

Federal government must guarantee long-term preschool funding



AEU

A new report into the benefits of early childhood education shows the Federal Government must guarantee universal access to 15 hours of four-year-old preschool after 2017, and extend funding to ensure the same access for three-year-olds, the AEU said today.

The report, released today by the Mitchell Institute, shows that an extra year of pre-school for three-year-olds would have positive impacts for all children, and be one of the most effective ways to help disadvantaged children.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that the report backed other research which emphasised the huge benefits of early childhood education for children's development.

"We know the benefits of providing high-quality early childhood education to children, yet we still do not have a federal funding commitment to four-year old preschool beyond 2017.

"The Coalition has repeatedly refused to make this funding permanent despite the proven benefits that come from giving children a head start on learning.

"It is ironic that Education Minister Simon Birmingham is talking about the possibility of funding for three-year old preschool, when he can't guarantee long-term funding for four-year-olds.

"We need to make 15 hours per week of early childhood education, taught by a university-trained teacher, universally available to all children from the age of three.

"This investment in our children will improve their readiness for school and boosts results in the long-term.

"While there are many three-year-olds benefiting from quality preschool already, we do not have the funding to guarantee universal access to 15 hours of preschool for every three-year old.

"Australia already invests far less in early childhood education than the OECD average, and we need to recognise the

importance of preparing our children for a life of learning.

Minister Birmingham has said in response to the Mitchell Institute report that they are looking at international models and talking to state leaders about the issue.

“He needs to do more than talk, he needs to take the lead and work with the states and territories to ensure that all children have access to quality preschool from the age of three,” Ms Haythorpe said.



Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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