

Two years are better than one

Preschool programs in New South Wales

New South Wales are significantly behind the rest of the country in ensuring all 4 year olds can access and attend preschool. However, they are ahead of the curve with the proportion of 3 year olds attending programs delivered by early childhood teachers.

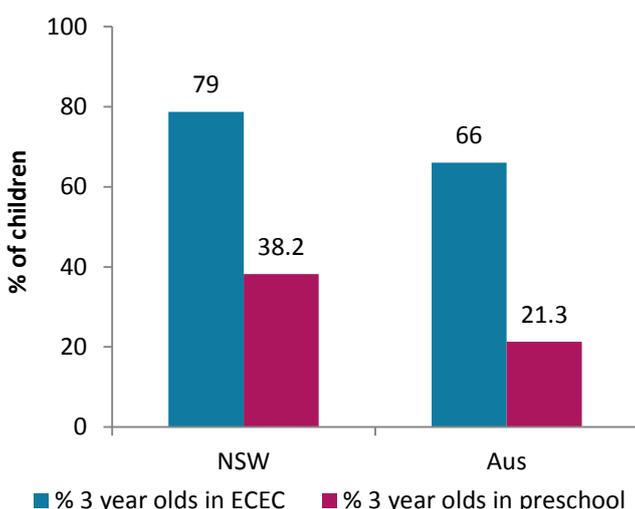
3 year olds enrolled in early education and care (ECEC) and preschool

NSW has a substantially higher proportion of 3 year old children attending ECEC than the national average.

Many more 3 year olds in NSW attend preschool programs, in part because NSW employs more early childhood teachers in preschool and Long Day Care.

- 79 per cent of 3 year olds are enrolled in ECEC (in Long Day care, sessional preschool and Family Day Care)
- 38 per cent of 3 year olds are enrolled in preschool programs

Figure 1: Proportion of 3 year olds enrolled in ALLECEC and preschool (Preschool Education, Australia 2015 and ROGS 2016)



Policy and funding for 3 year old preschool programs

Under NSW's preschool funding model, 3 year olds who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or hold a Health Care Card are eligible for subsidies to attend community preschool programs.

Some community preschools charge fees for non-subsidised 3 year olds, although most 3 year olds ECEC and preschool in Long Day Care

The Preschool Disability Support Program supports children with disability aged 3-5 to access to ECEC and preschool.

Progress towards Universal Access for 4 year olds

NSW's enrolment and attendance rates for 4 year old preschool are significantly below the national average.

- 86 per cent of children are enrolled in preschool programs in the year before school
- 58 per cent are attending for 15 hours or more (noting data is collected in a reference week and is likely to under-estimate actual attendance across the year).

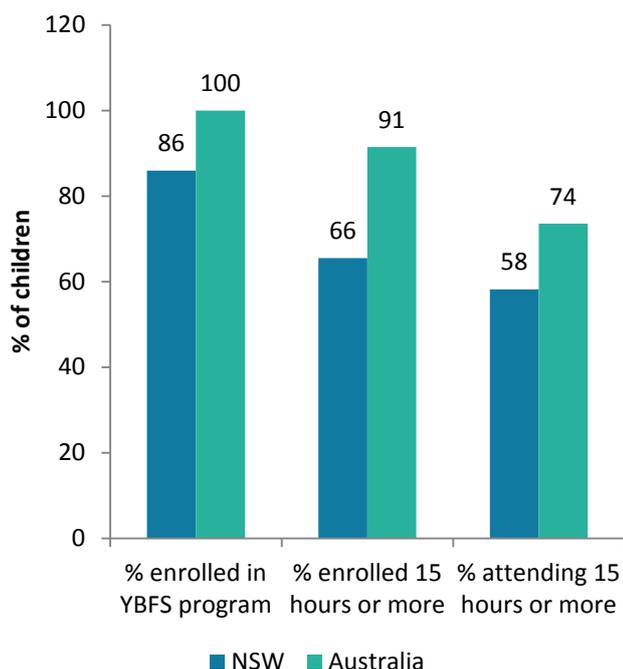
What is preschool?

Preschool is a play-based, learning-focused program.

In Australia, preschool programs are provided for children for 600 hours in the year before school (4-5 years) and are delivered by an Early Childhood Teacher.

There is no national preschool program for 3 year olds, but some children attend programs delivered by an Early Childhood Teacher.

Figure 2: Proportion of children enrolled in year before school preschool programs (Preschool Education, Australia 2015). Note: totals have been capped at 100%



Policy and funding for 4 year old preschool programs

The NSW Government provides grants to over 750 community based preschools (including preschools operated by local governments).

The Preschool Funding Model provides between \$1850 and \$5402 per child per annum, depending on the community's socio-economic status.

NSW's new Starting Strong policy will provide increased funding from 2017.

Historically, NSW has not provided funding to Long Day Care services. Over the last two years they provided two rounds of grant funds to long day care providers delivering preschool programs.

These grants provided a minimum rate of \$300 for each child enrolled, rising to \$450 for those enrolled for 600 hours. They provide an additional loading of \$450 for children from Aboriginal families or those enrolled in disadvantaged areas, topped up to \$675 for those enrolled for 600 hours.

These grants were one-off payments and have now been restricted to children from specific targeted cohorts.

Strategies to boost attendance of priority cohorts

NSW's primary strategy for boosting access for priority cohorts is increased per-child subsidies for the community preschool sector, with additional loadings for key cohorts:

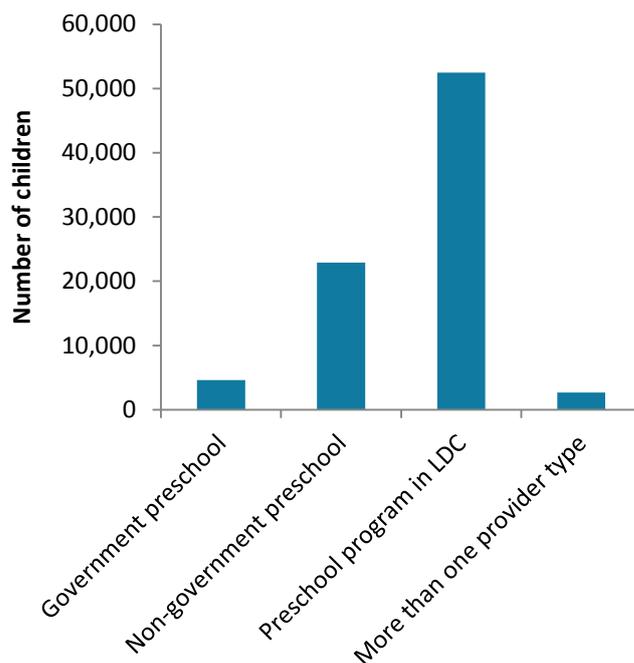
- Regional and remote services
- Children with English language needs
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Children from low-income families
- Children with disability

They also provide funding for mobile preschools to increase access for children in remote communities.

Who provides preschool?

The majority of children in NSW attend preschool in long day care settings, although there is also a strong community preschool sector in NSW.

Figure 3: Number of children attending kindergarten per sector (Preschool Education, Australia 2015)

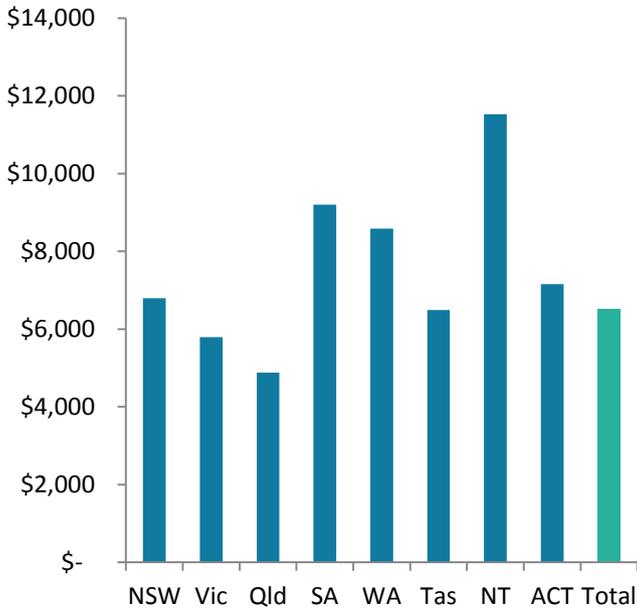


Universal Access funding

Total per-child expenditure in NSW is around the national average.

However, in NSW parents pay the largest proportion of the cost of preschool and experience high out-of-pocket costs.

Figure 4: Estimated per-child expenditure on preschool (combined Australian Government, state and territory government and parent contributions) 2012-13 (Productivity Commission 2015)



Nearly a quarter of Australian children arrive at school without the foundational skills they need to thrive. A child's risk of being developmentally vulnerable is closely correlated with their socio-economic status, meaning that before they have even started school, these children's chances are more influenced by where they were born than by their own innate abilities. These inequalities often increase as children progress through school.

Access to a high quality preschool program is one of the few proven strategies for lifting outcomes for all children, and evidence suggests that two years has more impact than one, especially for the children most likely to be developmentally vulnerable.

Mitchell Institute's new report, *Two Years are Better than One*, makes the case for preschool programs for 3 year olds.

The report is available at:

www.mitchellinstitute.org.au



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