

11 April 2020

The Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP  
NSW Premier  
Parliament of New South Wales  
52 Martin Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Premier Berejiklian,

**Re: NSW Government's free preschools for 6 months decision exposes own massive and unfair treatment and inconsistencies**

Although the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) NSW does not represent community preschools, we congratulate you for your government's decision of "[free preschool in NSW for up to six months](#)" during this Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

That said, we ask you again to fix the massive and unfair inconsistency that your government has perpetuated for now 8 years.

Your government's new temporary funding is restricted to 700 state-funded community preschools and 38 mobile services that provide care to 45,000 three to five-year-olds. However, up to 3,202 other NSW-based preschools in the form of long daycare services and about 150,000 similarly aged children will not receive the NSW Government's new funding.

Across New South Wales, preschool children who are enrolled for 600 hours per year in not-for-profit and privately-owned long daycare services receive only \$459 per child per year. This is in stark difference to those same cohort in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria operating under similar funding models receiving between \$2,011 to over \$3,600 per child per year. **Why are NSW-children being discriminated against by the NSW Government?**

The NSW Government's bias against children enrolled in long daycare services appears to have persisted since April 2012 despite a [NSW Government commissioned report \(see page 26\) by Professor Deborah Brennan](#) recommending that the NSW Government's contribution should be about a third of that received by community preschools, which is approximately \$1,729 in today's terms rather than \$459 per child per year.

And especially in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, it appears ludicrous that the NSW Government would continue to insist that its government subsidy via the Start Strong funding cannot be used to contribute towards labour costs by long daycare services, unlike its permissibility for community preschools' employees.

Your government has to date consistently responded by saying that funding for long daycare services is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. However, this answer is inadequate and is in stark contrast to the funding arrangements of other Australian states' and territories' governments for their long daycare services for their children in the year-before-school.

Moreover, your government's decision of 9 April 2020 appears odd when considering NSW Treasurer Perrottet's announcement on [19 June 2018](#) that :

*"from 2019, in an Australian first, every three-year-old in New South Wales will now have access to subsidised early learning.  
That's part of an almost \$200 million investment in our children, saving families on average \$825 per year."*

This NSW Government position was further reinforced after the NSW state election by the then outgoing Executive Director (Tracey Mackey) of the NSW Department of Education's Early Childhood Education Directorate in her final e-mail newsletter broadcast in [September 2019](#) when she claimed:

*"Start Strong has been the department's signature policy change during this period and I am extremely proud to have led our teams in delivering increased access to 600 hours of preschool education for children in the year before school, and to have been the first state to introduce funding support for **all** three year olds from 2019."*

Through a Government Information Public Access application, it would appear this funding support did not occur for every nor all 3-year-olds in NSW from 2019. In fact, a very small number were with funding restricted to community preschools. The percentage of these 3-year-old children who were funded is 4.6% in the context of all 3-year-olds across NSW as originally promised.

As such, for the overwhelming majority of 3- and 4-year-old children enrolled across up to 3,202 long daycare services, as compared to the 700 state-funded community preschools your government is supporting, these long daycare services will have to continue to absorb those cost themselves. **And given the current pandemic period, this reality is intrinsically unfair.**

It is also important to note that notwithstanding the Commonwealth Government's announcement of "free childcare" on 2 April 2020, long daycare early childhood education and care services will not have their entire fees subsidised and will be prohibited from charging any gap fees. This is despite the Commonwealth's new Government Subsidy, JobKeeper Payments and cash grants via the PAYG system.

On behalf of over 1,600 early childhood education and care services that we represent and advocate for, we would very much appreciate your response as to how those in long daycare services can be equitably treated by the NSW Government, emulating that of South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, and the recommendation provided by Professor Brennan, particularly during these next 6 months of the pandemic period.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,



Chiang Lim  
CEO

cc The Hon Dominic Perrottet MP, NSW Treasurer  
The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC, NSW Minister for Education & Early Childhood Learning  
The Hon Kevin Conolly MP, NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Education  
Ms Jodi Mackay MP, NSW Opposition Leader  
The Hon Walt Secord MLC, NSW Shadow Treasurer  
Ms Jodie Harrison MP, NSW Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education  
Mr Martin Graham, A/Executive Director, NSW Department of Education