

To Whom It May Concern,

Early Years Strategy – expansion of Child Care Subsidy

I am calling on the Australian parliament to expand the Child Care Subsidy to include subsidies for parental care arrangements for babies and children under three years of age. Considering the shortage of childcare positions, high staff turnover and no guarantee of access to a centre that is meeting national quality standards or minimum legal staffing requirements, the Child Care Subsidy must be extended to alternative care models.

The formal child-care system is beyond capacity. While more early learning and care staff are trained, while better pay is negotiated and while centre standards are improved, it is imperative that families have the choice to utilise informal care arrangements rather than accept sub-standard care arrangements due to financial stress.

Subsidising parental care arrangements is also the quickest and most effective way to ease the pressure on early learning centres which will in turn improve the quality of care those centres are able to provide. It is the most equitable way of supporting families in a variety of situations, including geographically isolated families that may not be able to access a centre at all in rural areas, families where disability or mental illness means day care is not appropriate or families who work variable or non-standard work hours, mostly essential workers.

Expanding the Child Care Subsidy would also help recognise the many benefits of parental care in the early years and support parents in this choice while also acknowledging the critical unpaid care work carried out by parents around the country every day. This unpaid labour forms our nation's largest industry and has immeasurable benefits for our society.

Genuine choice for families and valuation of care work cannot happen without a Child Care Subsidy that legitimises parental care and allows families to choose the best model of care for their family situation. Without this, government continues to endorse only profit based group care and exploit parents' unpaid care-work while also expecting them to maintain jobs in the paid workforce.

Sincerely,

Sarah Mellidis