



THE HON MAXINE MCKEW MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND
CHILD CARE
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

18 November 2008

Dear Members

I would like to thank you very sincerely for your support for the Australian Government's early childhood education and child care reform agenda.

It was heartening to read such letters of encouragement from people who are enthusiastic about working with parents and Government to achieve the best outcomes for Australia's children.

As you know, the Rudd Government has an innovative and far reaching reform agenda for the early years. However, we know that without a well-trained and well-respected workforce it will be difficult to achieve our goals in this area. We understand that the early childhood workforce is fundamental to delivering high quality education and care for young children.

I appreciate that many of you are employed at ABC Learning child care centres and that since sending your letters to me, ABC Learning has entered into voluntary administration. While I am in no doubt that this is an anxious time for you, I want to assure you that the Government and ABC's receivers both have the interests of parents, their children and ABC Learning employees front and centre in wishing to offer immediate stability and help ensure continuity of service.

In the coming weeks, the Government's Child Care Industry Taskforce will work with the ABC receiver to undertake a thorough review of the ABC Learning's operations. By mid December, it is envisaged that the Australian Government will be in a position to make a further announcement about the future of ABC Learning child care centres. Up to date information for parents and employees is available on the mychild.gov.au website or via a dedicated hotline on 180 2003.

During this time, the Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care will continue its work on developing the strategies and approaches we need to raise the quality of early childhood education and child care in all settings, and to increase the size and qualifications of the workforce.

A number of initiatives underpin our workforce commitment.

These initiatives include the removal of TAFE fees for students commencing child care diplomas and advanced diplomas, additional early childhood teaching places at universities around the country, and reducing the HECS- debts of early childhood teachers working in disadvantaged areas.

Information on these initiatives is updated regularly on the Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care's website. I encourage you to read more about these initiatives, and the Government's broader early childhood reform agenda, at www.office.mychild.gov.au.

While your letters identify four important issues affecting today's early childhood workforce, I'd particularly like to mention your last point - recognising the value of the early childhood workforce and carers' skills.

I believe that child care professionals should be treated with the same respect as teachers in every other part of the education system.

We need to work together to ensure that we have a well-qualified and respected early childhood workforce that delivers quality early years services for children and their families throughout Australia.

This will take time, and I look forward to working with union representatives, the sector and the community to raise the status and public awareness of the important work you do.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine McKew". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Maxine McKew MP