

# Early Learning Reform Principles

[All Australian governments] recognise the importance of the early years of life, and the significant contribution that high quality early learning makes to life-long educational achievement, productivity, wellbeing and success. This is reflected in our collective commitment to the national early childhood quality and participation agendas.

All jurisdictions acknowledge that reform and investment in early learning, which complements and builds on the strengths of the existing system, have the potential to deliver significant economic and social benefits to Australia, including improved school readiness; better opportunities; long-term productivity increases; improved workforce participation, income, financial security and health outcomes; and reductions in crime and welfare expenditure.

All jurisdictions recognise that we have a mutual interest in improving outcomes through early learning, and need to work together to achieve those outcomes. We share a commitment to the provision of high quality early learning services across Australia and improvements to the availability and sharing of data, evidence and research. All jurisdictions are already making a significant contribution to early learning in a range of settings. The substantial early learning system improvements and reform by all jurisdictions form a strong base from which to continue improving outcomes for children and families.

Early learning services include early childhood education and care, and other services that support families and children’s wellbeing, learning and development in the first years of life. All jurisdictions acknowledge that delivery of these services varies across jurisdictions, and that this diversity is a strength. Jurisdictions recognise that early learning intersects with other portfolios and services at all levels.

PREAMBLE

All jurisdictions are committed to cooperation and shared responsibility for early learning

All jurisdictions maintain flexibility to deliver services in a way that adapts to local circumstances, encourages innovation, and supports choice for families

National arrangements for early childhood are cohesive, effective and efficient; funding is sustainable and transparent; and services are high quality, accessible, equitable and inclusive

Reforms are evidence-based, child and family-centred, and complement existing arrangements

Roles and responsibilities are clear, and jurisdictions are accountable under agreed and measurable evaluation frameworks, which are supported by accessible, meaningful and reliable data

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning

Children’s wellbeing, learning and development are supported by high-quality early childhood services

Children are engaged in and benefitting from educational opportunities

Children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children

Families are confident and have the capabilities to support their child’s development and learning as first educators

Families are supported to make informed choices, and can access affordable, flexible services that meet their needs and preferences

OUTCOMES