, the communities in which they live and the economy of the state.” ENDS

‘What WA parents want. What our children need’ election policy manifesto can be found at [here](#)

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