



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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A roadmap for early learning that benefits us all

Early Childhood Australia (ECA), the national peak organisation advocating for children under eight, their parents and early childhood professionals, today welcomed the Mitchell Institute's new report *Quality Early Education for All - Fostering creative, entrepreneurial, resilient and capable learners*.

The report examines the evidence on the benefits of quality early learning and provides a road map for reform of early childhood education and care in Australia.

The Report shows that:

- around 60,000 kids arrive at school developmentally vulnerable each year
- the gap in disadvantage between poorest and wealthiest children is widening and the children missing out from early learning are those who would benefit the most
- 1 in 3 children don't attend the amount of early learning needed to make a difference in outcomes

"This timely report by the Mitchell Institute shows that the benefits of providing children with quality early learning extends to our whole society," said ECA General Manager, Judy Kynaston.

"If Australia is to improve our educational performance then we must invest in improving access quality early learning that boosts children's development.

"There is also unequivocal evidence that early childhood education delivers some of the strongest returns on investment of all social programs asserts that "the benefit arriving from 18 months of pre-school is similar to that gained from 6 years of primary school" – Mitchell Institute.

One of the key recommendations of the Report is for governments to 'commence work on extending Universal Access to 3 year olds'.

"The evidence shows that the duration of early learning - in years - matters for children's development - but Australian children currently only have access to one year of preschool education, said Ms Kynaston

The Report comes as the *Jobs for Families Childcare Package* is currently before the Parliament.

"Australia appears to be caught between the perception that early education is primarily a private concern and family responsibility – because the purpose of 'child care' is primarily to help parents get back to paid work – and the growing recognition of the significant public benefits that flow from investing in the early years." – Mitchell Institute.

"This Report underscores concerns about the Government's proposed activity test which will create a barrier to children participating in the quality early learning that amplifies their development," said Ms Kynaston.

Early childhood advocates are united in seeking key amendments to the bill to ensure that all Australian children can access a minimum of two days of early learning, regardless of their parents' ability to work, study or volunteer.

ECA supports in principle the Mitchell Institute's recommendations to:

- extend universal access to preschool education to 3 year olds
- ensure all services meet minimum national quality standards by next year
- invest in high quality intensive services in areas with more vulnerable children
- build a national data strategy with a coordinating agency
- introduce an early education information/awareness campaign

Download the Mitchell Institute report: <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/quality-early-education-for-all/>

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