

**2 April 2020**

### **Communique**

Education Council met today by teleconference to discuss early childhood education and care services provision in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministers acknowledged the announcements made by the Australian Government earlier in the day regarding funding assistance to allow families to continue to access early childhood education and care services, and extending preschool funding arrangements to 2021.

Ministers agreed that early childhood education and care services will remain open for all families who require care and any future decisions regarding these services will be consistent with advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

Education Council noted that state and territory regulatory authorities have agreed four critical areas for time-limited regulatory action: waiving fees and charges for COVID19-related applications, fast-tracking qualification waivers, suspending assessment and ratings, and making rapid operational adjustments as required. Regulatory Authorities will continue to apply child safety as the primary consideration in regulatory decisions. Ministers noted that fast-tracking qualification and operational requirement waivers is subject to there being no increased risk to the safety of children and staff.

Education Ministers are seeking further advice and practice guidance from the AHPPC on safe early childhood education and care practice, especially relating to room size limitations and additional cleaning, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministers requested that senior officials continue to work together to ensure an effective and streamlined early childhood education and care services response to COVID-19 and report back to Education Council regularly.

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*Media queries: Greg Donaghue, Education Council Secretariat on 0423 748 320 or [greg.donaghue@ec.edu.au](mailto:greg.donaghue@ec.edu.au).*