

# Media Release

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## **NSW improves but still well behind on access to Early Childhood Education: NCOSS**

The 2017 Report on Government Services into child care, education and training shows new investment has improved early childhood education attendance in NSW but there is still much more work to do to ensure access for all children, according to the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS).

The report shows a notable improvement in the proportion of children attending preschool programs in NSW, with 82.8% of children enrolled in the year before school - a promising increase from the 71.3% in 2014-2015. However, NSW still remains well behind the national figure of 96.5% of children attending preschool programs.

NCOSS CEO Tracy Howe said new funding from the NSW Government in early childhood education was having an impact but years of inadequate investment meant there is still significant ground to make if we are to lift NSW from being one of the worst performing states in this area.

“90% of a child’s brain development occurs in the first five years so this is a critical window of opportunity to maximise children’s potential and improve their life outcomes.

“We know high quality early childhood education and care enhances a child’s developmental outcomes, and is especially beneficial for vulnerable children, yet access to this opportunity is still out of reach to many children.”

Ms Howe said she was concerned the low numbers of children attending early childhood education and care was due to the lack of affordability of these services.

“The NSW Government continues to spend less on early childhood education and care services than any other state and territory.

“It’s great to see a rise in real recurrent expenditure in NSW from \$202 per child (aged 0-12 years) to \$246, but when we are seeing Western Australia spend \$733, South Australia spend \$704 and the ACT spend \$628 it is clear we have more work to do.

“NSW has the most the most expensive early childcare services in Australia.”

Ms Howe said the NSW Government needed to continue its work to make early childhood education accessible for all through further increases in investment in line with other States and Territories and the creation of a \$250 million Early Childhood Education Investment Fund.

“We envision a Fund that would act as a circuit breaker, supporting new, effective initiatives that will ensure vulnerable children and young people access the full benefits of quality early education.

“When we are so far behind the 8-ball it’s time for Government to look at new ways of making up ground. A Fund that could support targeted programs having big impacts on communities is the place to start.”

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