



PRESCHOOL FUNDING

A LIFETIME OF VALUE



As teachers we understand that education is the key to an equitable society, and that investment in quality early childhood education reaps significant long term benefits for children, their families and the community. We are committed to supporting Universal Access to Preschool – so that every child, everywhere has the right to be given an opportunity to the best start in life.

Over the past decade, through National Partnerships with Commonwealth, state and territory governments the early childhood education sector has been reformed through legislation to provide Universal Access funding to enable all children access to 15 hours per week of preschool education in the year before full-time schooling by a four year, university qualified teacher.

The legislation addressed key quality issues and through the National Quality Framework staff qualification requirements and educator-to-child ratios were improved in addition to the implementation of a national curriculum (Early Years Learning Framework).

Despite these reforms government funding of the sector remains one of the lowest funded early childhood education sectors in the OECD. Australia sits well below average, ranking third last in terms of pre-primary investment as a proportion of GDP. Universal Access has seen preschool enrolments increase from 12% to 91% and in 2018, Commonwealth funding to support Universal Access was only \$427 million.

Quality early childhood education provides not only lasting benefits for children's cognitive and social development but also significant social and economic returns to the individual, society and government. The 'Lifting Our Game' report estimates for every dollar spent on early childhood education returns an economic benefit between 2–4 dollars.

COST VS BENEFIT

FOR EVERY ONE DOLLAR INVESTED AN ESTIMATED \$2–4 IS RETURNED TO BENEFIT BOTH THE CHILD AND COMMUNITY.

**\$427
MILLION**

✓ Improved employment and earning potential	✓ Reduced rate of incarceration
✓ Increased high school graduation	✓ Improved school readiness
✓ Reduced reliance on welfare	✓ Reduced special education use
✓ Improved commitment to schooling and reduced absences	✓ Increase tertiary education attainment



Australia needs a high quality, permanently funded preschool sector.

Public preschool education is every child's right, and preschool holds an important role in setting the foundations for cognitive, physical, emotional, social and language development which benefits a child's learning potential for the rest of their life.

OUR CHILDREN NEED

- 1 Guaranteed permanent funding for Universal Access to preschool for all children the year before full-time schooling by a four year university degree qualified teacher for 15 hours per week.**

Current funding of Universal Access expires in 2019 leaving the future early education prospects of young children and those working within the early childhood education sector in a state of uncertainty. The benefits of Universal Access are clear and need to be secured with adequate permanent funding.

- 2 Universal Access for all three year old children.**

Extending Universal Access to preschool to include the two years prior to full-time schooling provides further social and cognitive educational outcomes and increased benefits both to the child and to society in general. The benefits of two years of preschool are even greater for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- 3 Restore permanent funding of the National Quality Framework.**

Without consultation with state and territory governments, Commonwealth funding for the National Quality Framework was cut in June 2018. A quality preschool program is the best indicator of achieving improved educational outcomes throughout a child's life. As such, funding for the National Quality Framework should not only be restored but minimum standards should be increased to achieve continuous improvement in quality early childhood education program delivery.

- 4 Implementation of a strong and effective workforce strategy for the sector.**

A qualified and skilled workforce is key to delivering quality preschool programs. A strong workforce strategy which includes elements such as staff qualification, educator-to-child ratios, preschool resourcing, group size and educational curriculum are important considerations along with workforce recruitment and retention to provide a sustainable profession for early childhood educators.



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