

## **Outside School Hours Council of Australia welcomes COVID-19 lockdown support payments**

The Outside School Hours Council of Australia (OSHCA) has welcomed the Federal Government's recent announcement that it will provide targeted support for outside school hours care (OSHC) services impacted by extended COVID-19 lockdowns.

The announcement follows considerable engagement between OSHCA and the Government regarding the viability of the sector, which has continued to operate at a loss through consecutive lockdowns around Australia in order to ensure the continuity of OSHC care for families who need it.

Despite record-low attendances as a result of state Government-mandated lockdowns, OSHC services are required to remain open to provide care for vulnerable children and those of essential workers – the cumulative impact of which has been debilitating for a large number of services.

Commenting on the announcement, a spokesperson for the group said: *“We strongly support the Government’s announcement, which will provide much needed relief to families, our staff, and the national OSHC sector more broadly, following what has been a tremendously tough year for the industry.”*

*“We’ve greatly appreciated the opportunity to work closely with the Government over recent months to ensure the specific challenges of the OSHC sector are well understood, and the undeniable community need for OSHC services is recognised.”*

*“The OSHC sector is one of Australia’s fastest growing childcare segments as workforce participation grows and more families choose to work flexibly, and as such, is widely considered an essential service and one critical to Australia’s post-pandemic recovery.”*

*“It’s therefore crucial the sector is in a position to maintain operations and staffing levels at its centres, so the services can pick themselves back up again once lockdowns end and demand returns.”*

*“These support payments will help protect the structural integrity of our sector, the jobs of thousands of employees, and our ability to continue providing safe, accessible care for Australian families.”*

**ENDS**