

Families package great for working families, needs to work for all children

Australia's largest provider of childcare and early learning has welcomed the Families Package released today as great news for working families.

Goodstart Early Learning CEO Julia Davison said the reforms will improve childcare affordability for most low and middle income working families and get more mothers into work.

"The Families Package needs to deliver for both parents and children," Ms Davison said.

"For most working parents this package will deliver more affordable childcare. For children the reforms are a mixed bag.

"Goodstart supports the move to a simpler single Childcare Subsidy replacing the current benefit and rebate, and targeting additional assistance to lower income families who need it most.

"We also support the Government's move to provide the subsidy based on the fees families actually pay, up to a reasonable market-based benchmark fee.

"We welcome the increased funding for children with identified additional needs. Families of children with special needs look to be big winners from the Families Package.

"All children should have access to a safety net of two days access to early learning, and we are concerned that some children will see their access reduced or cut completely. They could include:

- Children from single income and non-working families,
- Children from families with one parent who can only get casual or seasonal work.

"If children start school behind, they tend to stay behind and finish school not ready for the workforce. Access to early learning improves school readiness and later life outcomes.

"We will work with the Government and the Parliament to ensure children and working families don't fall through the cracks.

"The rest of the world is looking to expand access to early learning, because it works. The new British Government has committed to increasing access to free early learning for children from age two upwards," she said.

Ms Davison said families would be disappointed to hear that they will have to wait until after the next election before the new subsidy comes into effect.

"Despite this strong package, childcare affordability will actually decline over the next two years with the Childcare Rebate cap and the income thresholds for Childcare Benefit both frozen.

"Families need the Government to improve childcare affordability now, not in two years' time," she said.

Notes for editors : *Goodstart Early Learning is a not for profit social enterprise that is the largest provider of early learning and care services in Australia with over 644 centres. The Goodstart syndicate comprises Mission Australia, Social Ventures Australia, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, and the Benevolent Society.*

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