

---

## **Catholic Education sector welcomes the Australian Government's early learning and care COVID-19 package**

The National Catholic Education Commission has welcomed the Australian Government's rescue package for early childhood and care services across Australia.

Under the plan, the federal government estimates around one million families will receive free childcare, and the government will pay 50 per cent of the sector's fee revenue up to the existing hourly rate cap. The support would also apply to before and after school care and vacation care services.

National Catholic Education Executive Director Jacinta Collins said the announcement would bring great relief to Catholic early childhood and care services across Australia.

"The Catholic education sector operates about 250 preschools and early learning centres educating nearly 5,000 children, as well offering before and after school care and vacation care to families at many Catholic primary schools across Australia," Ms Collins said.

"The government's rescue package will enable those services to keep their doors open for essential services workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I'm sure this announcement will bring great relief to operators and staff of these services, and to the families who need to utilise early learning and child care over the coming months," she said.

The government's package will enable services to waive gap fees for families who keep their children home, and families will be able to access an additional 20 absence days.

"The government's assurances that early learning and child care workers will be able to access the JobKeeper payment is very reassuring, given the uncertainty the sector has experienced in recent weeks."

The Catholic Education sector operates about 250 preschool and early learning centres educating nearly 5,000 children, as well as a large number of before and after school and vacation care services. Most services are located onsite with Catholic primary schools.

Nationally, Catholic schools educate more than 764,000 students – or one in five Australian students - in 1,746 schools, the vast majority of which are low-fee schools.