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MEDIA RELEASE

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EARLY CHILDHOOD PEAK BODIES COME TOGETHER TO HOST VICTORIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CARE ELECTION FORUM

Early Childhood Australia (ECA), Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) and the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) Victoria came together as hosts for the Victorian Early Childhood and Care Election Forum at Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday 10th November. Candidates were invited from major parties and the crossbench to discuss key policies and commitments for early childhood education and care ahead of the Victorian Election.

Attending candidates were:

- Brad Rowswell MP, Shadow Minister for Education (Liberal Party)
- Anasina Gray-Barberio MLC, Spokesperson for Early Childhood Education and Kindergarten (Victorian Greens)

Members and colleagues from across diverse early childhood settings joined the evening as in-person and virtual attendees. The Forum provided candidates with the opportunity to share their policy positions and to engage in a facilitated conversation informed by questions from early childhood. Topics raised by candidates included child safety and safeguarding, investment in early childhood provision, and the importance of the early childhood professional workforce.

Brad Rowswell MP, Shadow Minister for Education said that, *'Free Kinder is here to stay under a Wilson Liberal and Nationals Government, but the way Labor has rolled it out is putting real pressure on kinders, especially smaller, community-run services.'*

Brad continued, 'Our review will look at how to better support with compliance and administration, identify funding gaps, assess infrastructure and capacity, and grow the number of qualified educators, particularly in regional Victoria. It will also examine the sector-wide impact of Labor's new childcare and OSHC regulations because, while we fully support strong child safety standards, services forced to close by rising costs leave children without safe, reliable care.'

Brad said, 'Quality early learning sets children up for life. That starts with properly supporting the kinders and early childhood education and care services that deliver it.'



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There was good engagement at the forum from attendees with candidates, and additional areas of interest included:

- The need for stewardship of early childhood services to ensure that they are where children and families need them to be – and that under- and over-supply of early childhood services is addressed;
- How early childhood professionals can be best supported in their work with children and families – particularly for children with developmental difference, disability and living with complexity.

Anasina Gray-Barberio MLC, Education, Victorian Greens Spokesperson for Early Childhood Education and Kindergarten said that, *'Every child, irrespective of their disabilities, postcode and socio-economic status, deserves to have access to high quality early learning education and care.*

Anasina continued, *'Children's safety is at the centre of Greens' policies. We want to strengthen ECEC by fairly remunerating our educators and retaining our skilled workforce without compromising on the quality of services. We want to incorporate the First Nations' traditional ways, perspectives and frameworks into our education system because our ECEC centres need to be culturally safe. The Greens will continue to fight for free universal childcare.'*

ECA, ELAA and ACA Victoria represent the interests of members in advocating for high-quality early childhood education and care for children and families where they live.

ECA, ELAA and ACA Victoria encourage their respective members to remain engaged with their peak body and to continue in their advocacy for children, families, communities and the early childhood profession in the lead-up to the Victorian Election.

ENDS

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