



Senator Katy Gallagher  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Gallagher

### Childcare before COVID-19 Committee

I am writing to request that you call representatives of the childcare industry before the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19.

As you know, the childcare sector has been significantly impacted not only by the pandemic, but also as a result of the substantial policy changes implemented first through the Government's Early Child Education and Care Relief Package on 6<sup>th</sup> April, and the subsequent termination of this package and re-imposition of Child Care Subsidy scheme on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

The announcement of the ECEC Relief Package was devastating for many childcare providers in my electorate of Indi. Council-run childcare providers – of which there are 14 in Indi - were excluded from JobKeeper, and excluded from the *Exceptional Circumstances* funding under the ECEC Relief Package.

Many of these services had not seen substantial declines in attendance as a result of the pandemic. This meant that as a direct result of the Government's Relief Package, many services had an effective reduction in their income of 50%. Wangaratta Council for instance, began losing \$20,000 a week – not as a result of the pandemic, but as a result of the Government's poorly designed policy.

Many family-care providers were similarly ineligible for JobKeeper, meaning these people, the vast majority of whom are women, and who are already among the lowest paid workers, had their income slashed by 50%. And now, those childcare workers who did receive JobKeeper are the first and only sector to have it removed. The imposition of childcare fees – already among the highest in the OECD – as millions of Australians find themselves out of work is also alarming.

I am concerned that the Government's policies on childcare risk the viability of many childcare providers in Australia, particularly in rural and regional Australia, at precisely the moment when we need it most. This issue is not only a fundamental question of children's education, but one of the most fundamental policy levers we have to drive employment as we look towards the recovery.

I am calling on you to invite representatives of the sector, including council-run childcare providers, family day care providers and rural and regional providers to come before the Senate COVID-19 Committee. It is critical to understand both the impact of the Government's policies on the sector, and what the sector needs over the coming months in order to remain viable – for all Australians parents.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Helen Haines MP  
Independent Federal Member for Indi

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