

26 March 2020

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC  
NSW Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sarah,

With all due respect. I don't know how you can say:

*"I want you to know that I am committed to working with you to maintain a strong education and care sector and to support you all in this difficult time".*

When you, together with the Premier Berejiklian went on television on Monday (23 March 2020) and told all parents whose children attend our services to keep their children at home via your instructions to the parents of school aged children to keep them at home wherever possible. The next 48 hours saw an immediate attendance decline of up to 90% of children across NSW!

One of your unintended consequences is that this now directly puts at risk frontline personnel's children who would normally be cared for by willing and able educators who are trained and qualified to address and prevent infectious diseases. Instead, either these frontline personnel's children will be kept at home by grandparents (who are more at risk) or by the frontline personnel themselves. Was this what you wanted?

With the overwhelming NSW-based services now facing collapse and are now laying off 50% of staff just to try to survive, I now ask you and Premier Berejiklian what your government is going to do in the way of immediately issuing large grants to services to enable them to continue to stay viable in order to maintain an essential social infrastructure?

What you and the Premier did on Monday did not earn either of you any bouquets from this sector – the sector that you say you are committed to working with to maintain a strong education and care sector. But I do know that you both have earned thousands upon thousands of brickbats from all of the enormously stressed providers and their staff (and I know of their stress as I am the one they are calling when they are in tears not knowing how they are going to pay their educators and their rent and how they are not going to maintain their mental health as the children have left in droves since your joint announcement on Monday).

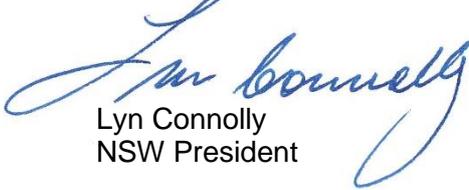
Sarah, I am sorry but unless you and the Premier can undo your actions, you, the Premier and the NSW Treasurer MUST immediately make grants to the services out of the NSW Government coffers in such large amounts that will allow the services to remain operational.

I am sorry to have had to be sooooo blunt in this email to you but providers and their employees are at their wits' end and I am concerned for the livelihoods and wellbeing of all of them.

Sarah, I implore you to **publicly demonstrate your words with action** and help our sector stay afloat and not only talk about committing to work with us to keep the sector strong – please I implore you on behalf of all of the providers, the educators, the children and families of our services who are in dire straits, to help us and to help us now

Kindest Regards to you at this ever so stressful time Sarah.

Yours sincerely,



Lyn Connolly  
NSW President

encl Copy of communique from NSW Minister for Education (24 March 2020)

**From:** ECEDupdate <[ECEDupdate@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ECEDupdate@det.nsw.edu.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 24 March 2020 6:57 PM

**To:** Undisclosed recipients:

**Subject:** Update from the Minister for Early Childhood Education

---

## **Update from the Minister for Early Childhood Education**

Dear Services and Providers,

I know these are very uncertain times and the early childhood education and care sector is facing many challenges. As we face a social and economic upheaval of unprecedented magnitude we are again seeing how well the sector comes together and responds in such difficult times.

I want to thank you for the critical service you provide to the community, particularly in ensuring that parents and carers have access to quality education and care for their children. You also provide much needed certainty and stability to children and their families and I value the deep professionalism that you bring to your work.

In the current environment I also understand that business as usual for our regulatory operations will not support the sector in the way that you need at this time. This is why our Authorised Officers will refocus their attention from standard Assessment and Rating to critical regulatory functions and supporting the sector. This will allow us to keep children safe but also reduces the burden on your services at this difficult time.

While it is important that we maintain efforts to continue to progress important reforms, I have also asked the Department to consider how we best implement major initiatives such as the Quality Ratings Guide in the current environment.

---

---

I understand that there are many challenges that remain to be solved. I want you to know that I am committed to working with you to maintain a strong education and care sector and to support you all in this difficult time.

Sarah Mitchell  
Minister for Early Childhood Education

---

**Our mailing address is:**

Early Childhood Education Directorate, NSW Department of Education · Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 1300· Australia

---