








EARLY LEARNING POLICY GUIDE 2019







Early Learning
**EVERYONE
BENEFITS**



Australia needs:	The Coalition (Liberal Party— Nationals) say:	The Labor Party say:	The Greens say:
A national strategy for early childhood	NO 	YES 	YES 
<p>Australia's first Early Years Strategy, encompassing early childhood development, family support and play-based learning.</p>		<p>Labor recognises that current programs and funding for early childhood development is spread across a number of departments. If elected, Labor will work to improve policy coordination and evaluation across government.</p>	<p>Greens support the development of a comprehensive national 'Early Years Strategy' that recognises the importance of early childhood development, family support and play based learning.</p>
Two days of early learning each week for each child	NO, BUT ... 	NO, BUT ... 	YES 
<p>Access to at least two days per week of subsidised, high-quality early learning for all children, irrespective of their parents' work or activity.</p>	<p>In families that do not meet the activity test, children are restricted to 12 hours of subsidised early learning per week. The activity test is waived where children qualify for the Safety Net.</p>	<p>Labor will review the impact of the Child Care Subsidy system on vulnerable children. The activity test will be abolished for three-year-olds (joining four-year-olds) who attend preschool. Subsidies will be increased to 100% (of the capped rate) for families that earn up to \$69,527 and meet the activity test.</p>	<p>The activity test will be abolished for all families. Child care will be fee-free for 80 per cent of Australian families, including all families on household incomes under \$171,959. Subsidies will be available for households earning up to \$351,248.</p>



Two years of preschool/ kindergarten	NO, BUT ... 	YES 	YES+ 
Funding for two years of preschool/ kindergarten for each child before starting school.	Funding is provided for one year of preschool/ kindergarten, in the year before school.	Universal access to 15 hours per week of early childhood education for two years before school, with a second year available from 2021.	Universal access to 24 hours per week of early childhood education for two years before school. +Extra marks for offering 24 hours per week.
Funding certainty for preschool/ kindergarten	NO, BUT ... 	YES 	YES 
A long-term funding agreement for universal access to preschool/ kindergarten programs.	The Government stated in April 2019 that it would 'continue to work with the states and territories to support a longer-term plan'.	Labor promises to 'lock in permanent funding to the existing universal access program for 4 year olds'	Ongoing funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.
Addressing disadvantage	PARTLY 	PARTLY 	YES 
Additional strategies to improve participation in early learning by children experiencing disadvantage.	This year's Budget includes \$4.9 million for participation strategies. However, current restrictions on access to early learning (via the activity test) disadvantage some of the most vulnerable children.	Labor will review the impact of the Child Care Subsidy system, including the activity test, on vulnerable children and very low-income families. Preschool/ kindergarten will be extended to three-year-olds, with no application of the activity test.	A proportion of the Community Child Care Fund will be allocated for quality community-controlled, culturally safe integrated early years services, to ensure access in areas of high First Nations populations and high levels of disadvantage.

Quality early learning and care	NO 	YES 	YES 
Ongoing funding of the National Quality Agenda, reversing the cuts in the 2018 Federal Budget.		Full restoration of the \$20 million cut from the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda in 2018.	Full support for the National Quality Framework and a commitment to reversing the funding cuts.
A strong workforce	NO 	YES 	YES 
Funding to help increase the size and quality of the early childhood education workforce.		A 20 per cent pay rise over eight years for all early childhood educators. A \$100 million fund for workforce development and supporting expanded capacity, and 10,000 fee-free places in early childhood education courses at TAFE.	A new workforce strategy to achieve professional pay and better working conditions for educators. Early childhood qualifications to be fee-free at TAFE and universities.