

EARLY LEARNING: EVERYONE BENEFITS NATIONAL ELECTION SURVEY: RESULTS SUMMARY

Early Learning
**EVERYONE
BENEFITS**

In March 2019, the Early Learning: Everyone Benefits campaign wrote to 356 Federal Election candidates, seeking their views on early learning. We asked the candidates questions about support for families (including the most vulnerable), the provision and funding of subsidised early learning for children, ensuring the quality of early learning services, and strengthening of the educator workforce.

THE RESULTS

The three main parties—Australian Labor Party, Liberal–National Coalition, and The Australian Greens—responded to the survey centrally. In addition to these centralised responses, 24 per cent of the candidates responded individually, with some sharing personal views:

'We need a **cross-portfolio integrated strategy** to get this right; one involving early childhood education and care providers, and all other relevant services that assist and support children and families' (Barbara Pocock, Greens candidate for Adelaide [SA]).

'I have seen first-hand the devastating effects of the pay inequity, and [seen] experienced and qualified early childhood educators leaving the sector because of pay and conditions. We cannot attract and retain high-quality educators with the system that is currently [being] used now. **Educators are burnt out, tired, stressed**' (Tracey Bell, Labor candidate for Moncrieff [QLD]).

'Children need support, encouragement and care irrespective of their parents' labour market participation ... **This matters. Good luck with your campaign**' (Rob Oakeshott, Independent member for Cowper [NSW]).

'Early childhood educators are **high-value and important contributors** to the later preschool development, especially for those children who have not been able to receive the best from their home situation' (Sharon Lohse, One Nation candidate for Flynn [QLD]).

Responses to the survey show that, while the major parties claim to be supporting children's early learning, there are significant differences in the details of their policy commitments:

Policy item	The Coalition (Liberal Party— Nationals)	The Labor Party	The Greens
Develop a cross-portfolio 'Early Years Strategy'.	No	Yes	Yes
At least two days per week of quality early childhood education, irrespective of parents' workforce participation or other activity.	Only for children in preschool/kindergarten in the year before school.	Only for children in preschool/kindergarten in the two years before school. Plus a commitment to review the impact of Child Care Subsidy and activity test for vulnerable children.	Yes. Scrapping the activity test.

Policy item	The Coalition (Liberal Party— Nationals)	The Labor Party	The Greens
A long-term funding commitment for universal access to preschool/ kindergarten programs.	No. No change to making funding decisions annually.	Yes	Yes. A 10-year funding plan.
Extension of universal access to two years before school.	No. A commitment to increase preschool/ kindergarten attendance for four-year-olds before they 'roll the same policy over for three-year-olds'.	Yes	Yes
Strategies to increase access to quality early learning programs for children at risk of disadvantage.	Yes. Funding for the Smith Family to develop and implement strategies. Plus the Child Care Safety Net, and Connected Beginnings integrated service sites for families.	Yes. A commitment to work in partnership with the states and territories to improve enrolment and attendance rates, particularly for Indigenous and vulnerable children.	Yes. Community Child Care Fund grants to increase access to quality, community-controlled and culturally safe, integrated early years services.
Ongoing funding of the <i>National Quality Framework</i> .	No reversal of the \$20 million funding cut announced in 2018.	Reversal of the \$20 million funding cut.	Reversal of the \$20 million funding cut.
Workforce development strategies for the early childhood sector.	No. Instead, tax cuts for all low- and middle-income earners.	Yes. (Policies on wages announced following the survey response.)	Yes. A workforce strategy to achieve professional pay and better working conditions for workers in the sector.

FOR OUR RATING OF THE PARTIES' EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICIES, PLEASE SEE THE [#ELECTION2019 EARLY LEARNING POLICY GUIDE](#)

Individual survey responses have been collated and posted on our [website](#). The survey questions are also available [here](#).