



AUTHOR: LANAI SCARR SECTION: GENERAL NEWS ARTICLE TYPE: NEWS ITEM AUDIENCE : 135,996
 PAGE: 7 PRINTED SIZE: 288.00cm² REGION: WA MARKET: Australia ASR: AUD 5,049 WORDS: 396
 ITEM ID: 1344782361



08 OCT, 2020

Handle with kid gloves

West Australian, Perth

PARLIAMENTARY
 LIBRARY

INFORMATION ANALYSIS AUSTRALIA

Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) licensed copy
 or Copyright Act 1969 (Dwell) s. 48M copy

Page 1 of 1

Handle with kid gloves

Government pledges to sell public on sought-after childcare reform

EXCLUSIVE LANAI SCARR
 FEDERAL POLITICAL EDITOR

The Federal Government has told the childcare sector it will run an unofficial six-month awareness campaign on the benefits of early learning before making serious reforms in next year's Budget.

There was widespread anger among early childhood advocates over the lack of any substantial changes in Tuesday's Federal Budget.

But The West Australian has been told Scott Morrison has personally expressed a willingness for reform but knows the message needs to be first sold to taxpayers who don't have children as the Government bids to get more women back in the workforce.

One senior sector source said they had been told by Education Minister Dan Tehan's team this need to convince the public and craft meaningful reform was the reason there were no big changes to childcare funding this week.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese will tonight give his Budget reply speech in the House of Representatives, with childcare reform to be a key plank.

It is expected Mr Albanese will announce Labor will pledge to make childcare more affordable for families if elected by changing the tapering rate for the childcare subsidy. The measure was recommended by accountancy firm KPMG in a major report in October last year.

Jay Weatherill, who heads up Minderoo Foundation's Thrive By Five childcare initiative, said Labor should be prioritising early childhood education.

Mr Weatherill, who co-led the review into the party's disastrous election loss last year, said the Budget was a "missed opportunity" to reform the sector and help parents back into work.

"National Cabinet should be taking up this issue," he said. "From a jobs lens, you get more bang for buck from the childcare sector than other sectors."

Sam Page, chief executive of Early Childhood Australia, said she was "astounded" a more significant package of funding was not announced.

"The childcare sector is as big as the mining sector yet it is not seen with the same importance," she said.

"There could have been very easy ways they could have made things better, for instance increasing the childcare subsidy by 10 per cent. That would create more jobs for those in the sector and help parents back to work."

Mr Tehan was yesterday asked in Question Time about the lack of new funding for childcare and pointed to the \$900 million in emergency funding throughout the coronavirus pandemic.