



## **Australian Education Union - Federal Office**

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### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONCERN: CALL FOR BUDGET BOOST AND FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRESCHOOLS**

Increased investment in Early Childhood Education has been identified as a key priority in next Tuesday's federal budget by Australia's peak public education organisation.

The Australian Education Union is demanding a Commonwealth contribution to preschool education funding.

The Union's Federal President Pat Byrne says that everyone now understands the critical importance of early childhood education to children's development and life opportunities.

"Yet, too many children *don't have access to preschool at all*, and this not only denies them the long-lasting benefits but has longer term consequences for Australia's growth, intellectually, economically and socially" Ms Byrne said.

"We face a dual challenge. The first is ensuring that all children in Australia actually have access to preschool education. The second is ensuring that all preschool education is of the highest quality, with small groups, appropriately qualified staff and enriching, well-equipped and caring environments."

"This is an issue to goes to the heart of social equity in Australia."

"Education represents the long term solution to overcoming poverty and disadvantage in Australia. It's particularly critical for groups with special needs, but often the very people who most need access to education are those most frequently denied it. "

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, especially in remote areas, are generally under-represented at preschool. There is also real unfairness in the distribution of IESEP (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program) funding. 30% is being directed to private schools, despite the fact that they have just 12% of indigenous enrolments."

"It's time that the Commonwealth Government accepted some responsibility to work with the states and territories in the funding and planning of preschool education".

"The AEU is seeking a funding commitment from the Commonwealth Government so that all children will have access to at least one year of high quality free, public preschool education, and an Equity Program to address areas of special need, including specially targeted programs for indigenous students" Ms Byrne said.

**For further information, please contact:**

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