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Minister for Education and Training
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MEDIA RELEASE

3 February 2018

Preschool funding boost

The Turnbull Government has locked in a \$440 million funding boost for preschool education and is urging states to boost the enrolment and attendance rates of preschoolers in early learning.

Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham said the extra funding would extend the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education into 2019 to more than 348,000 children to ensure they have access to 15 hours of quality early learning in the year before school.

“The Turnbull Government’s \$440 million funding boost secures education opportunities for more than 348,000 of Australia’s littlest learners,” Minister Birmingham said.

“The research is clear about the positive impact quality early education and care has for children, especially as preparation for school.

“This is an investment that we’ve seen gets results but could get even better results.

“Between our \$427.8 million in 2018 and \$440 million in 2019 for preschool as well as our overhaul of the child care system and \$2.5 billion extra investment, the Turnbull Government’s commitment to early childhood education and care and is clear.”

Minister Birmingham said his focus for the future of preschool policy would be to ensure it was as effective as possible.

Minister Birmingham said he was raising concerns with states and territories about [new data](#) showing nearly one in 10 children (92.4 per cent) the program was supposed to support weren’t enrolled in preschool. The best available data from the ABS also shows that only around 70 per cent of children enrolled in dedicated preschool were attending for the full 15 hours a week.

That compares to current methodology used to assess performance under National Partnership arrangements that’s reporting states and territories are achieving enrolment rates over 100 per cent.

“There’s clearly an opportunity to work with states and territories to ensure our funding for preschool is best supporting all children, especially those who most need it,” Minister Birmingham said.

“The new analysis from the Productivity Commission highlights the way enrolments have been calculated to date meant they could be flawed by showing all students in the year before school had been enrolled by comparing four and five year olds in preschool with just the population of four year olds.

“An even bigger challenge we need to confront is that for all the funding support provided over nearly a decade of agreements, more than a quarter of children enrolled for 15 hours a week in dedicated preschools aren’t attending for the full 15 hours.

“That means some children in the earliest years of education are starting behind the pack.

“We must improve the quality of the data we are collecting as well as confront the attendance problems we’re seeing.

“Too often, the students not getting the full 15 hours of preschool come from disadvantaged backgrounds. It’s unacceptable that over 23,000 children in the year before school are not enrolled in preschool and a chronic failure that around 40,000 of the children enrolled for 15 hours per week in dedicated preschools are not attending when they should.

“States must find ways to motivate the parents of educationally vulnerable preschoolers to both enrol and attend, otherwise we risk a lost generation of children who start school too far behind their counterparts.

“This extension of the National Partnership gives us time to work through these issues and develop an enduring policy beyond 2019 that ensures children are not just enrolling, but attending and benefiting from preschool programs in readiness for school.

“I’m looking forward to working with my state and territory colleagues to deliver preschool services that get the best bang for buck to support this and future generations.”

Enrolment data

Jurisdictions	State-specific Year Before Full Time School (YBFS) enrolment rate in preschool as per RoGS 2018 (a)	Enrolment rates of four and five year old children in preschool as per UANP 2016 performance reporting (b)		
		All children	Indigenous	Vulnerable & disadvantaged
VIC	98.4%	100%	100%	100%
NSW	84.9%	100%	98%	88%
SA	94.2%	100%	100%	100%
NT	92.5%	100%	100%	100%
WA	96.0%	100%	100%	96.5%
ACT	98.3%	100%	100%	100%
TAS	96.2%	100%	100%	100%
Qld	93.8%	100%	93%	96%
Aust.	92.4%	100%	100%	100%

(a) Enrolment data from *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016 (cat. no. 4240.0)*. Enrolment data is based on the location of the child’s residence. Estimated residential population data from *Australian Demographic Statistics (cat. no. 3101.0)* and *Births, Australia (cat. no. 3301.0)*. The YBFS population is an estimate of a single year cohort for the population that will transition to full time schooling in the following year. The preschool starting age varies across jurisdictions. The enrolment rate is calculated by dividing the number children enrolled in preschool in the YBFS with the estimated population of children aged in the YBFS in each jurisdiction.

(b) Enrolment data from *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016 (cat. no. 4240.0)* and supplementary data included for some jurisdictions. Enrolment data is based on the location of the child’s main service provider. Estimated residential population data from *Australian Demographic Statistics, Jun 2016 (cat. no. 3101.0)*. The enrolment rate is calculated by dividing the number of four and five year old children enrolled in preschool with the estimated population of four year olds, where this results in estimates greater than 100 per cent, results have been capped to 100 per cent. ‘Vulnerable and disadvantaged’ refers to children living in SEIFA Quintile 1 locations based on the ABS SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

Proportion of children enrolled in dedicated preschools for 600 hours per year, who attend approximately 600 hours per year

Jurisdictions	All children	Indigenous	Vulnerable and disadvantaged
NSW	80%	69%	73%
Vic.	69%	60%	61%
QLD	86%	85%	85%
SA	59%	41%	54%
WA	61%	43%	55%
Tas.	79%	75%	76%
NT	46%	21%	22%
ACT	68%	66%	68%
Aus.	70%	58%	64%

Sources: ABS Table Builder using ABS *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016 – New linking method (cat. No. 4240.0)*.

Notes: The numerator includes 4 and 5 year old children attending for 600 hours in a dedicated preschool, the denominator includes 4 and 5 year old children enrolled for 600 hours or more per year in a dedicated preschool. State and territory attendance data is based on the location of the child’s main service provider. For some children, the state or territory of a child’s service provider will be different to the state or territory the child resides. ‘Vulnerable and disadvantaged’ refers to children living in SEIFA Quintile 1 locations based on the ABS SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

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