

MEDIA RELEASE

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Catholic education welcomes government commitment to increase funding in 'childcare deserts'

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) has welcomed the Albanese government's re-election commitment to invest up to \$1 billion in funding to childcare centres in underserved areas, including co-locating services on school sites.

"The Building Early Education Fund will bring much-needed childcare services to regions and outer suburbs identified as 'childcare deserts' where access has been historically limited," National Catholic Education executive director Jacinta Collins said.

"We welcome the prime minister's commitment that priority will be given to co-locating services on school sites. This is great news for families of Catholic schools as many of our Catholic schools are located in these areas. Co-location ensures continuity in children's learning and aligns with our commitment to making quality early childhood education accessible to all families.

Minister for Education Jason Clare has stated 'we will build more centres to expand access to this essential service in the outer suburbs and the regions to help more Aussie kids benefit from quality early education.'

"By situating preschools within existing schools, children are better prepared for their first year of schooling, reducing the stress of multiple drop-offs for families and offering greater support to working parents dealing with cost-of-living pressures."

The Prime Minister rightly says all children should have guaranteed access high-quality early education and that real change can only happen 'in the way we as a society think about early education and care – not just a boost for the economy, not just an essential for parents but also a life-changing opportunity for children.'

"We welcome the new three-day guarantee that will allow parents to have guaranteed subsidised early education for their children if they so choose."

The NCEC represents thousands of children and their families in its early childhood and learning centres, with 693 approved services under the National Quality Framework including 417 early childhood education and care (ECEC) services (including centre-based care, occasional care and family care, excluding OSHC).

"Early Childhood Education is critical to building the competency and capability of young people, to successfully transition into school. The announcement of the funding today following on from the recent 15 per cent pay rise for early educators is a major step toward a universal early education system and we look forward to working with the government to bring this to fruition."

Catholic education is the largest provider of education in Australia outside of government, enrolling one in five, or 805,000 students and employing over 109,000 staff in 1,756 schools. The Catholic sector has 15,000 children attending over 400 Catholic early learning and childcare centres across Australia.

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