




Speech By
Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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MOTION

Early Childhood Education and Care Services, Federal Funding

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (4.35 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution to this debate. Can I say from the outset that I am proud to have an education minister who goes down to Canberra with her hands out and asks for a fair share for our kids here in Queensland. We will not ever see the shadow education minister go to Canberra and talk to his cronies in Canberra to get them to give our state a fair deal. He did not talk once to the substance of the motion—

Mr KRAUSE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think in previous rulings the word ‘crony’ has been deemed to be unparliamentary language. I would ask that you direct the member to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: It is not a word that has appeared on any unparliamentary language list I have ever seen. Thank you for your point of order.

Ms BOYD: We in Labor strongly believe that early learning and care is for everyone. We in Labor believe that it must be affordable and accessible and we in Labor also recognise the important work of the dedicated professionals in the sector. We in Labor fundamentally subscribe to the science that shows that investment in early learning gives kids the best start in life, improves school readiness, results in them being less likely to repeat grades or require additional support, are more likely to complete year 12 and links these kids with higher future levels of employment, income and financial security, improved health outcomes and reduced crime.

It was a federal Labor government that in 2009 initiated the first national partnership agreement with the states and territories to provide universal access funding for kindergarten of 15 hours per week. Since then our kindies have seen 66 per cent growth—I repeat: 66 per cent growth—in the last eight years. Last year our kindy programs had a participation rate of 95 per cent of children in the year before school. This is a program to be proud of, a program transforming the lives of many.

The federal government has shared responsibility for early childhood education through the National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, although we are getting nothing out of Malcolm Turnbull and the coalition except for stopgap funding, resulting in uncertainty for states and territories from year to year. In fact, this year will be the fifth short-term extension of the original 2009 funding agreement for early childhood education. It is not good enough. Sector uncertainty drags on. The Palaszczuk government continues to seek a commitment from the Australian government for a single national agreement providing long-term, sustainable and untied funding for universal access to early childhood education in the year before school as well as regulatory activities associated with the national quality agenda.

All the while what do we hear from the LNP members on this issue? Nothing! We do not see them lobbying their mates in Canberra for fair funding for Queensland kids—yet another instance of the LNP members squibbing Queenslanders. Devastatingly, from 2 July 2018 the federal government’s

actions will see low-income earners worse off under their childcare subsidy reforms. The very supports that are designed to ensure out-of-pocket costs are not a barrier for vulnerable families to access kindergarten are going to be tampered with. If honourable members do the maths they will find it will be harder for those families doing it tough in communities to access kindy programs. Let us break this down. We know that children from disadvantaged families benefit most from participation in quality kindergarten programs.

We know that these are the very families who are less likely to access these services. The subsidy designed and implemented to help address this issue, the subsidy under which we have seen dramatically increased participation, will be tampered with by the Turnbull government. This will result in increased costs to disadvantaged families. This approach is in direct opposition to the intent of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. This is madness. The most important factor in delivering quality early childhood education is a skilled and stable workforce. One of the Lifting our Game report recommendations states—

Australian governments agree to a new national early childhood education and care workforce strategy to support the recruitment, retention, sustainability and enhanced professionalisation of the workforce, thereby improving service quality and children's outcomes.

A recent workforce study showed that, while most educators enjoy their work and appreciate its value, one in five was planning to move on and leave the sector. Poor wages and conditions were the driving factors. I have spoken in this House on many occasions about my journey as an early childhood educator and having to walk away from the career I loved simply because it was not sustainable to stay. My story is also the story of too many others. In next week's federal budget I call on the LNP to deliver a long-term funding solution and commitment to early childhood education in this state and this country. I call upon this House to support the motion to ensure that we are giving Queensland children the best start in life, because they deserve nothing less.