The Early Learning EVERYONE BENEFITS campaign has come together as a result of people across the early childhood sector becoming frustrated that after so many years and much evidence about the benefits of early learning for children and communities, we still face such a battle to get funding – it’s still not seen as the key investment to ensure a thriving society. There is still widespread misunderstanding about the value of investing in early learning.

**Early learning** means the vital stages of children’s development from birth to age five.

Children learn from the time they are born. Early Learning happens in interactions with family and friends, and is further supported in early childhood settings including child care, pre-school, the early years of schooling and the broader community. Children’s development needs to be supported across all areas - social and emotional, physical, creative, language and thinking, and for this to happen, young children need inclusive and stimulating environments that support age-appropriate child-directed play and play-based learning.

By **everyone benefits**, we mean that the positive outcomes of early learning can and do have beneficial impacts on Australia as a whole, as well as children and their families.
Our goals are
• To increase public awareness and understanding of the benefits of investing in early learning for Australia’s future prosperity
• To increase access to quality programs that amplify children’s development.
These are our key partners and supporters
Early Childhood Australia is the instigator of the campaign, and contributes the secretariat staffing and manages the campaign, all state branches of ECA have made a financial contribution.
6 founding partners with ECA have made a substantial financial contribution: Family Day Care Australia, GoodStart, Early Learning Association Australia, Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange Uniting Care

The next eleven organisations are supporters who have made financial and or in-kind contributions.
Other Early Childhood Education providers [ECMS, KU, C&K, IACC]
As you can see we include research organisations like ARACY and the Murdoch Children’s Research Centre, peaks like Aust Community Children’s Services and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care SNAICC; and parents campaigning organisation The Parenthood
Why do we need a national campaign to rouse the nation about the benefits of early learning?

Because we have some serious problems as a nation that are holding us back, and investment in quality early learning for all Australian children will turn these problems around:

• 1 in 5 children (60K) are developmentally vulnerable when they start school (AEDC 2015)

And what we know, but most what most people don’t is how crucial the early years are to children’s futures—

• by age 3 – 80% of a child’s brain growth has occurred
• By age 4 - children from lower socio-economic and educational backgrounds will hear 19 million fewer words than children with more educated parents
• by age 5, a child’s vocabulary will predict their educational success across the lifespan.

The most effective way as a nation that we can reduce inequality, and disrupt the cycle of disadvantage is to ensure that all Australian children attend quality early learning for at least 2 years before they start school.

- Let’s think for a moment what are the consequences for these children who are developmentally vulnerable – socially, emotionally, in language development, in their communication or general knowledge – what happens for them at school? What happens when they leave school? What are their life chances? – What impact does that have on the rest of us?
Children who start school at a disadvantage are unlikely to ever catch up.

We want all Australians to understand that the first five years matter for children’s development and can unleash a lifetime of potential.

And we want our political leaders to act on this knowledge and ensure that as a nation we deliver quality early learning to every Australian child – because it’s the right thing to do for our children, and it’s the right thing to do to increase our future prosperity.

Dame Quentin Bryce put it very well at our campaign launch in May:

“Our future depends on how we invest in our children today.”
Media coverage of the campaign reached 7 million people through TV, radio and newspaper stories, as well as popular online outlets like Mamamia.
It’s our participation levels that really need to improve.

We’re doing OK with 4 year olds, helped by the Federal funding for Universal Access for children in year before school to 15hrs of early learning – so government policy has huge impact.
But Compared with other developed countries, Australia is in the bottom third of participation in early learning for THREE YEAR OLDS – 62 per cent in 2013, compared with the OECD average of 74%.

UK and NZ have among the highest participation – and they both provide FREE early learning for 3 and 4 year olds for between 20-30 hrs per week.
How do we get policy change – we target POLITICAL DECISION MAKERS - Prime Minister, Federal and State and Education Ministers, Premiers, and Finance and Treasury ministers and advisors.

For our political leadersto commit to ensuring all Australian children have access to quality early learning,
They need to be convinced that a vocal section of parents understand and demand access to quality early learning, and that more needs to be done to deliver this;

They need to hear a united voice from Early Childhood Professionals that access to early learning is in the best interest of children, especially vulnerable children and necessary to achieve future prosperity;

At this stage we are building the foundations of the campaign on helping Educators to communicate the benefits of early learning -
Now I’m going to share with you some of the really interesting research by the FrameWorks Institute on what’s going on with communicating about Early Childhood Development and Education in Australia - and recommendations for how we can get better understanding and support in the community about how important it is.

The Centre for Community Child Health brought the Frameworks Institute to Australia in 2014. To apply their scientific communications research methodology to find out what Australian’s really think about early childhood development, and what kind of language and messaging we need to use to help people understand it better, to achieve policy change.

Frameworks has had success in the United States working with the Harvard Centre for the Developing Child to translate brain science into sound policy; A Better Start Initiative in the UK – transforming service systems to align with the science of early brain development.
One of the first things Frameworks did was to map the difference between what early childhood experts know about early childhood development, and what people in general in Australia believe.

Experts – and people well informed by the evidence like all of us in this room, know:

That the first 3-5 years are crucial in brain development, that this is the key time that is influenced by environment and inputs a child receives as much as biology and genes.

That quality early learning can provide the necessary stimulation and learning environment where they can be supported to develop skills – that are about learning to interact with others and deal with their emotions as much as about learning information. And that a key threat to optimal child development is multiple adversity causing harmful stress – children who live in constant fear, don’t have primary needs met, don’t have the support of a stable nurturing adult, and don’t have predictable routines, are at most risk of failing to thrive and learn – and be developmentally vulnerable (on the AEDC) which will hamper their transition to school.
PUBLIC STORY

• **FAMILY BUBBLE** - Children need to be safe at home, with their mother -

• **THREAT OF MODERNITY** - Childcare is a necessary ‘evil’ caused by the modern necessity of both parents having to work

• In the past children did best by being able to learn at home naturally without interference.

• Focus shifts away from babies & toddlers - **AGE UP**
PUBLIC STORY

• The main threats to child development are the fast-paced modern lifestyle where parents don’t have enough time for children,
• Parents don’t have enough information there is an over-interference of science - MEDICALISATION OF CHILDHOOD
• Children don’t experience stress
When we talk to people about Early Childhood Education or Early Learning, we are not painting a picture on a blank canvas – we are throwing our precious ideas about what children need out into a swamp filled with creatures that can swallow and distort our messages.
And that swamp is filled with creatures that can swallow and distort our messages
Here’s FrameWorks map of the Early Childhood Development swamp

You can see here that Frameworks have divided the mental models into categories – the two biggest categories of swamp creatures – the alligators and the river monsters – are: what people think is harmful, or threatens children, and what supports child development

Threats

**THREAT OF MODERNITY**
- Childcare is a necessary ‘evil’ caused by the modern necessity of both parents having to work
- the fast-paced modern lifestyle where parents don’t have enough time for children
- Parents don’t have enough information
- over-interference of science - MEDICALISATION OF CHILDHOOD
- **Success = Happiness** – people want their children to feel happy in childcare/early learning. They aren’t necessarily expecting them to learn social, emotional and cognitive skills – which is how EC experts would measure success.

**Mistaken ideas about Child Development**
Children need to be safe at home, preferably with their mother - FAMILY BUBBLE
Separate influences of genes v environment – believe that genetic or inherent traits are inflexible and set in stone
Children are empty vessels, or sponges soaking up all the information we pour into them – FILL IT UP

**Good things in swamp are orchids** – we want to bloom – current mental models people hold that we can work with
Dev – **Stretch but not break** – children learn by overcoming challenges [similar to scaffolding]
Context – **Environment shapes outcomes** – people do acknowledge that improving a child’s home or learning environment can make a difference
Parents are hungry for more information
The key thing to remember is that if we’re not informed about the dominant frames of reference or ‘cultural model’ in people’s minds, we often have the experience that we say one thing and they HEAR and THINK another.

Because of the prevalence of the ‘FAMILY BUBBLE’ mental model –

**IF WE SAY**
We need to improve the quality of child care in Australia

**THEY THINK**
The problem is that too many kids are *in* child care and not at home with their mums.
In the case of early learning –
WE SAY - For children to do well in life, the best start we can give them is quality early learning [we need to invest more in early learning]
THEY THINK – Why should my taxes pay for other people’s children?
I think this is another key to why we are taking what Frameworks says seriously – they are using scientific methods to find out what elements work to SHIFT people’s thinking – so that they will support more investment in early learning.

A key way to do this is to embed your message in a VALUE – here is a slide showing all the values FrameWorks tested with about 4000 people in Australia – from all walks of life, ages and locations.

They asked a range of ‘priming’ questions to get people thinking about different social issues – Childcare, Early Childhood Education, Child Mental Health, Poverty and Community Resources – and then asked them to rate how strongly they agreed with a paragraph that had key words embedded in it to express one of the six values on the graph.

The value that received the strongest support across all these issue areas was Future Prosperity, closely followed by workforce equity. These values did way better than – Investing in children’s development will give Greater Opportunity for All, or increase Community Strength.
I know for many of you this way of thinking about the value of early childhood education and care is not the reason you believe it’s important, it may even go against the grain.
I’m asking you just to go with me here and think of that swamp – what ever we’re currently saying about why we need to value early learning is not hitting the mark, so let’s stretch to a little mental agility and try out a new angle.

The reason FrameWorks thinks this value is effective is that it steers people away from that nostalgic thinking about how everything was better in the past when kids were at home with their mother, and it counters the subconscious idea that science is part of the problem.

It shifts people’s thinking (subtly) towards looking ahead, to the future, being solution oriented, and what I like best about it, it shifts thinking about the care of children being the individual responsibility of families, to being a collective responsibility – with benefits for everyone.
The value of Future Prosperity is central to our campaign messaging – it's in our name: Early Learning Everyone Benefits;

It’s in key messages on our Website:  
HOMEPAGE: Australia’s future prosperity is linked to the collective investments that we make in all of our children’s development.  
When we improve programs and services that help all children to be healthy, to get a good education, and to contribute to our collective prosperity, we all benefit.

FACEBOOK: Quality early learning for our children makes a quality future for Australia  
Quentin Bryce at our launch said:  
Our future depends on how we invest in our children today.
Just as a house needs a sturdy foundation to support the walls and the roof, a brain needs a strong base to support all future development.

Brains aren't just born, they're built over time based on our experiences.

Positive interactions between young children and their care-givers, literally build the architecture of the developing brain.

Building a sturdy base in the earliest years creates a solid base for a life time of good mental function and better overall health.
Learning is about the brain weaving skills together—social, emotional, and cognitive—to form strong skill ropes. Successful learning and development result in a strong set of strands—that can be combined to form skill ropes. These skill ropes can stretch and flex to help us perform the full range of tasks and activities that our lives demand. Children need to develop strong individual strands, and they do that through opportunities to practice stretching, weaving, and reweaving these strands in challenging situations with support from adults. Quality child care and early education centres with qualified educators and highly skilled staff play an important role in making sure Australia’s children have the opportunities they need to develop strong skills ropes.
Quality early childhood services have the power to amplify children’s development. Just like an amplifier takes an incoming signal and makes it stronger and clearer, a good child development centre can help children reach their full potential—amplifying things that children will need for the rest of their lives, like social skills, problem solving, flexibility and self-confidence.

And just like an amplifier needs to be designed, built and maintained by trained professionals, child care centres need well-trained staff and well-designed programs. When high quality child development centres are in place and can get in tune with the important work that parents and family are doing, they can amplify a child’s development.

We need to make sure that all Australian children have access to quality development amplifiers.
We wanted to test the framing for the campaign and gauge public support so commissioned Galaxy to do a national survey – 1000 people in every state – and we were really encouraged to discover that

84% of Australians agree early learning is important to BOOST child development
85% of people agree that early learning is important for our future prosperity
That agreement is consistently high whether they are Coalition, Labor or Green voters (88-89%), and surprisingly is highest for young men aged 18 to 24 (90%).
AND 43% of parents would be most likely to vote for a candidate who supports affordable childcare and early learning.

The results show that voters of all ages, male and female, can see the benefits of early learning both in its impact in improving child development, and in wider social and economic well being.
While we’re on the website I just want to show you what a great resource it is for you – here’s the home page – where you can see we’re promoting the Pledge – and we launch straight into talking about how do all Australian’s benefit from quality early learning ....

AND SEE THE TABS ACROS THE TOP -

The third one along is for Educators –
It’s got a video from Ros Cornish, ECA National President about why this campaign is important for educators to get involved in,
And a series of articles from Early childhood experts, and resources
Early Childhood Educator Toolkit

These resources are designed to help you communicate the benefits of early childhood education. Most were created especially for Australia by the FrameWorks Institute as part of a collaborative research project coordinated by the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute. Their Strategic Communication Tools page is worth investigating.
To inspire parents and raise their awareness and understanding of how their children’s development can best be supported in the first five years, we want the website content to be engaging to parents and provide excellent information on child development and interaction. We want parents to treasure the site and our Facebook posts as a great source of easily accessible wisdom and practical advice, activities and tools they can use to help their children’s development.

We have written the Articles to incorporate the Frameworks tested explanatory Metaphors:
How children’s brains learn [Brain architecture metaphor]
Smiling is learning – connecting with babies [Serve and return]
We have created engaging, informative Facebook posts – aimed at parents and early career educators, that we hope visitors to our Facebook page will enjoy sharing.

We want parents to treasure the site and our Facebook posts as a great source of easily accessible wisdom and practical advice, activities and tools they can use to help their children’s development.
It’s easy to get active in the campaign

The first thing to do is open the website on your smart phone or tablet And click JOIN – a form will come up asking for your name and email address, your postcode, so we know which state you’re in and whether you’re an early childhood professional, or a parent. can tick both – emails you’ll receive are slightly different, just like the Families and Educators pages are different.

OR

Please come by the ECA stand, where we can help you sign up, and you can also have your selfie taken with our campaign banner – and you’re own message.

You can support our Fudge initiative:
In 2 weeks time we are giving every Federal politician a message – Don’t fudge early learning – in a colourful box filled with fudge – yum.
On Oct 17 we gave every Federal politician a message – Don’t fudge early learning – in a colourful box filled with fudge – yum.

The boxes were extremely well received – with some politicians sharing photos of themselves with the boxes on Twitter or Facebook

- Sen Larissa Waters (Green), Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Education Minister, Sen Claire Moore (Labor)
You can create your own Fudge activity with your local politicians by following the guidelines on our website:
http://www.everyonebenefits.org.au/fudge

Or one of your services might like to host a fudge event and invite your local MP – they always like an excuse to have their photo taken with cute kids.

We have 200 boxes of fudge left and we can sell these (while stocks last) to campaign partner and sponsor orgs - including ECA State Branches for $50 for set of 6 boxes + $10 postage. To order Fudge boxes (including 5 pieces of fudge), please send me an email order and I will send you an ECA invoice.
How you can get involved:

Join the campaign – you’ll get regular updates
Sign the Post Election Pledge
Visit the Educators page – all the Frameworks content in this presentation is up on the Educator Toolkit page

Like the Facebook page
Share posts on your own or service pages

If you’re on Twitter – follow us and Retweet our posts @EarlyEdBenefits
Check the hashtag #OzEarlyEd

We welcome Suggestions and feedback on how to engage both Educators and Parents to ‘join’ the campaign
Help us to find great stories of Early Childhood professionals working with families to improve child outcomes