Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia

OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care

30-31 October 2008
Current thinking

- Australia’s investment in early education is low compared to the OECD average.
- Investing in the development and care of children makes good social and economic sense.
- A focus on the early years to ensure the wellbeing of our children throughout their lives and to lift the productivity of our nation as a whole.
- Providing access to high quality affordable early education programs is one of the best ways to ensure positive outcomes for children, particularly disadvantaged children.
Split responsibilities

- Responsibilities for ECEC shared between the National Government and States and Territories means complexity
- The Federal Government manages the accreditation process and quality assurance, while the States and Territories regulate childcare, and have jurisdiction over preschools
New policy directions

- ECEC is a national priority
- Broad national strategy for early childhood development
- Establishment of the Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care (OECECC)
- Council of Australian Governments (COAG) - cooperation between national and state and territory governments
Early Childhood reform agenda

- Access
- Quality
- Affordability
Universal Access to preschool

By 2013, all children in the year before formal schooling will have access to quality early childhood education:

- 15 hours a week for a minimum of 40 weeks per year
- delivered by four year degree-qualified early childhood teachers
- in public, private and community-based preschools and child care.

(Funding: $533m over five years from 2007-08. Rising to $450m per year when fully implemented by 2013)
National Quality Framework for Education and Care

- Strong quality standards for ECEC
- A quality rating system to drive continuous improvement providing parents with information about the quality of care and learning
- Streamlining of licensing and accreditation arrangements
National Early Years Learning Framework

- To guide early childhood educators in developing quality early childhood programs
- Focus on play-based learning, role of teachers, early literacy and numeracy skills, personal development, formal school transition
- $2.5 million over 2008-09 to develop an Early Years Learning Framework
National Early Years Workforce Strategy

$126.6 million over the next four years for a high quality early childhood education workforce, includes:

- $60.3 million to support around 8000 child care workers getting a qualification
- $53.9 million to create additional university places for early childhood teachers, starting with 500 places in 2009 and rising to 1500 places by 2011.
- $12.4 million to reduce the HECS-HELP debt of early childhood teachers who work in Indigenous communities, regional and remote areas and areas of high disadvantage.
Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

- 2 year home based curriculum
  - 30 weeks per year
- Professional Co-ordinator
- Staff of Home Tutors

- Role-playing
- Teaching/Learning Technique
- Positive affirmation

- Home Visits and Group Meetings
Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

- Provides baseline data about how children in a community are faring in their development in certain domains.
- Collected on a community level not individuals.
- Allow governments and community organisations to target communities which need extra help to improve wellbeing and school readiness of children.
Initiatives for the Indigenous

- National Partnership for Indigenous Early Childhood Development
- National and State and Territory Governments together address the high levels of disadvantage to give children a better start in life.
- $564 million over 6 years.
- 35 Children and Family Centres across Australia to deliver early learning, child care and family support programs.
- Indigenous AEDI Adaptation Study
Child Care Assistance

- Child Care Benefits and Tax Rebates
- Up to $7500 for each child each year
- Jobs, Education and Training Child Care fee - pay the difference between full fee and benefits for sessions to participate in jobs, education and training activities
Australian Delegation to the OECD