

# keep funding 15 hours

## Campaign kit for parents and educators

### Making a difference

It is over 10 years since the Federal Government took the first steps to provide children with Universal Access to preschool across Australia by signing a National Partnership Agreement with the States and Territories.

But since then, both sides of politics have failed to guarantee ongoing funding for a minimum of 15 hours of preschool (for forty weeks) for every Australian child in the year before school.

At the moment, the Commonwealth contribution provides 5 hours of the 15 hours of preschool education that our children require as a minimum to keep up with the rest of the world – but this funding runs out at the end of 2017.

ELAA's "Keep Funding 15 Hours" campaign continues to fight for ongoing funding from the Federal Government. It is funding that will benefit our children and that will deliver much better social and economic outcomes for Australia's future.

ELAA has campaigned on this issue over many years. In 2014, ELAA led a successful online campaign to *Keep 15 hours*. Several of our partners and collaborators in the early learning sector across Australia also led similar campaigns – and the result was a two year extension of the Commonwealth funding to 2017.

But beyond 2017, the funding uncertainty continues. Your support is critical if we are going to finally secure long-term change and get the Federal Government to commit to ongoing funding for 15 hours.

This kit has been developed for parents, educators and any concerned person with an interest in early childhood education to support you to talk to politicians, media and others about the importance of early education and why it matters.

Pre-school education is an investment that our nation can no longer afford to ignore.

A wealth of Australian and international research demonstrates that:

- children who attend pre-school do better at school with lasting benefits throughout their lives; and
- vulnerable and at-risk children who attend pre-school have considerably better resilience and educational performance.

The economic contribution of pre-school education is extensive with every dollar invested returning between \$1.5 and \$3 as a result of the reduced costs of education, justice and health.

It's time for a commitment for ongoing funding of 15 hours of pre-school for our children.

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The vision of Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) is "excellence in early learning for every child".

*ELAA works with members, peak bodies, Commonwealth, State and local governments, and importantly parents to promote and support the provision of quality early childhood services to children, and to help ensure that these services are accessible and affordable for families.*



Shane Lucas  
CEO, ELAA

Handwritten signature of Shane Lucas in black ink.

Lee Cath  
President, ELAA

Handwritten signature of Lee Cath in purple ink.

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## The evidence

### The story until now

- In 2006, the State, Territory and Federal Governments committed to a new national approach to Early Childhood Education.
- In 2008, all Australian Governments signed up to guarantee 15 hours of preschool education for every child for the year before they start school, regardless of their family's income. The funding was supposed to be guaranteed from 2013.
- In 2009, the Council of Australian Governments again affirmed the importance of early education by signing up to the National Partnership Agreement for Early Childhood Education, which included a funding commitment to introduce Universal Access of 15 hours of preschool for forty weeks in the year before children commenced school.
- In 2014, the Federal Government extended this funding by one year until December 2015.
- After much lobbying by ELAA and other sector organisations in 2015, funding was further extended until December 2017.
- There is still no committed recurrent Commonwealth funding to lock in the 15 hours of preschool education for forty weeks.
- Year by year extensions are not good enough – they create uncertainty for service providers, for families, and for children.
- If the Commonwealth withdraws funding from preschools, parent fees will rise by as much as 70% – putting preschool out of reach for many families.

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If preschool hours return to less than 15 hours per week, Australian children will start school underprepared in social, numeracy and literacy skills, and will lag behind other countries.

- According to the OECD, Australia commits a lower proportion of funding to preschool education as a proportion of GDP than most other developed countries.
- We will fall even further behind other countries if we do not maintain the current 15 hours of preschool education per week for children in the year before they attend school
- New Zealand already **fully funds** the first 20 hours of early childhood education for all three and four-year-olds.
- The UK provides 15 hours of **free** early education for all three and four-year-olds, doubling it to 30 hours if the parents are working.

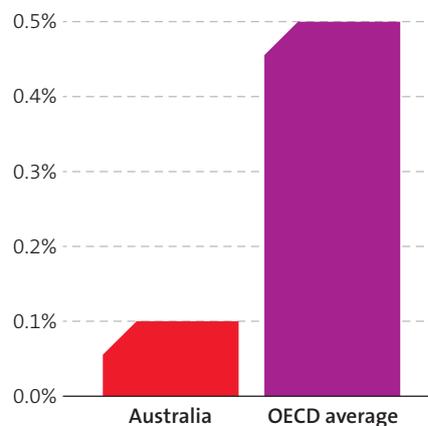
## A good investment

- Extensive Australian and international research shows that quality preschool education improves lifelong learning outcomes and is therefore a good investment – as well as giving all kids a better start in life.
- A [2014 report by PwC Australia](#) found that Early Childhood Education and Care would bring substantial economic benefits by 2050, including:
  - \$6 billion by enabling increased female participation in the workforce
  - Up to \$10.3 billion if children participate in quality education and care
  - \$13.3 billion if children of parents in the lowest income bracket who were not likely to attend ECEC were to attend quality early education and care

The Federal Government spends money on family tax benefits, childcare support payments and direct investment into preschool programs. State governments also provide funding for preschool programs, but Commonwealth funding is required to ensure every child gets access to 15 hours of preschool education per week for 40 weeks in the year before school.

The proportion of our national income, or GDP, that is spent on direct government funding for preschool programs is far lower than other countries. Australia's governmental investment in preschool education in 2012 amounted to just 0.1% of GDP, in comparison to an OECD average of 0.5%.

### % of GDP spent on preschool education in 2012



Source: Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators p. 328  
[http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2015\\_eag-2015-en#page324](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2015_eag-2015-en#page324)

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## Taking the next steps

The kit describes many different ways you can contribute to the ensuring ongoing support for early education. Most importantly – ask our political parties to commit to ongoing funding.

### Write an email or letter to the Minister for Education and Training or your local Federal Member of Parliament

We need the Minister to make a firm commitment to ongoing funding of 15 hours and end this uncertainty for families and children. Your letter could be the key to helping them show their support.

See sample letter/email at Attachment 1.

### Write a letter to the paper

Promoting the importance of early education and care through the local paper is a good way to reach a large audience.

See sample letter at Attachment 2.

### Engage with your local Federal Member of Parliament

This could happen in a number of ways:

- Post notes about the importance of a 15 hour commitment on your local member's social media page (keep them constructive and polite – it is more influential)
- Phone local members and let them know why the 'keep funding 15 hours campaign' is important to you and other parents.
- Invite local members to come and see your service, get to know them and tell them what is important to your children, parents and your service.
- Invite the local members to a question and answer session and invite parents to attend.
- Ask the local members questions about their party's policies and how they apply to your service and publish them in the preschool newsletter, for example:
  - Is your party committed to the objectives of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education beyond 2017, and to ensuring that future Federal Governments continue to provide funding to ensure every Australian child has access to 15 hours of early learning for forty weeks in the year before school?
  - Does your party support the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care?

### Invite the local media to your service.

Tell your local media what your centre is doing to promote the campaign and why it is essential to get a government commitment.

Brief the journalists on the issues facing the children at your service.

Arrange a photo opportunity, such as parents signing the petition.

## Five quick actions you can do right now.

1. Sign Keep funding 15 hours petition on [www.keepfunding15hours.org.au](http://www.keepfunding15hours.org.au)
2. Like and share 'Keep Funding 15 hours campaign' promotions on ELAA's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/ELAAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/ELAAustralia)
3. Tell your friends about the importance of the campaign over coffee, on Facebook or through some other medium – and ask them to spread the word about this campaign.
4. Encourage educators, parents and friends to sign the petition and promote it through their networks.
5. Ask your kindergarten to include information about the campaign in their newsletter to families.



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## Attachment 1

### Letter or email to MPs

Who to send the letter or email to:

#### Senator, the Hon Simon Birmingham

Minister for Education and Training  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
[Minister@education.gov.au](mailto:Minister@education.gov.au)

#### Your local Federal Member of Parliament:

- First find out which electorate you are in:  
<http://apps.aec.gov.au/eseach/>
- <http://www.aph.gov.au/senators> and members
- Enter your electorate in the search box to find your local member details

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### Sample letter/email

Dear [name]

#### Ongoing funding certainty for 15 hours of preschool is essential to our future

*[Write something about who you are and why this issue is important to you. E.g. I am a parent of three children under the age of 4 years or I am an educator with 5 years' experience]*

I am writing to you as I am very concerned that Commonwealth Government funding of pre-schools runs out in December 2017.

Australia already lags well behind many other developed countries in funding early childhood education – despite research that confirms it is critical to our future as a clever country.

In 2008, Australian Governments signed up to guarantee 15 hours of preschool education (for forty weeks) for every child in the year before they start school, regardless of a family's income. But no subsequent Federal Government has locked in recurrent funding for 15 hours of preschool education to give this commitment meaning.

Preschool enhances children's educational and social opportunities and builds resilience. It is a cost-effective investment with substantial returns not only in direct economic benefit but also in improving education outcomes – particularly for vulnerable children.

Australia is aiming to be at the forefront of innovation, but is missing a critical element required to be a clever country as a result of the refusal to commit to adequate hours of preschool education for children. Funding uncertainty also puts a great strain on services and educators.

After more than a decade of unfulfilled promises from all Australian governments it is time for a commitment to **ongoing** funding for 15 hours of pre-school education.

I seek a commitment from you, that your party that you will implement ongoing funding to help deliver at least 15 hours for preschools across Australia

Yours sincerely

*[Your name, signature, preferred contact details]*

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## Attachment 2

### Letter or email to media

Dear Sir/Madam

The OECD has singled out Australia for its low investment in preschool education compared to many other developed countries – and without an ongoing commitment to funding, we will lag further behind.

Australian Governments spend a lower proportion of GDP on directly funding preschool education than many other developed nations – just 0.1 per cent of GDP, while the OECD average is 0.5 per cent.

New Zealand provides 20 hours of fully funded early childhood education each week to three and four-year-old children, while the UK, which is already providing free access to early education for all three and four-year-olds, is doubling the funding to 30 hours per week per child for working parents. Australia currently provides only 15 hours – and that is only guaranteed until the end of 2017.

Extensive Australian and international research demonstrates that an adequate quantity of quality preschool education makes a significant difference to the future educational outcomes of young people and provides important socialisation skills for life.

State and Federal governments have agreed for over 10 years that preschool education is essential, but continue to argue about which level of government is responsible for funding it. If we are to have any hope of a smart future, we must end the blame game and act now to ensure our children's future.

After more than a decade of unfulfilled promises from all Australian governments it is time for a commitment to **ongoing** funding for 15 hours of preschool education.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name, address and contact phone number for verification purposes.]