Template Letter for Mayors: Urgent action required for ongoing kindergarten funding

Dear <insert MP name>

As the mayor of <insert council name> Council I write to you on behalf of all families in our community to strongly urge you to take action to secure ongoing funding for universal access to early childhood education (15 hours of kindergarten).

In 2015, almost all of Victoria’s 74,000 children in kindergarten have had access to a 15 hour program, including <insert number of children> currently enrolled in four-year-old kindergarten in <insert council name> Council. Currently the Victorian Government funds 10 hours and the Federal Government funds five hours, with the community contributing 35 per cent through parent fees, fundraising and council support.

Families have enthusiastically taken up the extra hours and it has particular benefits for working families, rural families, and disadvantaged children and their families.

The 2015 Productivity Commission report into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning recommended continued Federal investment in preschool programs. Further the Federal Government then went on to develop the *Jobs for Families* package which included Federal funding to help meet the cost of providing 15 hours of kindergarten. However, the current National Partnership Agreement expires in December 2017 and the Federal Government has not committed to continuing its funding. These continual short-term funding arrangements make it difficult for councils and kindergartens to plan, and it’s disruptive for parents.

I urge you to raise community and council concerns with your Ministerial colleagues, party leaders, and through Parliamentary question time to specifically seek a solution to kindergarten funding uncertainty.

<insert council name> Council seeks your support in strongly representing the interests of your electorate to ensure the rights of our families and children to attend 15 hours of kindergarten in an accessible, affordable and flexible way is achieved beyond 2017.

If the Federal Government does not continue to fund five of the 15 hours of kindergarten, working parents in our municipality will face a potential $2000 per year per child in additional child care costs, which is simply unaffordable for many. The direct impact will be reduced participation and learning outcomes for our children, which is unacceptable.

Insert statistics about kinder facilities in your municipality eg:

At (insert council name) we fund (est. DOLLAR AMOUNT) per year / provide “peppercorn rent” to support xxx kindergartens in the communitiy / have invested around xxxx in building new kindergarten facilities in the last xxx years to maintain our (NUMBER OF KINDER FACILITIES) for our (NUMBER ATTENDING) children who attend 15 hours of kindergarten.

This is a vital start to our children’s formal education to prepare them ahead of attending primary school education.

Our council would like to brief you on this important issue further, and would be grateful for a time to do this prior to the next Federal Budget in May 2017.

I can be contacted on (insert contact details).

Yours sincerely,

(name, position, council)