



## ▶ Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in Western 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 by 2013. These programs will be delivered in a diversity of settings by a university trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before full-time schooling. In Western Australia, 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 \$98.4 million to achieve the Universal Access goal in partnership with the Western 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 responsibilities in this area do not change; the Western Australian Government remains responsible for ensuring the provision of early childhood education programs in Western 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 full-time 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 Western Australia by 2013?

Currently 95 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in kindergarten. The Western Australian Government is committed to:

- increasing the hours of kindergarten offered at public and participating non-government schools to 15 per week – the roll-out will be phased, beginning in 2010
- providing additional facilities to ensure schools can expand existing programs and provide access at a child's local public school
- progressively increasing the number of early childhood teachers
- holding an inquiry into the provision of kindergarten in child care settings.

### 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)



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