

Campaign Briefing

The 'Early Learning: Everyone Benefits' campaign aims to increase public awareness and understanding of the benefits of investing in early learning for Australia's future prosperity and to secure political commitment to increase access to early learning.

Why do we need a campaign to convince Australians that Everyone Benefits from Early Learning?

There is still widespread misunderstanding in the community about the value of investing in early childhood education, despite some progress at State and Federal levels to improving the quality of early childhood education and care and much cited evidence of the importance of getting children the right support in the early years.

The Coalition government maintained the National Quality Framework (NQF) [until end 2017], and the Federal Government plans to reform the childcare finance system through its 'Jobs for Families Childcare Package' in parliament. However one in five Australian children start school vulnerable in their social, emotional or cognitive development¹ and Australia is in the bottom third of OECD countries for enrolment of three year olds in early childhood education.²

These developments are in the context of the compelling body of evidence that **participation in early childhood education for all children, and particularly for vulnerable children, improves educational outcomes, prevents learning difficulties, improves socialisation and address emotional and behavioural problems.** This provides children with a foundation that sets them up for life. It's also the most cost effective investment as steps taken to address problems in the early years are more effective and provide the greatest return on the dollars invested.

Quality early learning creates a quality future – the evidence

[Longitudinal studies in the UK](#) found that children who attended quality early learning had higher grades at school, were better able to manage their behaviour and had lower levels of hyperactivity.³ The longer they spent in pre-school and the higher the quality, the better the grades, and the more likely children were to continue on an academic pathway.

¹ *Australian Early Development Census 2015*, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/about-the-aedc/aedc-news/article/2016/03/08/2015-summary-findings>

² *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris. p. 322. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>

³ *UK Effective Pre-School, Primary & Secondary Education study* Institute of Education, University College London
<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/153.html>

[Australian studies](#) show that children who attend a high quality early childhood program in the year before school are up to 40% ahead of their peers by the time they reach year three.⁴

A [PWC report](#) released in 2014 found that the benefits to GDP from children participating in quality early learning stood at more than \$10 billion cumulative to 2050. Additionally, the benefits of increased participation of vulnerable children are estimated to be \$13.3 billion cumulative to 2050.⁵

Despite this body of evidence, not everyone is convinced that investing in quality early childhood programs is warranted or effective. The political discourse is dominated by the importance of 'childcare' in supporting parents (especially mothers) to get back into work, the focus in media coverage is on affordability and lack of availability.

Changing the national conversation on early childhood

Social research conducted by the [Frameworks Institute](#) in 2013-14 shows that people think of 'childcare' as a necessary evil because of the economic necessity of both parents working. They think of quality in terms of how 'safe' it is. We need a compelling new narrative capable of changing the way parents, practitioners, policy makers and the public think about society's responsibilities and interest in these first crucial years. The *Early Learning Everyone Benefits* campaign will use communication tools developed by the Frameworks Institute to build understanding amongst key targeted audiences about the benefits of early learning for everyone, and mobilise the support of parents, early childhood professionals, business leaders and voters to convince State and Federal governments that all children need access to at least two days per week of quality early learning, before they start school.

Early Learning: Everyone Benefits is coordinated by Early Childhood Australia and is a collaboration of early childhood, welfare and parenting, advocacy, research and service organisations. Campaign partners include: Early Learning Association Australia; Goodstart Early Learning; Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS); Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People (ARACY); Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH); The Parenthood, and UnitingCare Australia.

What will the campaign do?

- Mobilise support through our website and social media
- Produce reports on the state of early learning in Australia
- Urge all political parties to commit to providing two days per week of early learning access to all Australian children, especially vulnerable children and families.
- Enlist high profile Ambassadors and Business Champions to support the campaign

⁴ *Early Bird Catches the Worm: The Causal Impact of Pre-school Participation and Teacher Qualifications on Year 3 National NAPLAN Cognitive Tests*, Melbourne Institute D. Warren and J. Haisken-DeNew

http://melbourneinstitute.com/downloads/conferences/LEW2013/LEW2013_papers/WarrenDiana_LEW2013.pdf

⁵ *Putting a value on early childhood education and care in Australia*, Price Waterhouse Cooper, J. van Smeedijk
<http://www.pwc.com.au/publications/early-childhood-education.html>