

Two years are better than one

Preschool programs in the ACT

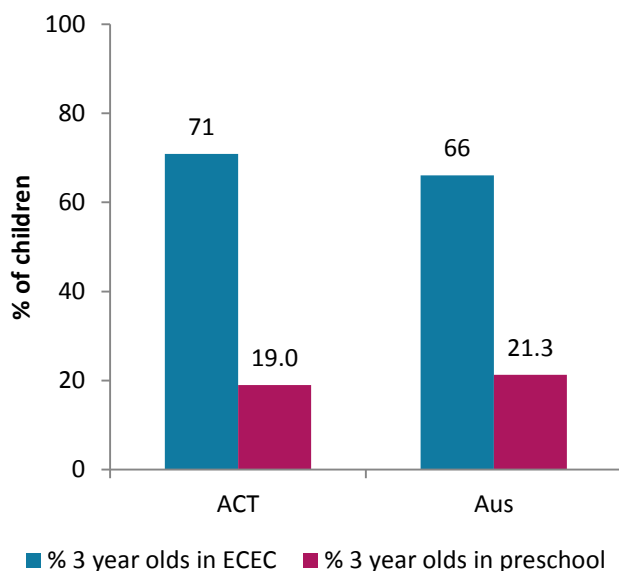
The ACT has one of the highest proportions of 3 year olds in early education and care (ECEC) and is performing above the national average for the proportion of 4 year olds enrolled in and attending preschool.

3 year olds enrolled in ECEC and preschool

The ACT has one of the highest proportions of 3 year olds attending ECEC in the country. However, the proportion attending a preschool program is slightly below average.

- 71 per cent of 3 year olds are enrolled in ECEC (in long day care, sessional preschool and family day care)
- 19 per cent of 3 year olds are enrolled in preschool programs

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



Policy and funding for 3 year old preschool programs

The ACT Government delivers free Koori preschool programs for 3 to 5 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Some government and non-government schools also provide 3 year old programs.

The ACT has a number of community-established and run 'playschools' that provide (fee-based) programs for 3 year olds that may be delivered by an early childhood teacher.

Progress towards Universal Access for 4 year olds

The ACT is performing significantly above the national average for the proportion of children enrolled in and attending preschool (noting data is collected in a reference week and is likely to under-estimate actual attendance across the year).

High rates of attendance reflect the ACT's long history of providing preschool programs.

- 100 per cent per cent of children are enrolled in preschool programs in the year before school
- Nearly 90 per cent are attending for 15 hours or more

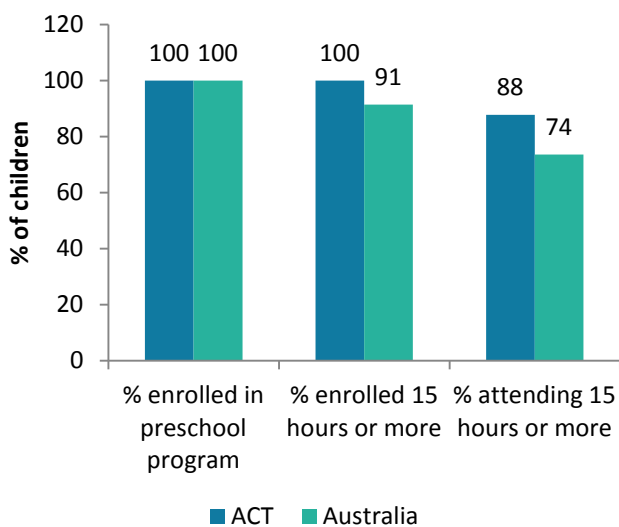
What is preschool?

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

In the ACT, preschool is largely integrated with schools, both government and non-government.

The ACT Government uses its National Partnership Agreement funds to make sure all children can access at least 15 hours of preschool through school based programs.

Children accessing preschool programs in Long Day Care settings are not subsidised under the National Partnership Agreement, although Long Day Care services can access other support.

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

Strategies to boost attendance of priority cohorts

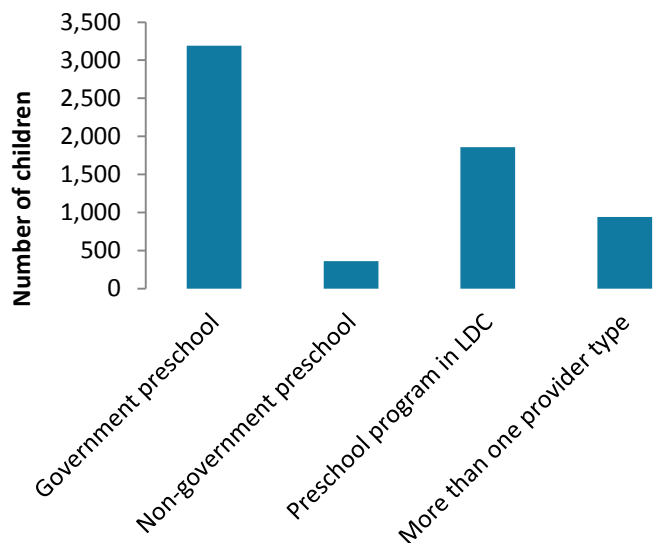
The ACT delivers preschool through local schools, which ensures all children have access to a preschool program.

Who provides preschool?

The majority of children attend school-based government and non-government preschool in the ACT.

A number of families are accessing preschool programs in Long Day Care.

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



Universal Access funding

Total per-child expenditure in the ACT is slightly above the national average.

ACT Government pays a higher proportion of preschool funding than the national average.

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

