



## ▶ Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in Victoria

### 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 Victoria, 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 \$210.6 million to achieve the Universal Access goal in partnership with the Victorian 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 Victorian Government remains responsible for ensuring the provision of early childhood education programs in Victoria.

### 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 Victoria by 2013?

Currently 96 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in kindergarten. The Victorian Government is committed to:

- increasing kindergarten attendance from 10 to 15 hours
- working with local government to plan and deliver 15 hours of kindergarten
- increasing participation of disadvantaged and Indigenous children
- using current centres and building new services to meet the additional demand for services
- increasing the number of four year university trained early childhood teachers
- priority allocation for vulnerable children.

### Who do I contact for more information?



Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

[www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy\\_Agenda](http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda)



mychild Information Line: 13 36 84

Text telephone for the hearing impaired (TTY): FreeCALL™ 1800 554 609