

Government invests \$970 m in high quality early childhood education

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, and the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, Kate Ellis, have announced that all State and Territory governments have signed on to the Rudd Government's \$970 million Universal Access to early childhood education initiative.

The Ministers stated that early childhood education is the foundation of the Rudd Government's Education Revolution and that this investment will help make preschool services more affordable and accessible for all Australian families.

The Universal Access initiative will ensure that by 2013, all children will have access to 15 hours a week of quality early childhood education delivered by a university-trained early childhood education teacher for 40 weeks a year, in the year before they start school.

Each State and Territory has a different starting point and so will take different approaches to improving access to early childhood education.

States and territories will use funding to boost the number of available places, increase the number of contact hours and reduce the costs of early childhood education for parents.

The funding follows an agreement between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to implement the Council of Rudd Government's National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

The Rudd Government has committed \$970 million over five years to early childhood education through the National Partnership. Of this major investment, \$955 million will go directly to the states and territories to achieve universal access to early childhood education.

The Rudd Government's Universal Access initiative will also be supported by a range of early childhood reforms, including the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework, which began in July 2009. This national curriculum framework will ensure quality and consistency in the delivery of early childhood education programs across the country.

The Government has also committed \$126.6 million nationally over four years to support the training and retention of more, better qualified early childhood professionals.