

MEDIA RELEASE – 13 APRIL 2020

NSW GOVERNMENT'S FREE PRESCHOOLS DECISION EXPOSES OWN MASSIVE AND UNFAIR TREATMENT AND INCONSISTENCIES

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) NSW has congratulated NSW Premier Berejiklian for her government's decision of "[free preschool in NSW for up to six months](#)" during this Novel Coronavirus pandemic. But ACA NSW has also asked the Berejiklian Government to fix the massive and unfair inconsistency that her government has perpetuated for now 8 years.

"It is good that community preschools and long daycare services operated by local councils are supported by the NSW Government's COVID-19 funding round. But compared to the actions of other state governments, 3,202 NSW-based preschools that happen to be long daycare services are not equitably supported by the NSW Government," said Mrs Lyn Connolly, President of ACA NSW.

The NSW Government's new funding for the next 6 months is restricted to 700 state-funded community preschools and 38 mobile services that provide care to 45,000 three to five-year-olds. But there are up to 3,202 other NSW-based preschools and up to 150,000 similarly aged children who will not receive the NSW Government's new funding.

Across New South Wales, children enrolled for 600 hours per year in not-for-profit as well as privately-owned long daycare services in their year-before-school 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 state government funding models where they receive between \$2,011 to over \$3,600 per child per year.

"Why is the majority of NSW-children in their preschool year discriminated against by their own state government, especially compared to other states?" asked Mrs Connolly.

The NSW Government bias against long daycare services appears to have persisted since April 2012 when a [NSW Government commissioned report \(page 26\) by Professor Deborah Brennan](#) recommended that the NSW Government's contribution ought to be about a third of that received by community preschools, which calculates at 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 cannot be used to offset labour costs, unlike its permissibility for community preschools' employees.

It also appears odd that the NSW Treasurer Perrottet announced 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."

The NSW Treasurer's position was further reinforced by the then outgoing Executive Director (Tracey Mackey) of the NSW Department of Education's Early Childhood Education Directorate in her final e-mail broadcast newsletter in [September 2019](#) where 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."*

"The NSW Government appears to have ignored the fact that the majority of all 3- and 4-year-olds are not equitably supported by the NSW Coalition Government. Consequently, up to 3,202 long daycare services have had to and will continue to absorb the associated cost themselves. This reality is intrinsically unfair on these service providers especially given the current pandemic period," said Mrs Connolly.

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Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) NSW (www.nsw.childcarealliance.org.au) is the peak body for privately owned early childhood education and care services in NSW, numbering approximately 1,600 childcare services. ACA NSW provides advocacy, policy and regulatory and business support and advice, member services and professional development for members and their staff across the state.

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