

Friday February 12, 2021

WA regional children to benefit from the Nationals' election commitment to cut the costs of upskilling educators.

ACA WA calls on all parties to commit to policies that empowers working parents and attracts more educators to the childcare sector.

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Perth: Western Australia's children, and their working parents will be the key beneficiaries of the National WA's election commitment to reform the cost of upskilling educators in all regional and remote early learning (childcare) services.

ACA WA commends the Nationals WA for their promise to ensure existing educators, in regional and remote the early learning (childcare) services can be upskilled, with the same subsidies that are currently offered to new recruits to the sector.

Existing WA childcare staff face exorbitant study costs, of up to \$10,000, to earn a diploma in early childhood teaching, whilst new recruits pay only \$1,200 for the same course.

The Australian Childcare Alliance Western Australia (ACA WA) calls on all parties to now make a similar commitment, in the interests of all of children living in regional and remote WA.

Right now, 1000 educators are urgently needed for all of the state's early learning (childcare) sector.

In a survey of WA services, 80% report they can't fill degree or diploma- qualified educator roles, despite offering significant financial and professional development incentives. These educators must now be drawn from the existing pool of staff.

The President of ACA WA, Ms. Ann Marie Chemello, says if this election commitment is adopted by the next state government, it will help more than 250 regional and remote member services to maintain the strict educator-child ratios, rather than force families out of their centres.

"Our members have successfully kept children in their education and care, safe and calm, especially during this current unexpected lockdown," Ms. Chemello said. "We are demonstrating, again, that the early learning (childcare) sector is the absolute bedrock of the WA economy.

We are enabling WA parents, especially those on the health and emergency frontline, to stay at work, where they are needed. However, this pandemic is exacerbating a workforce shortage that now needs to be urgently addressed."

Other cost-effective policy solutions to resolve workforce issues and increase affordability for families are outlined in the WA ACA's non-partisan election manifesto "**What WA parents want. What our children need**". The manifesto will be launched next week.

"Working WA parents need the next State Government to commit to policies that help attract, train and retain good educators for their young children," Ms Chemello said.

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