

Senate Inquiry into Jobs for Families package is our chance to ensure a great package for all Australian children and families

Victoria's largest not-for-profit early learning and care provider, ECMS, says the Jobs for Families package legislation introduced to Parliament this week is good for working families but some changes are necessary to ensure all children can benefit from vital access to early learning and care.

"We welcome this package - the \$3.2b of additional investment proposed by the Turnbull Government will provide much needed support to low and middle income working families who access early learning and care.

This is an important reform and with a few key changes to the proposed bill, the Federal Government has the opportunity to ensure all children can benefit from access to early learning to set them on the best path," explains CEO Bernie Nott.

"Now that a Senate Inquiry into the Jobs for Families Package has been announced, we see an opportunity to talk with the Government and the Senate about those changes."

"We'd like to see more detail around how the activity test will work and how families and children will be affected. We welcome the Minister's assurance that the activity test will be a 'soft touch' but are concerned the administration of the new system will be overly complex. Some vulnerable children may miss out on vital early learning experiences because their parents are not working, or working casually or infrequently," continues Mr. Nott.

"We believe the number of subsidised hours children have access to should be a minimum of 15 but preferably more, but not 12 as currently proposed. Families who access our services know that 12 hours is less than two days, meaning they will be further out of pocket."

"We also know that 2 days of quality early learning is beneficial for children's cognitive, emotional and social development and prepares them for school and lifelong learning. The positive impact of early childhood education and care is multiplied when provided to the most vulnerable children," says Mr. Nott.

"We urge the Senate to consider these matters in the inquiry. We're keen to see more children accessing early learning more easily, more often."



More affordable access to quality childcare is benefits children, families and the economy. A 2014 study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), entitled *Putting a value on early childhood education and care*, estimated cumulative benefits of almost \$30 billion to the Australian economy by continuing to lift quality standards and increase participation amongst children who are vulnerable and at-risk.

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About ECMS:

ECMS is a not-for-profit community enterprise providing quality early learning and care for children, families and communities in 75 services in Victoria. Our services touch the lives of approximately 6500 children and families in many varied and diverse communities each week.

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