



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

**OUR  
VISION:  
EVERY  
YOUNG  
CHILD IS  
THRIVING  
AND  
LEARNING**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday 11 December 2015

### **Leaders' commitment to early childhood welcomed**

Early Childhood Australia today welcomed COAG's commitments to continue reforms aimed at improving the participation of Australian children in high-quality preschool programs.

Leaders agreed to progress reforms at the first COAG meeting in 2016 for all children in the year before school to access 15 hours per week of high-quality preschool education through durable and adequate national funding arrangements.

Early Childhood Australia CEO Sam Page said that the COAG reforms were important to embed preschool and quality early education as an essential part of children's early learning experiences, but urged COAG leaders to maintain their commitment to fully implementing the [National Early Development Strategy](#), and recognise the importance of the full spectrum of early childhood education from birth onwards.

'If we want to lift educational outcomes, we need a lasting and sustainable commitment by all governments to high-quality preschool programs for children', said Sam Page.

Ms Page said that putting in place a lasting agreement for preschool in the year before school was a critical precursor to the expansion of preschool to three-year-old children.

'If the states do not have the certainty of funding for four-year-olds, then it is very difficult to start investing to extend the program to three-year-olds and other vulnerable children.

'While today's commitments are welcome, COAG could do more to boost Australia's future prosperity and extend access to preschool for all children in the two years before formal schooling.'

Australia currently lags behind other OECD countries, with only 62 per cent of children at age three enrolled in a preschool program according to the OECD's [Education at a Glance 2015 report](#), released this month.

Early Childhood Australia welcomed COAG's recommitment to the Closing the Gap target of 95 per cent enrolment for all Indigenous four-year-olds by 2025.

#### **For interviews and more information contact:**

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Only 85 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities were enrolled in early childhood education in 2013 according to the latest [Closing the Gap report](#).

‘Models of early childhood education run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have had good results and have the trust of their communities. They deserve stronger and continued government funding and support.’

[www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/COAG\\_Communique\\_20151211.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/COAG_Communique_20151211.pdf)

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