

# EDUCATION: TASMANIA'S FUTURE

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR 3 YEAR OLDS

*In recognition of the importance of early learning in improving life outcomes for our children, the Tasmanian Government will fund a Working Together for 3 Year Olds – targeted pre-school initiative, commencing in 2020.*

This initiative will provide the opportunity for eligible three-year-old children to participate in Government-subsidised quality pre-school programs for 10 hours a week (400 hours a year). The program will be delivered by accredited services in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, or government schools, where no ECEC facility is available.

There is strong evidence that quality early learning has significant benefits for our children that flow through to adulthood. The research is clear that all children benefit from early learning programs, especially so for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

After considering the Secretary of the Department of Education's report into the social and economic impacts of implementing the earlier school starting age, the Government has decided not to proceed with legislating an earlier school starting age.

### WHY WORKING TOGETHER FOR 3 YEAR OLDS?

The Secretary's report has provided the Government with a detailed understanding of the Early Childhood Education Sector in Tasmania.

As a result of the report, the Government has made a decision to provide earlier access to quality early learning by providing 2 years of pre-school to Tasmanian children who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

The Government's view is that access to high quality early learning sooner is best for all Tasmanian children and it is imperative that a viable ECEC sector is maintained.

Tasmania has longstanding social and economic challenges that continue to require strong action to address, which is why the Government will provide \$10.5 million for delivery of the *Working Together for 3 Year Olds*. This will provide government subsidised participation in quality pre-school programs for eligible three year old children, to commence in 2020.

The Government will retain key commitments made to support implementation of the earlier school starting age in the school sector, including supporting children from Kindergarten to Year 2 with developmentally appropriate learning frameworks, enshrined in the *Education Act 2016*, recurrent funding of \$4.9 million for additional support in Prep including additional teacher aides, and assessing government Kindergartens against the National Quality Standard.

The *Working Together for 3 Year Olds* initiative will provide quality play based early learning at an earlier age that we are committed to, and is a very important step forward to leading the nation in education.



### HOW DOES MY CHILD QUALIFY FOR THE WORKING TOGETHER FOR 3 YEAR OLDS INITIATIVE?

The initiative will be subsidised by the Tasmanian Government. This subsidy will mean that eligible three-year-old children will be able to access free early learning in accredited early learning programs.

The initiative will be available for children with the greatest need. Access, in the first instance, will be guided by a set of criteria to include children who are three years old by 1 January in any year and;

- whose parents/guardians are Health Care Card holders, or
- who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- who are receiving support or intervention from the Child Safety Service.

*Working Together for 3 Year Olds* will commence in 2020, which means that eligible children born in 2017 will be able to access the initiative.

### HOW WILL THE INITIATIVE BE DEVELOPED?

The *Working Together for 3 Year Olds* initiative's design will be guided by what works on the ground – an inclusive co-design approach that will promote buy-in by both ECEC providers and schools. The detailed design of the initiative will be undertaken with the ECEC sector.

This initiative is consistent with the Government's focus on the ECEC and school sectors working together to improve the educational, health and wellbeing outcomes of children from pregnancy to eight years of age.

An evaluation will also be set up in the design phase to inform delivery of the initiative and of early years policies into the future.

### WILL ATTENDANCE BE COMPULSORY?

If your child is eligible, participation is voluntary.

Families will be strongly encouraged to take up this opportunity, and the Department will work with key organisations, such as TasCOSS, during the design phase to identify barriers to participation in early learning and consider options to support families to take up the *Working Together for 3 Year Olds* initiative.

### HOW MANY CHILDREN WOULD THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORT?

Modelling undertaken by the Department of Education indicates that approximately 2,500 three year olds could access early learning through the *Working Together for 3 Year Olds* initiative each year, or approximately 40 per cent of all three year olds.

### HOW MANY 3 YEAR OLDS ARE ALREADY ACCESSING ECEC SERVICES?

In 2016, less than 60 per cent of three year olds across Tasmania were engaged in early childhood education.

### HOW WILL THE INITIATIVE BE FUNDED?

The \$10.5 million initiative will be funded from the budget allocated to implement the voluntary earlier school starting age.