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MEDIA RELEASE

ACA calls for consistent child safety protections across all early learning services following Four Corners investigation

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) has reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to child safety following last night's ABC *Four Corners* investigation, which highlighted deeply disturbing instances of child abuse and serious failures in the systems designed to protect children attending early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.

ACA President Paul Mondo said the incidents highlighted in the program were deeply distressing and reinforced the critical importance of ensuring that every child attending an early learning service is safe, supported and protected.

"We are deeply saddened by the harm experienced by the children and families involved. Our thoughts are with those affected, and we unequivocally condemn any form of abuse, mistreatment or neglect of children," Mr Mondo said.

ACA believes that all children deserve equally robust protections, regardless of where they live or the type of early learning service they attend.

“With the next Education Ministers Meeting approaching, we know that Ministers will reflect on a range of further policy changes to further enhance child safety”.

“We urge the Ministers across the country to consider how best to strengthen supervision practices with the understanding that no two services or locations are identical.”

“Good policy outcomes recognise the unique context of each location”.

ACA believes that all out-of-scope services under the National Quality Framework should be required to undertake the mandatory child safety training recently developed by the Australian Governments”.

"Every child deserves the same fundamental protections” Mr Mondo said.

The *Four Corners* investigation highlighted an important distinction within Australia's regulatory system, identifying 473 education and care services operating outside the National Quality Framework (NQF).

While these services are subject to other regulatory arrangements, they do not necessarily operate under the same nationally consistent standards, assessment processes and safeguards that apply to services regulated under the NQF.

"We urge Federal, State and Territory governments to examine these inconsistencies and work towards a more comprehensive and nationally consistent approach to child safety."

At the same time, many of these out-of-scope services require more reliable funding because of the unique characteristics of their communities and geography, making their inclusion in the NQF complex.

“ACA understands that reports like this can be deeply unsettling for families and heavily impact educators, providers and broader community who care deeply to protect children.

"Every day, dedicated providers and early learning professionals work tirelessly to create safe, nurturing and positive early learning environments. It is important to recognise that a high-quality and child-safe

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early learning environment is the standard, delivered day in and day out across the vast majority of early learning services."

A rush to characterise any service or service type as all good or all bad in such a binary way fails to recognise and celebrate the significant positive impact of many services across Australia.

ACA remains resolute in its commitment to working with governments and the broader sector to strengthen child safety protections, address gaps in regulatory oversight and ensure that every child attending an early learning service receives the protection and care they deserve.

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For further information about the organisation visit childcarealliance.org.au.

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About Australian Childcare Alliance

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) is a not-for-profit, member-funded organisation advocating for the future of Australia's children.

Our national and state bodies work collaboratively with all levels of government, regulatory authorities and other stakeholders with an evidence-based approach, to ensure that families are supported into the future with a sustainable, affordable and viable ECEC sector.

The ACA believes that with the right policy and financial frameworks in place, we could ensure that every child in Australia has access to high quality, affordable and sustainable early learning (childcare) services, and therefore the best start in life.

About Paul Mondo - President, ACA



With over 20 years of experience as an early learning service provider, Paul has developed a strong understanding of the challenges facing owner/operators in an ever-changing, highly-regulated landscape. This wealth of experience coupled with a passion for the benefits of early learning inspired Paul to take a leadership role in the advocacy space.

Formerly the President of ACA Victoria, Paul has now been President of the Australian Childcare Alliance for over nine years, playing a key role in advocating for the interests of ACA members and the early learning sector at the Federal Government level.

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