

LONG-TERM 15 HOURS KINDER FUNDING & QUALITY NEEDED

National Partnerships at risk

In November 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the National Agenda of Universal Access to 15 hours of preschool a week for four year-olds. This was closely followed by the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care in 2009. Funding to the states and territories has been in place since then through successive National Partnership Agreements.

The Australian Government has not committed ongoing funding for *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education* beyond December 2019; and in May 2018 it decided to withdraw from the National Partnership on the *National Quality Agenda* – the system overseeing regulation and quality assessment of early childhood education and care services.

Why are the National Partnerships important?

All governments, children and families benefit from a joint national approach to the funding, regulation and quality assessment of early childhood education and care services:

- We now have 96 per cent of Victorian preschoolers with access to a high quality 15 hour early childhood education program and 75 per cent of services nationally meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standard.
- Australia's jointly governed Partnership Agreements uphold children's best interests through universal access to preschool and a world-class quality system of scale and effectiveness.
- These reforms have underpinned significant advances in reducing vulnerability and increasing school readiness as evidenced by the Australian Early Development Census.
- The *National Partnerships* are the mechanism that bind this system together for the benefit of 1.3 million children and 900,000 families accessing early education and care.

Recent reports *Lifting Our Game*; *Gonski Report 2*; and the Royal Commission's report into institutional child sexual abuse have all highlighted the need for a stable funding and quality base for our youngest children, with national oversight and investment.

Our messages to the Australian Government

Permanent kindergarten funding and a quality assessment system are vital:

- Australian children deserve the best start with a high quality, stable education
- Victorian families cannot contribute any more funding to send their children to kinder
- There is irrefutable international and national evidence linking preschool attendance to improved student results in numeracy, reading and spelling
- For every \$1 invested by governments in early childhood education, there is a \$2 - \$4 return through higher wages, more tax revenue, reduced school and criminal justice expenditure.

We urge the Australian Government to:

1. Provide ongoing funding for your share of 15 hours kindergarten costs, and
2. Deliver an enduring funding arrangement for 15 hours kindergarten beyond 2019, plus a long-term commitment for the National Quality Agenda.

Find out more:

mav.asn.au/news-resources/campaigns/kindergarten and ilovekinder.org.au