



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Education Council recognises the importance of early learning in improving outcomes

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) welcomes many of the decisions made by Australia's education ministers today. In particular, the ambition and commitment in the Mparntwe Education Declaration, launched by the COAG Education Council, is inspiring.

ECA is very pleased that the Mparntwe Declaration reinforces the critical role of early learning and development in each child's life, as a first step to lifelong learning. We also welcome the recognition that children's social and emotional wellbeing is important both within and beyond education settings.

Other positive decisions from the meeting include:

- The development of a workforce strategy for the early learning and care sector, which is facing significant workforce challenges
- Reforms to teacher registration, which must encompass professional recognition of Early Childhood Teachers working across both school and prior-to-school settings
- Support for the work of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

On the issue of reading instruction, ECA notes that reading and phonetic awareness are grounded in early language acquisition and pre-literacy skills – which need to be fostered well before school. Governments could improve school-based outcomes by investing in more professional development for early childhood teachers and educators, to support best practice in the critical years before compulsory schooling.

The one area of disappointment from today's meeting is the lack of progress on securing a long-term funding agreement to provide all Australian children with universal access to preschool/kindergarten. Education ministers considered interim findings on the review of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, which reportedly urge the strengthening of the national preschool agreement, but the Federal Government is remaining silent on its intentions.

'ECA continues to urge Minister Tehan to take a leadership position and make a substantial, long-term commitment to high-quality preschool programs for all children across all jurisdictions – ideally all children would have access to at least 15 hours, or 2 days per week, for two years before they start compulsory schooling,' ECA CEO Samantha Page said.

'Quality preschool education programs are provided in age-appropriate settings that support rich play-based learning, led by a qualified early childhood teacher. We need certainty and national leadership to ensure that every Australian child has the chance to learn and thrive.'

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For interviews, contact: Paige Pollard 0475 554 999

Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight years, their families and early childhood professionals.