

Statement

31 July 2018

Universal access to early childhood education for three-year-olds in the ACT

Northside Community Service welcomes ACT Deputy Chief Minister Yvette's Berry's announcements reported today that the ACT Government will fund universal access to early childhood education for three-year-olds as part of their Early Childhood Strategy.

Deputy Chief Minister Berry's announcement reflects the overwhelming and irrefutable evidence that access to high-quality early childhood education is critical to early development, success in later learning and benefits the entire community.

The ACT's Early Childhood Strategy has been in development since 2016, and we hope that this announcement indicates that the Strategy will soon be made available to the sector and the community.

While Northside is strongly supportive of the ACT Government's announcement, we do call on Deputy Chief Minister to provide funding and rollout details as soon as possible. This is important to ensure adequate opportunity for the entire early childhood education sector to be consulted.

Northside also calls on the ACT Government to confirm that the announced universal access funding will be provided to all children, including those accessing early childhood education centres for children aged birth-five.

Birth-five centres and ACT Government Preschools both operate under the same regulatory system, the National Quality Framework. Both require Early Childhood Teachers working with young children. Both are subject to the same national assessment and rating system.

Given there is one regulatory system, there is no reason for funding to be separated and only provided to ACT Government Preschools.

Northside also calls on the ACT Government to ensure that the new access provisions include specific support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access culturally-safe and high-quality early education.

Northside looks forward to working cooperatively with the ACT Education Directorate in delivering this important opportunity for all of Canberra's children to be giving a stronger start, no matter which early education service they attend.

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