



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

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### **42,000 Australian children still missing out on preschool education**

New Government figures show that there is little improvement in children's access to pre-school education in Australia.

An analysis of the data contained within the "Report on Government Services, 2005" by the Australian Education Union (AEU) shows that children's access to preschool still depends too much on who they are and where they live.

AEU Federal President, Ms. Pat Byrne said, "More than 42,000 children in Australia continue to miss out on access to preschool education, despite some increase in enrolments and participation rates over the last twelve months. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities and children living in rural and remote areas are still more likely to be missing out.

"In NSW and Victoria, because preschool is generally separated from schools, parents are forced to pay high fees in order to provide access to preschool for their children. The result of this is that these states contribute far less to children's services than other states.

"These inequities must be addressed. There is almost universal recognition of the vital importance of preschool education for children's development and life opportunities, yet efforts to develop a national plan for early childhood education seem to have slipped down the agenda", Ms Byrne said.

"This report shows that there is a desperate need to address this issue and quickly. Australian children should not be denied the first steps in their education and it is paramount that the Federal and State Governments address this issue.

"The AEU is calling on the Federal Government to develop a national plan and provide funding support to guarantee that every child in Australia has access to high quality, free preschool education," Ms Byrne said.

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