



2021 EARLY LEARNING MATTERS WEEK

26–30 JULY 2021

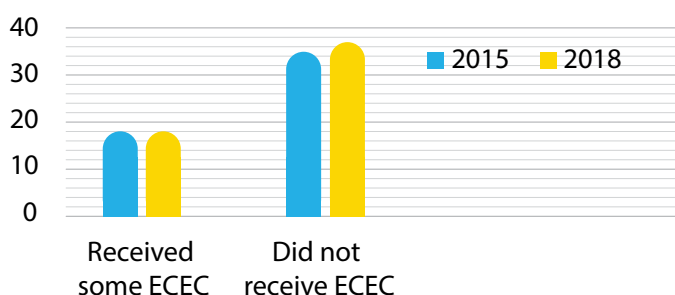
Why early learning matters

In the first five years of life, children's brains are wired to learn and they are developing quickly.

Early learning helps to amplify their natural skills and abilities. Young children learn best through play-based activities that are suited to their age. When children have inclusive, positive and rich early learning experiences, it is more likely they will go on to become successful learners with high levels of wellbeing. Early childhood education and care is an important way of providing such learning experiences, especially for children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

Trained early childhood educators support and extend play to maximise learning through exploration, inquiry and problem-solving. Educators also help families understand and support their child's development.

Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains



Source: Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2020*

Snapshot of early learning in Australia

- 1.3 million children attended an approved early childhood education and care service in 2020.
- Children who attend early learning services are 33% less likely to be developmentally vulnerable when they start school than those who do not attend early learning services.
- The proportion of children aged five and under attending early learning services rose from 36% in 2010 to nearly 45% in 2019.
- Children living in remote areas, children from Indigenous backgrounds, children from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with a disability are all under-represented in early learning services.
- The median weekly cost of centre-based early learning services increased from \$423 in 2015 to \$495 in 2019.
- Australia's investment in early learning is below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (0.7% of GDP). Australia is ranked 11th among 21 OECD nations.



The goal of fully realising the benefits of early learning for all children in Australia has not yet been reached. To make better progress, we need to:

- recognise the **benefits** of early learning for children, families and the wider community
- address unequal **access** to early learning by targeting the barriers to participation
- address **workforce** issues in the early learning sector, including retention, qualifications and skills
- ensure the delivery of **high-quality** early learning and care, regardless of service type or location.

Early Learning Matters Week is a nationwide event to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of early childhood education and care in Australia. Visit www.earlylearningmatters.org.au to get involved.

About ECA

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is a not-for-profit organisation that has been a voice for children since 1938. We have a federated structure with branches in every state and territory in Australia and our membership includes individual professionals, early childhood services and schools, as well as public, private and not-for-profit organisations that share a commitment to young children. Our vision is that 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.

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