

Budget measures to upskill early childhood workers welcome – ACU

Australian Catholic University’s Executive Dean of Education and Arts Professor Mary Ryan has welcomed the Federal Budget’s measures to boost the qualifications and experiences of early childhood workers.

Professor Ryan said funding including \$33.1 million to support up to 6000 early childhood educators to complete paid practicums in initial teacher education courses at a Bachelor or postgraduate level would help the vital workforce to upskill.

“We know setting the foundations for learning at the preschool age is so important for a child’s educational future and their life opportunities,” Professor Ryan said.

“This measure will help to ensure our youngest students are taught by educators who themselves are able to pursue opportunities for advancement and lifelong learning.”

Professor Ryan said the announcement reinforced the importance of ACU’s popular Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (Birth to Five Years) (Accelerated) course offered in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training, which allowed early childhood educators to upskill while working in the sector.

“This course provides diploma-qualified early childhood educators with full funding so they can continue to earn and learn while completing their early childhood teaching degree in a record time – without any sacrifice to quality,” she said.

Budget provision to implement aspects of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan was also welcomed by Professor Ryan.

“We know we need to do more to support our teachers to remain in the profession by reducing workloads and improving conditions, so to see some funding allocated to the plan is a good start,” she said.

Professor Ryan said she was pleased to see that cost-of-living support was a key feature of the budget including increases to Austudy payments.

“There’s no doubt university students need more financial support while they learn. As such, in addition to more opportunities for paid internships in schools, we also need to support preservice teachers with financial support when they complete their practicums as this is a huge impost and barrier to students completing teaching degrees,” she said.

Funding of \$10 million to support phonics, classroom management, and leadership programs was also supported by Professor Ryan.

“Our teachers need to keep learning to continue to be the best educators they can be for their students. Our new Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy will be at the forefront of delivering key evidence-based literacy professional learning opportunities to allow them to do this,” she said.

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