

# ACT Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development Communiqué

## Early Childhood Advisory Council

I established the Early Childhood Advisory Council to strengthen the partnership between the ACT Government and the early childhood education and care sector.

The goal of the Advisory Council is to bring together diverse parts of the sector for collaborative input and advice to the ACT Government on early childhood education and care. Members were selected not solely as representatives of their organisations but on the basis of their individual skills and expertise in the sector.

The Advisory Council represents the various parts of the sector. A list of members is available at [www.education.act.gov.au/childrens\\_policy\\_and\\_regulation/early-childhood-advisory-council](http://www.education.act.gov.au/childrens_policy_and_regulation/early-childhood-advisory-council).

The initial work of the Advisory Council is to provide advice to the ACT Government on proposals that would inform the Early Childhood Strategy and the Future of Education conversation, which are both currently in development.

### Work of the Advisory Council to date

The Advisory Council's meetings have focused on the issues facing the ACT's early childhood education and care sector, and how these can be tackled collectively. In particular the Advisory Council has discussed and provided advice on the four key elements of the Early Childhood Strategy:

- access, equity and affordability
- workforce and qualifications
- transitions from education and care to school
- maximising the benefit to children from money spent.

The Advisory Council has met on six occasions to date:

- 22 August 2017 (inaugural meeting)
- 6 November 2017 (roundtable with Professor Edward Melhuish)
- 12 December 2017 (transitions from education and care to school)
- 9 February 2018 (workforce and qualifications)
- 9 March 2018 (access, equity and affordability)
- 28 March 2018 (full day workshop on all four elements)

The Advisory Council supports the recommendations and directions of the *Lifting our Game Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions* released in February 2018 and the implementation of these recommendations within the ACT context.

Feeding in to the discussions of the Advisory Council is the consultation with representatives from the sector at the Education and Care Sector Meeting of 4 December 2017. This was a special Sector

Meeting focussing on the four key elements of the Early Childhood Strategy, led by the Future of Education team.

### *What we heard*

The feedback from the sector meeting amplified common themes arising from the sector. The key themes from the sector meeting were:

- The importance of universal access to early childhood education and care.
- The huge range of benefits that would come from extending the commitment of universal access to three year old children.
- The need to improve public awareness of the benefits of quality early childhood education.
- The need to raise the profile, and the community's value, of the early childhood education and care workforce.
- The need to make services more accessible for vulnerable and disadvantaged families.
- The need for greater collaboration and partnerships between early childhood education and care services, preschools and primary schools, as well as stronger communication between the ACT Human Services Directorates (Education, Health and Community Services).
- Greater communication and sharing of information between the sector, the government, and with families.

As well as broader national issues related to education and care, the Advisory Council has also interrogated examples of good practice at a local, national, and international levels. This was particularly apparent in its roundtable with Edward Melhuish, Professor of Human Development at the University of Oxford, which was supported with organisation from the Children First Alliance.

### **Next Steps**

The work of Council is creating dynamic and strong partnerships within the sector and with Government. Our shared aim is to increase access to quality early childhood education and care for every child in the ACT.

The Government is aiming to complete the strategy by the end of the year.

There will be more communication with the community and the sector about the Early Childhood Strategy in the lead up to its completion.

### **Contact**

Contact [ECPolicy@act.gov.au](mailto:ECPolicy@act.gov.au) for further information on the Advisory Council and the development of the Early Childhood Strategy.

Information on the Future of Education is available via [www.education.act.gov.au/school\\_education/the-future-of-education](http://www.education.act.gov.au/school_education/the-future-of-education).