



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 6 November 2017

### **Good news on early learning for NSW children and families**

Early Childhood Australia welcomes announcements by the NSW government of the new Regional and Remote Early Childhood Education Strategy 2017 – 2022, and cost reductions for community based preschools as a result of the NSW government's [Start Strong](#) reforms.

The new [strategy](#) supports flexible and responsive approaches for mobile services and sets priorities on education for Aboriginal Communities in culturally safe environments, and other measures which will help to close the indigenous education gap.

'It is reassuring to see progress being made to improve early learning outcomes in NSW through effective consultation with the early childhood sector, represented by Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA), who have advocated for greater recognition of mobile services and needs of regional remote communities for many years,' said ECA CEO Samantha Page.\*

'Data from ECA member organisations who operate preschool programs has already shown us that cost reductions of around 25 percent are being passed on to parents,' said ECA NSW President Carol Burgess. 'The other great outcome is that increased affordability has resulted in hundreds, if not thousands more children attending preschool in NSW.'

'One of our largest members, KU Children's Services has enrolled 582 more children in preschools this year and their average preschool fees for four year olds went down by 25 percent, and by more than 50 percent for children in particular circumstances,' said Ms Burgess.

Increasing preschool attendance is very important in NSW as the state historically has the lowest preschool attendance in the country.

Average attendance of 4-5 year olds in preschool in NSW was 77% in 2015, compared to the national average of 91%. (as reported in the [State of Early Learning in Australia 2017](#) report, Sept 2017)

In NSW, one in five children start school vulnerable in one or more domain(s) of social, emotional, language and cognitive, communication and general knowledge, or physical development. Two in five Aboriginal children are developmentally vulnerable when they start school. Australian research shows that children who attend a quality early learning service are half as likely to have developmental vulnerabilities when they start school as children who don't attend any form of early childhood education.

Attending play-based, quality early learning is beneficial for the social, emotional and cognitive development of children. Australian and international research shows that children who have attended one or more years of preschool perform better at school, and have better grades, than their peers who did not attend early learning.

'The next step is to make sure that all children attending preschool programs benefit from the national Universal Access funding, and that there is national and state cooperation to increase participation of three year olds in preschool,' concluded Ms Burgess.

\* See CCSA media release [here](#)

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