



▶ Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in New South Wales

What is Universal Access?

Universal Access to early childhood education is an Australian Government commitment to provide all children with access to a quality early childhood education program by 2013. These programs will be delivered by a university trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before formal schooling. In New South Wales, this year is known as preschool.

The Council of Australian Governments has endorsed a National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education which provides \$970 million over five years to 2012–13 to implement the Universal Access commitment. The Australian Government has committed \$278.6 million to achieve the Universal Access goal in partnership with the New South Wales Government over the next five years. Following this, the Australian Government will provide up to \$450 million nationally per year to support the ongoing delivery of Universal Access.

Federal and state government responsibilities in this area do not change; the New South Wales Government remains responsible for ensuring the provision of early childhood education programs in New South Wales.

Benefits of the Universal Access commitment

- Access to a quality early childhood education program for all children.
- Children will acquire basic skills for life and learning through engaging in quality play-based early learning programs.
- Early learning facilitates the transition to primary school and has a direct and positive effect on future educational, employment and health outcomes.
- Existing barriers to participation, including cost, access and convenience for parents, will be addressed.
- All Indigenous four year olds in remote communities will have access to an early childhood education program.
- Over the longer term, early childhood education generates substantial cost savings through improved health and productivity and reduced expenditure on social services.

Why is Universal Access to early childhood education being implemented?

- Nationally, around 30 per cent of eligible children do not attend an early childhood education program in the year before formal schooling.
- Research shows those children who would benefit most from preschool are the most likely to miss out.

How will Universal Access be implemented in New South Wales by 2013?

Currently 82 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in preschool. The New South Wales Government is committed to:

- increasing preschool hours from an average of 12.5 to 15
- improving the affordability of community-based preschool, including through the immediate provision of significant increased funding for 85 per cent of community preschools. Funding for community preschools will increase per year by:
 - \$420 for children in high income local government areas (bringing the total to \$1200)
 - \$1386 for children in low income local government areas (bringing the total to \$2986)
 - \$1300 for Indigenous children (bringing the total to \$3300 per child); and
 - \$1250 higher for children from low income families (bringing the total to \$3000 per child)
- establishing an early childhood teacher contribution scheme to offset costs for licensed community-based, private and mobile services for the employment, retention or professional development of early childhood teachers
- increasing the number of four year university trained early childhood teachers
- reducing barriers to participation through providing additional funding for community preschools
- improving data collection.

Who do I contact for more information?



Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda



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