New resources to strengthen inclusion in early childhood education and care

28 August 2023

The Government is focused on building the capability of families and carers of children with disability or developmental concerns in early childhood and education and care settings through new resources aimed at boosting inclusivity and building staff and educator capacity.

Delivering on the Government's commitments under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan, educators will be equipped with resources designed to foster more inclusive and supportive environments for young children and their families and start conversations about where to access wrap around supports.

Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth said the resources would fill existing knowledge gaps within the early childhood sector and will strengthen collaboration and coordination across both state, territory and Commonwealth programs and services.

"The first few years of a child's life are crucial to their overall wellbeing and development," Minister Rishworth said.

"For children with identified disability or emerging developmental concerns, their first interactions with early intervention programs and support services can be a predictor for their future education success.

"It is therefore vital to ensure that early childhood educators have the knowledge, skills and resources at their disposal to best support young children and their families in accessing available support pathways."

The resources will include guides on how to identify and communicate concerns about a child's development with their family, and advice on how to ensure children with identified and emerging disabilities are being supported in an inclusive way.

The resources will also support educators to work alongside families and carers to ensure consistency in supports and service delivery.

Minister for the NDIS Bill Shorten said "children with disability deserve the best possible start in life, their opportunities to grow and learn shouldn't be dictated by disability".

"The Government has listened closely to parents and representatives from the sector about the need for more information and resources to ensure young children with disability are able to fully participate in education and care services," Minister Shorten said.

"By working collaboratively across government and non-government sectors, we've been able to produce resources which complement existing supports within early childhood education and care settings."

Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly said participating in early education on the same basis as their peers helps children with disability to thrive not only in their early years but throughout life.

“We know that quality early childhood education delivers positive education and health outcomes, while also providing families and carers with opportunities to re-join the workforce,” Dr Aly said.

“This exciting initiative is in addition to resources recently released by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to help early childhood educators and service managers understand and meet their obligations to ensure the delivery of inclusive early learning.

“ACECQA also has resources available to help students and young people with disability and their carers navigate the Disability Standards for Education and the Disability Discrimination Act.”

The resources will be made publicly available and will be published online on the Department of Social Services website.

For more information on the Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan, visit Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan (Early Childhood TAP) | Department of Social Services, Australian Government (dss.gov.au) .

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