

New directions for early childhood education: Universal access to early learning for 4 year olds ^[1]

Author: Rudd, K, & Macklin, J.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

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Executive Summary

Investing in human capital formation delivers significant benefits to individuals, society and the economy. International research demonstrates that earlier investment yields a higher rate of return. Australia's investment in education across the spectrum has been low by international standards, and to compete in the new world economy and guarantee our future prosperity, Australia needs an education revolution. Federal Labor will begin this education revolution by focusing on where learning begins, in the early years. Under our plan:

- all Australian 4 year olds will have enshrined in a new Commonwealth Early Childhood Education Act a universal right to access early play-based learning and development programs delivered by degree-qualified teachers;
- these programs will be funded for 15 hours per week, and delivered across a diversity of early childhood settings – public and private – as Labor is concerned with the quality of the learning, not where it takes place;
- universal access to early learning programs to be achieved five years after passage of the new Act;
- there will be a new Commonwealth investment of \$450 million per year when universal access is achieved;
- fees and charges for parents will not increase as a result of the expansion of learning programs;
- a package of complementary policies designed to boost the early childhood workforce will be implemented;
- an Early Years Learning Framework will be developed;
- early childhood infrastructure will be expanded; and
- priority for early learning will be underlined by transferring responsibility for early childhood into the Commonwealth Department of Education.

Our plan will be developed in partnership with States and Territories, and in consultation with the early childhood education and care sectors.

Related link:

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