Preschools suffer as Turnbull won’t commit to 2018 funding

Parents and preschool teachers and co-educators still have no certainty that four-year-old preschool will be funded in full beyond 2017, due to Malcolm Turnbull’s failure to commit to funding the successful program.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said a delegation of preschool educators would visit Education Minister Simon Birmingham’s South Australian office today, and warned many four-year-old children will miss out on the 15 hours of preschool they need to give them a headstart on their education if the Government fails to deliver crucial funding.

“Preschools can’t guarantee their staff will have jobs next year, given they don’t know whether the Federal Government will fund preschool education next year,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Malcolm Turnbull’s refusal to support this program means jobs are at risk and children could miss out on the vital boost to their learning that quality preschool provides.

“Centres can’t plan to meet community demand without a funding commitment from the Turnbull Government. They can’t manage enrolments, plan learning programs or invest in staff when they don’t know whether their services will be funded.

“When parents and educators visit his office today, Simon Birmingham needs to answer the question – will the Federal Government fund 15 hours of preschool for four-year olds in 2018 or not?”

The delegation will deliver over 14,000 postcards, signed by parents and preschool educators, as well as a petition with over 5500 signatures, pleading with Minister Birmingham to put an end to this uncertainty.

“Early childhood education is funded by both federal and state governments, but the Turnbull Government has so far refused to commit their share of the funding beyond December 2017. Without that funding the goal of providing 15 hours of preschool to every four-year-old is at risk.

“Preschool prepares children for success. It means they start school prepared for learning and thriving. Children who attend preschool start prep with a bigger vocabulary, stronger basic skills and better learning habits.

“Primary school teachers report children who miss out on preschool start their schooling six months behind. Access to preschool education should not depend on parents’ capacity to pay. Every child deserves the chance to benefit from early childhood learning – regardless of their background.

“Preschool employees are primarily women, often working part-time. They are also passionate educators who make an invaluable contribution to the lives and future of their young students. This uncertainty is making it harder for centres to retain the quality staff they need.

“Minister Birmingham and Malcolm Turnbull need to show families they care about four year old learning,” Ms Haythorpe said.

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