

MEDIA RELEASE

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Response to the recent ACT Budget and the Toward 2020 announcement

The Canberra Preschool Society acknowledges the innovation that has been made with respect to Preschool education in the ACT during the term of this Government. However, we are shocked at the proposed number of closures and the timing of the first of these (the end of 2006 immediately after the six month consultation period ends).

Realistically, Preschool Parent Associations and families of potential 2007 preschoolers need to be able to forward plan with certainty. The limited availability of childcare places makes this vital to the welfare of the family and child. To imply that the only way families can get certainty is to not register at preschools that may be closed, undermines the viability of those preschools. We believe that the timing of any closures should acknowledge a basic social responsibility within the communities themselves.

Parents of ACT preschoolers, along with the Government, are co-providers of preschool education and contribute approximately \$1 million in ongoing costs annually and have built up substantial assets for preschool use. Considering parents high level of commitment and active participation in the provision of an excellent preschool education, any changes should respect the co-provider relationship and incorporate fair transitional arrangements.

The Canberra Preschool Society values a quality preschool education and believes that ACT preschools should be best practice and provide for equitable access.

We support preschools that are viable from both an educational and operational perspective.

We oppose the closure of Tharwa Preschool and Primary School.

This school is in a rural area with no direct access to the standard of schooling experienced by other Preschools/Primary Schools throughout the territory. Our position is based upon our understanding of the location and nature of the Tharwa township.

Should closures proceed as proposed, we strongly oppose the closure of any viable Preschool at the end of 2006.

Many of these preschools have received enrolment registrations for 2007 and we feel that it is important to consider the stability of the family in its planning for existing and 2007 arrangements for childcare that suits employment and family circumstances.

There is a real need to acknowledge the high demand for childcare that often requires arrangements to be made well in advance and then confirmed when

the offer of a Preschool session has been made in November.

A delay of the proposed closures will allow for existing 2007 childcare arrangements to be maintained whilst providing parents with an adequate timeframe within which to make alternative arrangements as a result of future developments (closures).

We aim to assist future Preschool parents in making the right choices to enable their children to access Government Preschool education.

Carolyn Harkness President of the CPS 2006