



▶ Universal access to early childhood education in the Northern Territory

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 the Northern Territory, 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 \$15.9 million to achieve the Universal Access goal in partnership with the Northern Territory 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, state and territory government responsibilities in this area do not change; the Northern Territory Government remains responsible for ensuring the provision of early childhood education programs in the Northern Territory.

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 the Northern Territory by 2013?

Currently 89 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in preschool. The Northern Territory Government is committed to:

- increasing preschool participation by developing a territory wide plan for preschool delivery by July 2010, with a focus on small remote communities and town camps
- increasing the number of four year university trained teachers through incentives to upgrade qualifications
- increasing the available hours for attending a preschool program from 12 to 15 hours per week, for 40 weeks a year from January 2012.

Who do I contact for more information?



Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda



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