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Media release for immediate distribution

C&K supports kindergarten funding extension

Queensland's largest early childhood education and care provider C&K has applauded the Federal Government's decision to continue funding access to 15 hours of preschool for all four year old children in 2015.

CEO Michael Tizard said this was a huge relief for Australian families looking to send their children to preschool and kindergarten next year.

"These families can be rest assured their children will be funded to access those 15 vital hours of preschool education and all the benefits that it brings.

"I now call on the Federal Government to commit to extending this funding beyond 2015 and provide Australian families with certainty on the future of their children's education.

"Families often enrol their children years before they attend preschool, even at birth, so families need that certainty.

"We need to ensure the benefits that have been achieved since the funding was introduced in 2008 continue to grow."

"In six years we have seen preschool and kindergarten attendance rates soar. There have been significant improvements in Year 3 NAPLAN test results and the Australian Early Development Census children's developmental scores.

"Pre-school attendance levels of children from low socioeconomic and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in particular have sky-rocketed, from 29% to 85% and 29% to 79% respectively.

"While significant gains have been made since this funding was introduced, there is much more work to do and we simply can't afford to lose momentum."

Mr Tizard said there is compelling national and international evidence that early childhood education delivers important lifelong benefits including improved social, literacy and numeracy skills, higher intellectual performance, an easier transition into school, increased future earning capacity and higher self-esteem and independence.

"Australia already lags behind the rest of the developed world in terms of early childhood education attendance and investment levels and can't afford to fall further behind."

"Australia ranks 34th of 38 OECD countries in early childhood education enrolment rates and 32nd in terms of expenditure on early childhood education institutions as a percentage of GDP."

Assistant Minister for Education The Hon. Sussan Ley announced the \$406m funding deal today at the Early Childhood Australia Conference in Melbourne. The funding was due to expire in December this year.

Mr Tizard, who is also at the conference, congratulated the Federal Government during his introduction to the keynote speaker, and urged them to commit to the funding beyond 2015.

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