



30 March 2022

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Federal Budget: Positive initiatives, but more work needed to help children experiencing disadvantage to access early education

The Front Project CEO Jane Hunt says measures to ease the financial burden on families for early childhood education and care (ECEC), enhanced paid parental leave, and further investment to establish additional ECEC services in remote, rural and regional areas announced in the Federal budget, are most welcome.

‘There is however more work to do to address the barriers to accessing affordable, high quality ECEC, particularly for those children and families living in disadvantaged circumstances,’ she said.

Ms Hunt said the announcement of \$19.4 million over 5 years to establish a new open grant round of the Community Child Care Fund will provide a much-needed boost to access to ECEC services for families in remote, rural, and regional areas.

‘Similarly, \$22.1 million over 2 years to increase the Community Child Care Fund, and \$6.9 million in 2021-22 to provide Business Continuity Payments of \$10,000 to ECEC services in flood effected locations, will be critical to support families and communities in these areas of Queensland and NSW.

Ms Hunt said it is well established that access to high quality early education delivers better life outcomes and lower costs to society and taxpayers in the long term.

‘We want to work with government to make this a reality for more families across Australia, and the measures announced in the Budget provide an important foundation to build from as we move towards the election.’

Ms Hunt said data shows that around 60,000 Australian children are developmentally vulnerable or ‘behind’ their peers when they start school every year.

‘Children from remote, rural and regional areas, those from the lowest socio-economic communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children from language backgrounds other than English, can be particularly vulnerable.

‘We believe additional targeted funding is needed for ECEC services in disadvantaged communities to initiate local programs to address barriers to affordability and access for children and families.

‘More broadly, we need to invest in the ECEC workforce to build quality in every community.

‘And finally, we need the policy and funding settings to ensure that every Australian child gets two years of ECEC prior to school - and more for those who need it the most.

‘While some important steps forward have been taken in ECEC policy in this Budget, and over the last 12 months, more work is needed to ensure Australia’s ECEC system is robust, equitable and affordable for all families, no matter where they live,’ Jane Hunt said.

ENDS



## **ABOUT THE FRONT PROJECT**

*The Front Project (TFP) is an independent, national enterprise working to improve quality and create positive change in Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) system.*

*The Front Project works with government, business and the early education sector to address disadvantage, improve outcomes for children, and increase the short and long-term gains for Australia.*