



▶ Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in Queensland

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 mid-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 Queensland, this year is known as kindergarten.

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 \$252 million to achieve the Universal Access goal in partnership with the Queensland 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 Queensland Government remains responsible for ensuring the provision of early childhood education programs in Queensland.

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 kindergarten are the most likely to miss out.

How will Universal Access be implemented in Queensland by mid-2013?

Currently 29 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in kindergarten. The Queensland Government is committed to:

- increasing the enrolments of children in kindergarten in a variety of settings, particularly in long day care
- lifting delivery of kindergarten to 15 hours a week from the current rate of around 12.8 hours a week
- taking action to improve attendance, especially for disadvantaged and Indigenous children
- progressively increasing the number of early childhood trained teachers
- engaging with the child care sector to ensure delivery meets the needs of parents.

Who do I contact for more information?



Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda



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