

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
14 May 2025

Delivering universal high quality early childhood education & care in the 48th Australian Parliament

Dear Prime Minister,

Congratulations on being re-elected at the 2025 Federal Election. We welcome your appointment of ministers who are personally committed to delivering universal high quality early childhood education and care.

In the last term of Parliament, you listened to families, educators and services, and established the foundations for a universal system. This was the most comprehensive reform achieved in a single term of Parliament, with landmark reforms that are already delivering tangible benefits for children, families and our sector.

The Community Child Care Association and Community Early Learning Australia have outlined our actionable plan to deliver your commitment to universal high quality early education and care in the 48th Australian Parliament ([Attachment A](#)) based on the following priority reforms:

1. Embedding quality and safety in all education and care services
 - Establish a Reform Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care to drive an urgent uplift in quality and safety across the sector.
 - Establish an independent ECEC Commission to support and monitor the ongoing delivery of the national vision for the early education and care sector.
2. A qualified valued workforce
 - Commit to extending the ECEC Worker Retention Payment for two years.
 - Commit to funding the Fair Work Commission's decision on gender undervaluation in priority awards.
3. Inclusive education and care for all children
 - Implement interim inclusion reforms including funding unmet demand for additional educators, the Inclusion Support Program and Inclusion Agencies.

4. Growing community and small services to meet the needs of all children and families

- Expand communities' access to the types of early education and care services that local families need via the Building Early Education Fund.

5. Affordable education and care for all families, regardless of where they live

- Consult with the education and care sector on a new supply side funding model.

Community and small services will be the foundation for delivering universal high quality early education and care in a meaningful timeframe. They provide the greatest return on government investment by consistently delivering the highest quality ratings and most efficient service delivery. These services use 100% of parent and government funding for direct service provision to children, unlike other service types including large not-for-profit and for-profit providers.

CCC and CELA are proven partners with a track record of supporting the delivery of complex reform in the early education and care sector. We have demonstrated our steadfast commitment to supporting major changes in partnership with government including:

- spearheading unprecedented cross sector collaboration between unions, providers and government in the first national multi-employer bargaining process, on behalf of community and small providers
- assisting community and small providers to access the ECEC Worker Retention Payment quickly and efficiently
- boosting children's access to education and care through the Victorian Inclusion Agency, in partnership with KU Children's Services and Yooralla
- supporting local councils and major employers to establish new community services using our proven Local Champion model.

We are ready to partner with your government to create the education and care system that children and families need.

Regards,



Julie Price
Executive Director

Community Child Care Association



Michele Carnegie
CEO

Community Early Learning Australia

Attachment A: Priority ECEC Reforms for the 48th Australian Parliament

cc: Minister for Education; Minister for Early Childhood Education

Priority early childhood education & care reforms for the 48th Australian Parliament

The Australian Government can create a world class education and care system that is affordable, high quality and accessible by prioritising the following reforms in five pillars:

1. Embedding quality and safety in all education and care services

- Establish a Reform Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care to drive an urgent uplift in quality and safety across the sector.
- Establish an independent ECEC Commission to support and monitor the ongoing delivery of the national vision for the early education and care sector.

2. A qualified valued workforce

- Commit to extending the ECEC Worker Retention Payment for two years.
- Commit to funding the Fair Work Commission's decision on gender undervaluation in priority awards.

3. Inclusive education and care for all children

- Implement interim inclusion reforms including increasing funding for additional educators, the Inclusion Support Program and Inclusion Agencies.

4. Growing community and small services to meet the needs of all children and families

- Expand communities' access to the types of early education and care services that local families need via the Building Early Education Fund including pilots to test the Local Champion mode and ECEC Service Hub.

5. Affordable education and care for all families, regardless of where they live

- Consult and collaborate with the early education and care sector on the proposed supply side funding model.

Enabling Factors

The achievement of these pillars will require:

- effective National Cabinet collaboration
- dedicated sector capacity to support major reform
- establishment of an independent ECEC Commission
- a balanced sector to support quality, access and choice.

Effective National Cabinet collaboration

First ministers must prioritise collaboration to deliver intergovernmental reforms over the next three years including:

- a Reform Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care to drive an urgent uplift in quality and safety across the sector
- a commitment to a national vision for early education and care reform
- agreement to fund professional wages across the jointly funded ECEC sector
- a new intergovernmental ECEC Partnership Agreement and renewed National Preschool Reform Agreement.

Sector capacity to support major reform

To successfully deliver major education and care reforms, the Australian Government will need assistance to design, validate and implement key measures while minimising implementation risks. Engagement with community and small providers will be crucial to support sustainable growth in high quality services, which will be the foundation for a universal education and care system.

To support this foundational work, we recommend the Australian Government provides support to national peak bodies of small and community providers.

Establishment of an independent ECEC Commission

The Productivity Commission recommended establishing an independent ECEC Commission to solve current systemic barriers that prevent governments from maximising outcomes from their investment in early education and care.

National Cabinet should establish an ECEC Commission to support and monitor the ongoing delivery of the national vision for the early education and care sector. The Commission should not replicate or replace the functions of ACECQA.

A balanced sector to support quality, access and choice

A diverse early education and care market is necessary to ensure choice, improved quality and return on government investment.

The introduction of government child care subsidies has skewed the rapid expansion of services towards private for-profit services. Governments receive less return on investment in large for-profit services because these services prioritise owner profits, higher executive compensation and corporate functions over quality service provision and professional wages for early educators.

Community and small services provide the greatest return on investment by consistently delivering the highest quality ratings and most efficient service delivery. These services use 100% of funding for direct service provision to children, unlike other service types including large not-for-profit and for-profit providers.

Timeline – ECEC Priority Reforms

Our proposed timeline is phased to build sector capacity to deliver universal high quality education and care in a meaningful timeframe.

2025

Australian Government

- Work with the sector to introduce the Three Day Guarantee from January 2026.
- Implement interim inclusion reforms.
- Commit to extending the ECEC Worker Retention Payment for two years.
- Commit to funding the Fair Work Commission's decision on gender undervaluation in priority awards.
- Commence designing a new supply side funding model.
- Expand communities' access to the types of early education and care services that local families need via the Building Early Education Fund including pilots to test the Local Champion mode and ECEC Service Hub.

National Cabinet

- Finalise the national vision for early education and care.
- Establish a Reform Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care to drive an urgent uplift in quality and safety across the sector and stand up the independent ECEC Commission.
- Agree to fund professional wages across the jointly funded ECEC sector.

2026

Australian Government

- Implement the Three Day Guarantee.
- Complete the Early Education Service Delivery Price.
- Consult and collaborate with the early education and care sector on the proposed supply side funding model.
- Commission research on the consistent indicators of high quality care and efficient service provision.
- Extend the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) to the ECEC sector.
- Establish support for national peak bodies of small and community providers to support major education and care reform.

National Cabinet

- Commence negotiating a new intergovernmental ECEC Partnership Agreement.
- Confirm the scope and responsibilities for the ECEC Commission.

- Establish new mechanisms for early education and care regulators to remove consistently underperforming service providers for implementation from 2027.
- Examine funding required for state governments to deliver compliance, assessment and rating programs that meet the objectives of the National Quality Standard.
- Agree to a new robust nationally consistent child protection system.

2027

Australian Government

- Establish the new supply side funding model including legislative changes required to support implementation from 2028.
- Fund ongoing professional wages for the education and care workforce via a legislated Essential Services Fund.
- Establish ongoing funding for:
 - the development of new and expanded community and small services using the Local Champion model
 - professional and governance support to community and small services through an ECEC Service Hub.
- Establish the ECEC Inclusion Fund.

National Cabinet

- Stand up the ECEC Commission to support and monitor the ongoing delivery of the national vision for the early education and care sector.
- Implement the new nationally consistent child protection system.
- Implement new mechanisms for early education and care regulators to remove consistently underperforming service providers.
- Implement new funding required for state governments to deliver compliance, assessment and rating programs that meet the objectives of the National Quality Standard.

2028

Australian Government

- Commence supply side funding and a flat fee for families.
 - All families can access any service type that meets their needs.
 - There are no cost or accessibility differences between long day care and sessional kinder/preschool.

National Cabinet

- The ECEC Commission supports and monitors the implementation of universal high quality early education and care.

Outcomes – ECEC Reform Pillars

Our plan will help the Australian Government deliver the full range of education and care benefits by creating a system that:

- prioritises high quality and safety for all children
- is simple for families to access
- values the work of educators and teachers
- is viable for providers.

1. Embedding quality and safety in all education and care services

State and federal governments will administer a safe high quality education and care system that:

- prioritises quality over profit
- embeds a child-safe culture across all service types
- ensures staff are trained and supported to deliver a safe nurturing and educational environment for all children including those with additional needs
- ensures children can have consistent attachments with educators and teachers
- is delivered by a qualified and experienced workforce
- has effective compliance, assessment and rating levers to manage consistently underperforming services.

2. A qualified valued workforce

- All children will have consistent access to highly qualified educators and teachers at all stages of their development.
- Families will enjoy the full benefits of the Australian Government's early education and care reforms because the sector is operating at its full potential.
- Services will grow to meet the needs of their communities because they can attract and retain quality staff.

3. Inclusive education and care for all children

- The Australian Government will unlock the full benefits of education and care for families, workforce participation, social equity and our broader economy by creating an education and care system that is genuinely inclusive for all children and families.
- Every child will feel a sense of belonging and have the opportunity to maximise their potential.

4. Growing community and small services to meet the needs of all children and families

- Parents and carers will have access to affordable education and care so they can make choices about returning to work or working more hours.
- The Australian Government will be able to solve market failures and maximise the value of early education and care by:
 - targeting the goals, priorities and workforce needs of regional and rural communities
 - growing sustainable services that reflect the values, cultural identity and needs of local children and families
 - supporting thousands of parents to return to work or increase their working hours
 - promoting economic growth in regional and rural communities from increased workforce participation and new early education and care jobs.

5. Affordable education and care for all families, regardless of where they live

- A supply side funding model will provide effective levers for governments to:
 - create a simple affordable system that provides certainty about the cost of education and care services to families
 - achieve intended policy outcomes for children, families and communities
 - slow the growth of cost increases by significantly limiting current drivers, and direct targeting of funding to deliver policy objectives.