

Thursday February 25, 2021

Peak WA early learning body calls on all parties to commit to policies that empowers educators and solves a critical workforce shortage

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Perth: Right now, across WA, 1000 early learning (childcare) educators are urgently required. Without them, some WA families may be forced out of early learning (childcare) services as they reduce places to adhere to strict child-educator ratios.

As Western Australia emerges out 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 WA children and the educators who nurture them.

Central to this, is the urgent need to attract, train and retain highly qualified educators.

The Australian Childcare Alliance WA (ACA WA) has presented all parties with its non-partisan election policy manifesto "**What WA parents want. What our children need**". Addressing urgent workforce shortages is a priority.

To offset the difficulty in finding qualified teachers; ACA WA says there is a great opportunity to upskill existing educators, under a traineeship, but the costs are too crippling.

A WA educator, with a Certificate III, must pay between \$7,800-\$10,000 if they want to upskill to a Diploma, under a traineeship. Their counterpart in Victoria, for example, pays around \$200.00.

ACA WA President, Ms Ann Marie Chemello, says the WA Government is to be congratulated for its initiative, Lower Fees, Local Skills (LFLS), but, according to the Government, these subsidies are not available to existing worker trainees.

The National Party has pledged support for these trainees in regional and rural WA.

"We urgently need these subsidies to be extended to include our existing educators, under traineeships, who need to be paid whilst they study and upskill," Ms Chemello said. "It's also important for our children to feel confident that their beloved educator will remain in the same service, after they graduate."

Ms Chemello said the early learning (childcare) sector has proven to be the lynch pin of WA's economy, as it nurtures the students of tomorrow. No more has this been evident as it has through this crippling pandemic.

"With further support to ensure we can attract, train, and retain the best of educators; we can remain the backbone of the WA economy, care and educate the next generation of young West Australians and keep working parents, mothers in particular, in the workforce.

We look forward to working closely with the next WA Government to adopt and implement these cost effective and sensible policy solutions," Ms Chemello said. ENDS

What WA Parents Want; What Our Children Need election manifesto can be [found here](#)

Below is a snapshot of the policies aimed at resolving WA's early learning (childcare) critical workforce shortages:

Commitment needed:

1. WA Government fund traineeships for all existing workers to upskill from Cert III to diploma and degree qualified ECT.
2. Allow more time to find and train candidates (from current mandated three months to six months)
3. Support roster flexibility to allow services to better manage educator-child ratio restrictions over the quiet lunchtime period.
4. Tie training and upskilling to suitable candidates on JobSeeker and JobKeeper.
5. WA Government to subsidise trainee wages and incentives for employers and course costs for candidates.
6. WA Government create or silo 1,000 funded trainee wage subsidy places for the program.
7. Government-funded advertising recruitment and awareness campaign for ECEC sector.

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