



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate Release

Thursday July 6, 2017

Babysitting backpackers are not the solution

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) is extremely concerned with the Federal Government's discussions regarding the possible introduction of a new Au Pair Visa, particularly if it is seen as a response to an apparent shortage of childcare availability or affordability.

The new visa would allow au pairs seeking employment in Australia to work for a 12 month to two-year period with an Australian family. This would be a substantial extension beyond the current arrangement under the Working Holiday Visa, which allows au pairs to stay in Australia for up to 12 months, but they can only work for a period of up to 6 months with the one employer.

"Whilst ACA supports the right of families to have choice around care for their children, this ill-considered approach seems to undermine the government's own position that the Jobs for Families package will address affordability concerns" ACA President Mr Paul Mondo said.

"Furthermore with significant and continued growth in supply across the country, availability is less likely to be an issue for parents returning to the workforce."

ACA is concerned that following the failed Nanny Pilot Program, this second attempt at unqualified and unregulated informal care undermines the importance of engaging children in quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). It appears to be an attempt to solve an apparent problem with a group of underpaid itinerants who may not have any relevant qualifications or experience.

"Is government policy that supports a group of babysitting backpackers a responsible solution to cut costs for families, given the time and energy that has been invested over the last 5 years in the National Quality Framework?" Mr Mondo exclaimed.

"The aim of the NQF is to increase the quality of care and educational outcomes for Australia's children, and has resulted in an increase in qualification requirements and educator/child ratios. This has increased the cost of centre-based early childhood education and care, making it out of reach for many families – does the government seek to address this by circumventing its own policy framework?"

ACA is vehemently opposed to any decision which may adversely impact the quality of care delivered to children.

"It is vitally important that au pair visa is not an alternative to the well-established benefits of having children engage in a quality ECEC environment." Mr Mondo said.

Australian Childcare Alliance

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State Presidents

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“It seems quite strange that right now, when there has been a tightening around the visas for skilled workers in ECEC, that the government would now consider a program that allows for untrained carers to enter the country to look after our young children. At a time when there are many Australians possibly looking for similar work, exploiting visa holders doesn't seem to be the best outcome for anyone.”

ACA will engage with the Federal Government to further discuss the implications of this proposal.

ENDS

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BACKGROUND

As the national peak body in the Australian Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) represents more than 2,500 members and approximately 360,000 families throughout Australia.

We work on behalf of long day care service owners and operators, predominantly private, to ensure families have an opportunity to access affordable, quality ECEC throughout Australia.

The ACA has existed in various forms for more than 30 years and has extensive experience in the fields of early childhood, education, training and management. Our experience means that we understand the critical role a quality ECEC program plays in the life of families and the importance of a viable long day care sector in preparing children for the best start in life and learning.

The ACA's national and state bodies work collaboratively with all levels of government, regulatory bodies and other stakeholders to ensure that families are supported into the future with a sustainable, affordable and viable sector, with a focus on the best interests of Australia's young children.

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