Invest in three-year-olds, invest in the nation



Australia’s youngest children are at risk of being left behind due to the ongoing failure of the Federal and some state governments to invest in three-year-old preschool.

The Australian Education Union is continuing to call on the federal government to invest in two years of early education for all Australian children before they start school.

“The evidence is clear. Children have the best opportunity to reach their full potential when they have at least two years of high quality, play-based learning in the years prior to school,” said AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe.

“Importantly, preschool education must be delivered by qualified and professional early childhood teachers.

“By investing in three-year-old preschool, governments are investing in the future of our nation. Children who attend preschool for two years are shown to do better at school, to stay at school longer, to be more likely to continue their education beyond school and to be employed in the workforce.

"Modelling conducted in 2019 by PwC shows that for every dollar invested in preschool, Australia receives a dividend of twice that over the life of a child.

“The AEU has been calling for the federal government to extend preschool funding to three-year-olds for many years.

“This is best practice internationally, with OECD data showing other nations have long recognised the value of investment in two years of high quality early learning.

“In the absence of federal government leadership, states like Victoria and the ACT have stepped up, and SA Labor has made a commitment to invest in three-year-old preschool.
“It’s well past time for the federal government to show leadership and make this critical investment in the future of young Australians.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026