



Early Childhood
Australia
A voice for young children

NEW
DATE

2025 EARLY LEARNING MATTERS WEEK

18–24 AUGUST 2025

About Early Learning Matters Week

Early Learning Matters Week is a much-loved annual event, which celebrates the incredible value of early learning by uniting early childhood educators, parents, carers and community leaders across Australia.

Early Learning Matters Week is a chance for educators, families, politicians and the broader community to come together and celebrate the power of high quality early learning on children's outcomes. For Early Learning Matters Week 2025, we are urging all services to be involved and Members of Parliament to consider what they wish to know more about in early childhood education and care. We are also encouraging educators to consider how to involve children and families.

This year, Early Learning Matters Week is celebrated in the week of 18–24 August. Throughout the week, events will be hosted by early childhood education and care services across the country to showcase what high-quality, play-based learning looks like. We want to celebrate you! Early learning matters to everyone—children, families, educators and the wider community—and there is great practice happening every day around the country.

Why early learning matters

The early years can have the greatest influence on a child's life outcomes and recent economic analysis has shown that investment in early learning delivers significant returns. Children's learning, social, physical health and wellbeing outcomes can be positively impacted by high quality early learning experiences. Quality play-based early learning, led by responsive teachers and educators, helps to amplify children's natural capacities for learning. Our hard-working early childhood teachers and educators plan and deliver learning experiences that draw on children's natural interests, skills and abilities, which help them learn while they are playing.

Early learning matters in the everyday lives of children and families in Australia, because it provides:

- quality early experiences for children as our youngest citizens—this has impacts beyond today, translating to improved academic achievement and wellbeing at school and better post-school options
- partnership for families in their role as children's first educators through parent/carer messaging, access to integrated services, and daily interactions with families
- support for families so they can access employment, training, study and volunteering options
- culturally safe, inclusive, child-centred spaces and places where children can grow, learn and develop, and be visible within their communities.



What is the state of early childhood education and care in Australia in 2025?

We have a fantastic system of early learning in Australia, but not for every child. In recent years, there have been several significant reviews and inquiries into the early childhood education and care system investigating how we can provide more equitable, consistent and accessible early learning across the country. This attention represents a unique opportunity to make positive and enduring changes to deliver better outcomes for young children and their families.



A snapshot of where we are currently:

Participation and costs

- In 2024 in Australia, 66.4% of two year olds were enrolled in CCS approved care; 69.3% of three year olds; 63.2% of 4 year olds and 44.1% of 5 year olds (Australian Government, 2024, March).
- In 2024, the average weekly usage was 27.3 hours up 2.3% from the previous year, and the average hourly fee was \$12.40, up 8.5% from the same quarter in 2023.

2024 was an Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) collection year

- The last AEDC in 2021 saw over 95% of eligible children assessed. In 2021, 1 in 5 children were considered developmentally vulnerable at school entry. The 2024 AEDC results will be released in 2025.

According to the Australian Government Department of Education, in 2024:

- Of children in CCS approved 'child care services':
 - 59.8% (851,161) attended centre based services
 - 39.7% (564,755) attended outside school hours care
 - 5.2% (73,826) attended family day care
 - 0.1% (1,659) attended in home care
- The number of children enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full-time schooling in 2023 was 285,218 (89.2%), a 0.1% increase from 2022.
- The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged four or five years enrolled in a preschool program in 2023 was 19,823 (7% of all children enrolled), and 34,234 (6.9% of all children enrolled) aged 3-5.
- There were 13,284 ECEC services in Australia delivering preschool programs with 8,986 (67.6%) delivered from centre based care and the remainder (32.4%) from stand-alone preschool services or preschool services attached to a school.

According to ACECQA, in 2024:

- 17,842 children's education and care services were approved to operate under the NQF (including OSHC)
 - 7,194 providers approved to operate
 - 23,094 quality rating assessments were completed
 - 14,980 (91%) services with a quality rating of Meeting National Quality Standard or above
 - 27 services were rated Excellent

About ECA

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation that was first incorporated in 1938. We work nationally and locally, with active State and Territory Committees in each Australian jurisdiction and a National Board of Directors.

Our vision: Every young child is thriving and learning.

To achieve this, we champion the rights of young children to thrive and learn at home, in the community, within early learning settings and through the early years of school. Our work builds the capacity of our society and the early childhood sector to realise the potential of every child during the critical early years from birth to the age of eight.