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](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education/early_childhood/quality_agenda/national_partnership.pdf) 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 Agreementsuphold 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*](https://docs.education.gov.au/node/50516) *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.**