



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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NEW REPORT REVEALS URGENT NEED FOR ACTION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A new report released by the Australian Education Union today shows that as many as 57,000 children missed out on preschool last year. The report analysing Government data estimates that over 21% of children did not attend preschool in 2006.

Along with disabled children and children from non-English speaking backgrounds indigenous children are more likely to miss out. The report found around half of eligible indigenous children did not enrol for pre-school.

Parents in New South Wales are paying more for preschool per week than any other state, at the median weekly cost of \$40. Victorian parents paid \$16.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne said that preschool was a crucial learning period for young children and set the basis for their early schooling years.

"It is outrageous that so many children are missing out on crucial preschool learning.

"Internationally we have a poor record in this area – Australia currently ranks lowest of 24 OECD countries on education spending for 3-4 year olds."

"All three and four year olds should have access to at least 20 hours of high quality free preschool education.

"It is also crucial that we address the current inequity which sees children in some states and territories able to access free, public preschool education while those in other states are required to pay."

The AEU is calling for a national approach to early childhood education that includes:

1. Guarantee access to 20 hours of high quality, free preschool education for all three and four year olds in Australia.
2. Ensuring that early childhood education is of high quality.
3. Give priority access to two years high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education to all three and four year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
4. Improve equity of access for children with special needs and children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
5. Provide adequate levels of high quality early childhood education and care for 0 to 3 year olds to meet family and community needs.
6. Develop the links and coordination between early childhood services to provide a more seamless continuum of education and care.

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