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## The Hon Kate Ellis MP

Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth

22 April, 2010

### Media release

## Vacancy data gives first true picture of child care landscape

The Minister for Early Childhood Education and Child Care Kate Ellis today released two new reports that give updated information about the state of the Australian child care sector.

The new reports, *Child Care Vacancies Quarterly Snapshot* and the *State of Child Care in Australia*, clearly demonstrate the Australian Government's progress in delivering affordable, accessible, stable and high quality care for Australian children and their parents.

The new *Child Care Vacancies Quarterly Snapshot* is the first of what will be a quarterly report providing accurate, aggregated vacancy data. It reveals that:

- 91% of reporting long day care services recorded vacancies, including 90% in major cities and 98% in very remote and remote areas
- Approximately three in ten long day care places are available each day
- 65,780 long day care vacancies on average are available each day.

Also released today, the *State of Child Care in Australia* provides a statistical analysis of the Australian child care market over the last five years. The report demonstrates that there is now greater availability of child care than five years ago and that supply is largely keeping pace with demand. Specifically, the report shows:

- The number of long day care centres increased from 4,751 to 5,758 between 2005 and 2009. This is an increase of more than 1000 centres, or 21%, and equates to an average increase of about 250 centres each year
- The number of children using long day care has increased by 15% over the past four years
- The proportion of long day care hours being used has declined from 77% in 2005 to 75% in 2009
- Out-of-pocket costs to families have fallen across all income levels. In 2004 families earning \$55,000 a year spent 13% of their disposable income on child care, this has fallen to 7% in 2009.

The report also shows that Australian Government funding for child care has more than doubled in the last four years, up from \$1.7 billion in 2004-05 to \$3.7 billion in 2008-09.

The Australian Government committed \$114.5 million to deliver 38 Early Learning and Care Centres in the 2008-09 Budget.

With the collapse of ABC Learning and the de-stabilisation of the child care market that resulted, the Government indicated that it would assess the sector in light of the collapse prior to delivering any further centres.

The data released today creates an evidence base for an assessment.

The evidence tells us that an injection of more centres could threaten the viability of existing services and cause disruption for Australian families, just as the market is settling after the collapse of ABC Learning.

In order to support continued stability in the market, the Government has decided not to proceed with additional centres to the 38 centres already in train.

The Government acknowledges that there are some circumstances in which families face challenges finding child care that meets their particular requirements and we will continue to keep a watching brief on the child care market and take action if required.

The Government will also continue to provide \$98 million in establishment and sustainability funding to improve the viability of services, especially in regional and remote areas. This funding helps to secure the viability around 1500 services nationwide.

It is important we acknowledge that the child care landscape has changed significantly since 2006.

These two reports tell us that the child care market is strong as a consequence of this Government's commitment to early education and child care.

Over the next four years, the Government will invest over \$16 billion to support child care – more than double that of the previous Government.

The Government will continue to prioritise the early years for our children and to support Australia parents to access stable, affordable and high quality care.

The *Child Care Vacancies Quarterly Snapshot* and the *State of Child Care in Australia* report are available at [www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood).

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