

MEDIA RELEASE

22 March 2013

Childcare, out of school hours care, working parents and national productivity

economic Security4Women (eS4W) welcomes the recent government announcements of increased investment in childcare and out of school hours care that will go some way to retaining the skills and experience of childcare workers and to exploring more flexible child care options: Both of which will lead to improved opportunities for working parents, especially mothers and increased productivity.

“The dynamics of the labour market are changing, and we must ensure we have a child care system to support those changes; one that gives working parents the flexibility they need to secure employment while reassuring them that their children have the highest quality care available” said Sandra Cook, chair of eS4W. “This increased funding for some wages in the sector is a good step to improving recruitment and retention in the industry. eS4W particularly favours the additional focus on Out of School Hours Services”.

“This increased investment is good for the nation as well as for parents and children” said Sally Jope, Acting Executive Officer. “We restrict a powerful driver of productivity in Australia when we lag behind our OECD equivalents in rates of female workforce participation. Restricted access to care for children once they start school limits the choices that many workers, particularly women, have in job selection and ultimately impacts on their economic security”.

“We will wait with interest for the results of the trials with Family Day Care Australia teaming up with shift workers; with Goodstart long day care centres extending their hours of operation and with out of school hours care, announced by Minister Ellis. The members of eS4W have advocated for increased attention to this care for many years, understanding that different local communities require different solutions”.

“We also recognise the increased investment in child care over the last three years and are appreciative of efforts thus far; however we are mindful of the complexity of increasing women’s participation in the workforce. That is why eS4W has written to the Prime Minister requesting the matter be referred to the Productivity Commission where an in-depth analysis can be made of the provision and financing of childcare and out of school care services” said Ms Cook who represents Business Professional Women Australia in eS4W.

“The Grattan Institute has already identified improvements to child care access and the reduction of tax disincentives as one major 'game changer' in seeking to improve national productivity” said Ms Marie Coleman, a representative of National Foundation of Australian Women, another member of eS4W. “The PC review needs to include consideration of changes to current policy settings for Family Tax Benefit Part B, provision patterns and user costs for child care (including for school age children) and as well, the introduction of measures to mitigate against the trends towards increasingly insecure work. Findings from the trials announced this week can be fed into such a review”.

Media contacts:

Sally Jope 0423198567

Sandra Cook 0409 608 344

Marie Coleman 0414 483 067