



▶ Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in South Australia

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 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 South Australia, 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 \$65.4 million to achieve Universal Access in partnership with the South Australian 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 South Australian Government remains responsible for ensuring the provision of early childhood education programs in South Australia.

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 school.
- Research shows those children who would benefit most from preschool are the most likely to miss out.

How will Universal Access be implemented in South Australia by 2013?

Currently 88 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in preschool. The South Australian Government is committed to:

- increasing preschool attendance from 11 to 15 hours per week, particularly in government preschools in disadvantaged areas
- maintaining affordability for parents
- increasing the number of four year university trained early childhood teachers
- providing subsidies for teachers in child care centres in communities with unmet demand for early childhood education
- improving data, especially in relation to attendance information.

Additionally, pilots are currently in progress to gauge the implications of the National Partnership on staffing and hours of work.

Who do I contact for more information?



Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda



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