

CPD Welcomes NSW Government Investment in Early Childhood as National Reform Consensus Gathers Momentum

- *Announcement indicates emerging consensus on the importance, scale and collaborative nature of early childhood reform*
- *Precedes NSW Ministerial participation in June Early Childhood Development Council*
- *Investments reflect the aims of CPD's 2021 [Starting Better](#) report*

Tuesday 14 June 2022 – Today's announcement by the NSW Government on early childhood has been welcomed by early childhood policy experts, as consensus on systemic reform builds across levels of government.

The \$5b decade-long package includes incentives for operators to expand or build new centres to offer high-quality services in 'childcare deserts', and \$281 million for workforce development, including scholarships for educator training.

These measures are informed by the NSW Treasury Women's Economic Opportunities Review. The Independent Expert Panel that advised the Review considered CPD's 2021 [Starting Better](#) report in its deliberations. The panel was chaired by CPD Deputy Chair Sam Mostyn and included participation from sector experts including Senior Fellow Leslie Loble.

Starting Better proposed a decade of holistic reform to deliver a Guarantee for Young Children and Families. The Guarantee is a universal entitlement including free or low cost early childhood education and care, more paid parental leave shared between parents, boosts to maternal and child health services, and greater integration of current services.

To bring the Guarantee to life, reforms need to focus on outcomes for children and families, to be a joint effort between Commonwealth, State and Local governments, and need to push for high quality services, accessible to all children and families in Australia.

Starting Better shows that systemic early childhood reform can yield a generational boost to wellbeing, productivity gains from women's participation in paid work, and lower crisis costs as children who get a better start flourish throughout their lives. The report found that the Guarantee could be cost-neutral by 2030 and deliver a net benefit of \$15b a year by 2045.

Today's package follows the announcement at the weekend that NSW Government employees would receive increased paid parental leave split between parents - a key component of the Guarantee for Young Children and Families.

NSW Treasurer Matt Kean and Education and Early Learning Minister Sarah Mitchell will address CPD's Early Childhood Development Council this month. The council is an informal



inter-governmental body comprising sector representatives, researchers, experts and participants from all State and Federal jurisdictions.

Centre for Policy Development Senior Fellow and Co-Chair of the Early Childhood Development Council Leslie Loble said the announcement responded to the needs of children, families and the early childhood sector.

“We want all children to have the best start they can - it’s a boost that lasts through their entire lives. This means investing in the people and places who provide that start.

“Children's learning and relationship in their formative months depends on investment in more places, higher quality early education and rewarding, secure early childhood jobs. Funding for services, training and staff - particularly in “childcare deserts” and regional areas - is crucial.

“There is a growing consensus on holistic, intentional reform across the federation on all sides of politics. The mission for all of us - the sector, elected leaders, public officials and researchers - is to turn intention into positive impact for children, families and the country.”

Centre for Policy Development Deputy CEO Annabel Brown said the announcement responded to the needs of children, families and the early childhood sector that CPD’s research had identified.

“This is a bold and practical step towards a universal early childhood system where children are supported to flourish regardless of where they live or what the circumstances of their families.”

“Today’s announcement, alongside the momentum on early childhood reform in other States and at the Commonwealth level, is very welcome. We encourage governments and the sector to build on what has been announced as part of a shared national reform mission.

“A high quality, universal early childhood system that everyone can count on will deliver a triple dividend. Children who start well flourish throughout their lives. Women will have access to opportunities in paid work, and employers to skilled workers. Investing in growing sectors like early childhood will create secure, rewarding jobs for this generation and the next.”

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