

Two years are better than one

Kindergarten programs in Western Australia

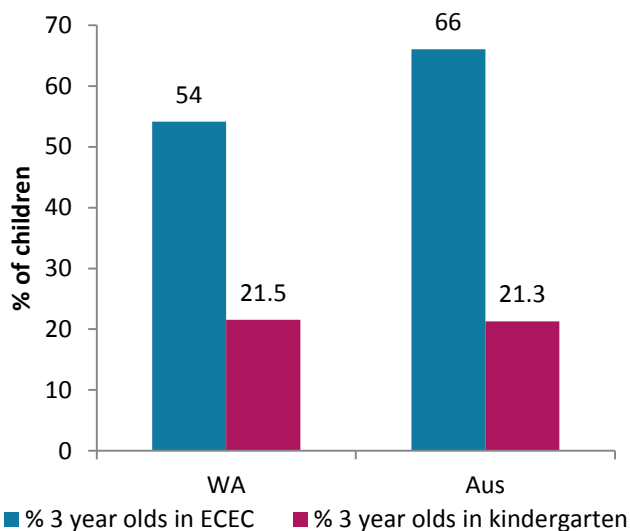
Western Australia has achieved universal enrolment of 4 year olds in kindergarten. However, a much smaller proportion of 3 year olds attend early education and care (ECEC) than the national average.

3 year olds enrolled in ECEC and kindergarten

WA has a smaller proportion of 3 year olds attending ECEC than the rest of Australia, although they have an equivalent proportion of 3 year olds enrolled in kindergarten programs.

- 54 per cent of 3 year olds are enrolled in ECEC (in long day care, sessional kindergarten and family day care)
- 21.5 per cent of 3 year olds are enrolled in kindergarten programs

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



Policy and funding for 3 year old kindergarten programs

In WA, 3 year old kindergarten programs are largely privately provided (either through Long Day Care centres, community agencies, local government or non-government schools).

A large number of non-government schools in WA offer a 3 year old program to children in their local community.

The KindiLink programme provides Aboriginal 3 year olds with supported playgroup sessions for six hours per week.

Kindilink is jointly delivered by an early childhood teacher and an Aboriginal assistant. They work with families to support children's learning. It is free and operates for six hours per week in 37 public schools which have a high number and proportion of Indigenous enrolments.

Progress towards Universal Access for 4 year olds

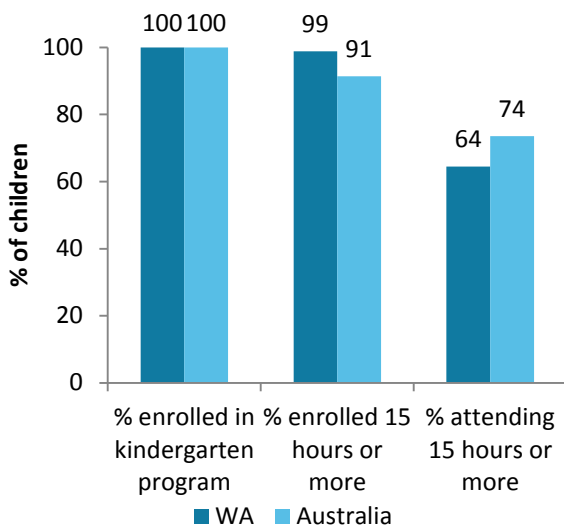
All 4 year old children are enrolled in kindergarten in WA. This reflects WA's long history of ensuring all children are entitled to a free place in a kindergarten program at school.

- 100 per cent of children are enrolled in kindergarten programs in the year before full-time school.
- 64 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).

Policy and funding for 4 year old kindergarten programs

In WA, kindergarten is primarily integrated with schools. A small but increasing number of families are choosing to access their kindergarten program through Long Day Care services, primarily families where both parents work.

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



All 4 year olds are entitled to a free kindergarten place at a public school, and the WA Government pays (on average) 75 per cent of the cost of kindergarten in non-government schools.

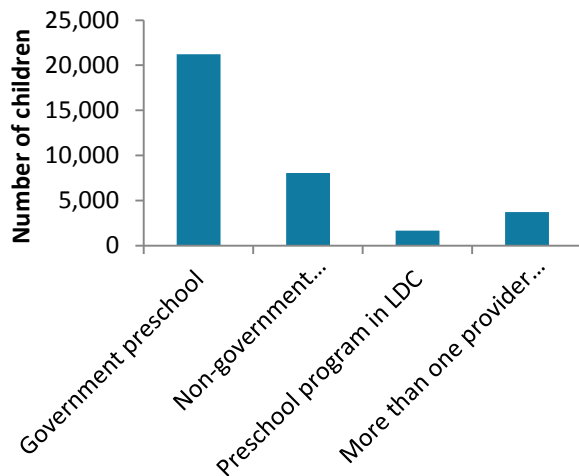
The WA Government uses its National Partnership Agreement funds to increase the hours of kindergarten provision from the state-funded 11 hours per week to the national benchmark of 15 hours per week.

Children accessing kindergarten in Long Day Care settings do not attract any subsidy from the WA Government.

Who provides kindergarten?

The majority of children attend government and non-government schools to access kindergarten in WA. A small proportion of children attend kindergarten programs through long day care settings.

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



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

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

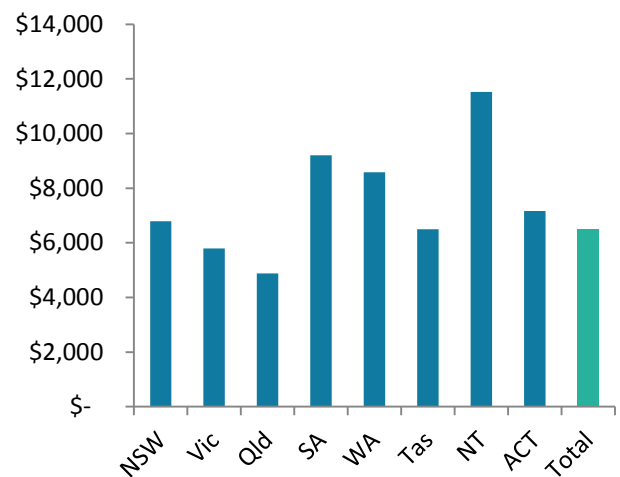
There is no national kindergarten program for 3 year olds, but some children attend programs delivered by an Early Childhood Teacher.

Universal Access funding

Total per-child expenditure in WA is considerably higher than the national average.

In WA, the state government pays a higher proportion of kindergarten funding than the national average. Parent contributions are lower than average.

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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