



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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MEDIA RELEASE

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40,000 Australian children denied a preschool education

The Australian Education Union has today, in Canberra, launched the report of a national inquiry into preschool education.

The national inquiry commissioned by the Australian Education Union has found that children across Australia are being denied access to quality, free, public preschool education.

Kathy Walker, the Independent Inquirer who conducted the National Inquiry on behalf of the AEU explained that the major finding in her report was a lack of consistency in the sector across the country. This inconsistency includes funding, child ratios, curriculum, costs, delivery hours and terminology.

"Australian parents and teachers all recognise the benefits that preschool has on the development of a child. But the sector is difficult to access for many parents with costs a major factor, particularly in Victoria and NSW.

"A lack of funding from both State and Federal Governments has resulted in preschool being inaccessible for a lot of families for a range of reasons including location factors, transport availability, differences in age of entry, and a lack of qualified teachers.

"One of the major recommendations of this Inquiry is that a national plan be developed to ensure equity and access to a high quality preschool education. A national framework must be developed and coordinated through MCEETYA and DEST", Ms Walker said.

AEU Federal President, Pat Byrne, said that a national under-resourcing of preschool education underpins many of the barriers that currently prevent universal access to high quality preschool education, resulting in 40,000 children missing out, including significant numbers of Indigenous children.

"It is widely recognised by parents, teachers and researchers that children who attend preschool have a better chance of succeeding at school and later in life.

"We are calling on the Federal Government and Opposition parties to make a commitment to Australian children. Currently, the Federal Government provides absolutely no funding to the sector at all and as a result there is no national vision for the sector and remains inaccessible to more than 40,000 Australian children," Ms. Byrne said.

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