



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, 3006
Phone : +61 (0)3 9693 1800 Fax : +61 (0)3 9693 1805
Email : aeu@aeufederal.org.au Website : www.aeufederal.org.au

29 January, 2007

AEU WELCOMES NATIONAL STRATEGY AS AUSTRALIA LAGS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Australian Education Union today welcomed the announcement by the Australian Labor Party for a national early childhood education strategy as research revealed tens of thousands of Australian children are missing out on vital early education.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne said the commitment for a future federal ALP government to work with state and territory governments, in consultation with the early childhood education and care sectors was an important step forward.

“Government data suggests at least 43,000 or nearly 17% of Australian children missed out on preschool in the year before school in 2005,” said Ms. Byrne.

“At the moment whether children get this vital education depends on where they live and what their parents can afford.”

“By proposing to legislate for a universal right of access to early childhood education, the ALP has recognised the critical importance of preschool education to children’s development and future life opportunities.”

“Australia has the worst record of developed countries in this area, ranking the lowest of 24 OECD countries on education spending for 3-4 year olds.”

“The picture is even worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with only 56% of four year olds attending preschool.”

“As well as acknowledging the need for cooperation between stakeholders, the strategy also recognises the need for additional funding to ensure that programs are delivered by qualified teachers.”

“It is critical that Australia adopts a national approach to early childhood education which guarantees access to high quality, free preschool education so that all Australian children, no matter where they live, are able to gain the benefits which we know come from such an opportunity.”

For further information, please contact:

Pat Byrne
AEU Federal President
041169-3244

Erin Farley
Media
0409 510 879