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Labor child care policy delivers relief to families earlier

Australia's largest childcare and early learning provider has welcomed Labor's commitment to match the Coalition's promised \$3.1 billion investment to make childcare more affordable and its promise to provide more immediate relief to families from January 2017.

Goodstart Early Learning, a not for profit, said the commitments are good for children and good for families.

Goodstart Early Learning CEO Julia Davison said the gap has been widening between the cost of care and the level of government childcare assistance, increasing out of pocket costs for many families.

"This policy will go a considerable way to making childcare and early learning more affordable for Australian families. It will help more parents get back to work and see more children access early learning enabling them to start school ready to learn," she said.

"Goodstart has been a strong supporter of the Coalition's proposal to move to a single, means tested Childcare Subsidy, but we remained concerned that the Coalition's proposed activity test would reduce access to early learning for many low and middle income families."

"We welcome Labor's commitment to consult on these matters as part of its longer term reform of childcare assistance.

"We do note that from July 2018 the Childcare Subsidy proposed by the Government would be more generous for most working families than the 'interim relief' childcare measures proposed by Labor, although Labor's relief will flow 18 months earlier," she said.

Ms Davison said Goodstart would work with a future Labor Government to develop workable proposals on greater price transparency in childcare.

"While childcare fee increases have been moderating in recent years, rising by 3.6% in FY2015, increasing accountability of operators imposing excessive fee increases would be welcomed by many parents," she said.

Ms Davison said Goodstart looked forward to seeing further early learning and childcare policy proposals from the Coalition and other parties during the campaign.

The childcare and early learning sector has called on all major parties to respond to five key policy priorities:

1. Commit to **invest at least an additional \$3.1 billion** in reforming childcare assistance to make childcare more affordable, and decouple that funding from family payments measures;
2. Ensure that all children (birth to five) are able to **access at least 2 days of subsidised early learning**, especially children who need it most.
3. Increase **participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children** in early learning.
4. Provide **immediate relief** by increasing Child Care Benefit and the Childcare Rebate cap from 1 July 2017.
5. Commit to ongoing funding for **universal access to preschool programs** in the year before school.

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Notes for editors: Goodstart Early Learning is a not for profit social enterprise that is the largest provider of early learning and child care in Australia with 643 centres servicing over 60,000 families. More info: www.goodstart.org.au.