

Concerns over impact of child care reforms on children of migrants and refugees

The Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee yesterday released its report on the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2015*. The report recommends that the Bill be passed in its current form.

“The Senate report failed to examine the particular impact of the proposed child care reforms on migrant and refugee children and families”, says FECCA Chairperson Joe Caputo. “The role of child care in increasing workforce participation, particularly for women, is critical. In this package of reforms the Government has failed to recognise the importance of early childhood education for children’s development. Early childhood education is particularly important for migrant and refugee children to develop their English language skills and provide an opportunity for these children to be exposed to Australian social culture, assisting with their later transition to formal schooling.”

Child care and preschool attendance have been consistently found to affect early child development, and thus inclusion of migrant and refugee children is essential. The right resources must be invested into early childhood development and education to ensure that children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds develop a sense of belonging, have access to adequate support and are empowered to preserve and develop their cultural identity.

FECCA has previously raised concerns that the three-tiered activity test would disproportionately affect migrant and refugee families, due to the high proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse workers, particularly women, in insecure, casualised and variable employment. The test links the number of hours of ‘recognised activity’ that a parent undertakes to the number of hours per fortnight of subsidised child care available to that family.

FECCA also calls on the Government to restore 24 hours of subsidised child care per week, regardless of whether a child’s parents meet the proposed activity test.

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