MARCH 2025

Universal Access to Early Learning

Communique #1

Universal Access to Early Learning Advisory Group

The Universal Access to Early Learning Advisory Group met for the first time on 13 March 2025. The Advisory Group will meet quarterly throughout 2025.

The newly established Advisory Group will provide advice and guidance to the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) to inform the design and implementation of initiatives to increase access to early learning, towards the goal of Universal Access to early learning for three year olds.

Membership to the Advisory Group includes peak bodies across Tasmania representing the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, Independent and Catholic education sectors, and other key stakeholder representatives where appropriate.

The Advisory Group will be guided by the overarching objective and key principles for the Early Learning for Three Year Olds initiative:

Objective

Every 3-year-old will have access to quality and affordable early learning that supports their lifelong learning, wellbeing and growth as confident and capable people.

Principles

- Quality, age and developmentally appropriate and play-based
- Delivered by a qualified workforce
- Accessible to all 3-year-olds for up to 15 hours distributed over a week
- Place-based, flexible, innovative and meet local needs
- Children and their wellbeing are central to decision making
- Cost will not be a barrier to participation
- Informed by evidence and research
- Implemented through a co-design approach with ECEC providers, families and communities

Department for Education,
Children and Young People

Tasmanian Government

EL3 Trial Site Update

Three trial sites have commenced in Term 1 at East Devonport, Fingal and on Bruny Island providing access for local children to participate in quality early learning.

- **East Devonport** – Hub Model – The service is a regulated ECEC service, delivered by Uniting Early Learning, co-located on the school site and near the CFLC.
- **Break O'Day/Fingal** – Regional Model – The service is an expansion of an additional day of access at the existing occasional care service at the Fingal Valley Neighbourhood House.
- **Bruny Island** – CFLC Outreach Model – Expanded early years supports including drop in and play and adjunct care, while families engage in activities on site.

DECYP is working closely with the following communities and the ECEC sector to continue engagement and scoping:

- **West Coast** – Co-location Model – Co-located ECEC at Zeehan Primary School (scoping in progress) and ongoing engagement on the West Coast to identify further suitable opportunities.
- **Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island** – Regular engagement with the existing ECEC on Flinders Island to establish a partnership approach and current engagement (in progress) for an Outreach Model on Cape Barren Island.

DECYP is in the process of selecting an external consultancy to evaluate the EL3 trial sites. Selection to be complete by late March with commencement in early April. The evaluation will examine:

- The impact of trial site services and their alignment with the EL3 Principles
- Outcomes for children, families and communities
- The adequacy and effectiveness of the processes and supports
- What is working well in each trial site and the transferability of trial site service models to other locations with low or no ECEC capacity.

The evaluation will conclude in October 2026 and involve consultation with Local Enabling Groups (LEGs), trial site service providers, children and families, DECYP and the Advisory Group.

Research and Development Project

Ernst and Young (EY) are finalising their engagement with DECYP in the delivery of the Research and Development Project, that aims to support a better understanding of the barriers to ECEC service capacity across Tasmania and opportunities to overcome them.

A summary of EY's findings will be distributed in the coming weeks, in consultation with the Universal Access to Early Learning Advisory Group. The findings are based upon

stakeholder engagement with the ECEC sector in Tasmania and economic modelling of the supply of and demand for ECEC across the state.

EY's findings will inform actions towards the long term goal of Universal Access to early learning for three year olds in Tasmania, and is an important part of the partnership approach between the Tasmanian Government and the ECEC sector to achieve this goal.

National Update

The Universal Access to Early Learning Advisory Group received an update from the Australian Government on the following initiatives that are part of the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring Australian families can access universal, affordable ECEC no matter their background or postcode.

Building Early Education Fund (the Fund)

The Australian Government will invest $1 billion to establish the Building Early Education Fund (the Fund) to build early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres, including in the regions and outer suburbs. This will give more families access to quality early childhood education and care in areas where it is needed most.

The Fund includes $500 million in targeted capital rounds and $500 million for future Commonwealth investment in owning and leasing ECEC centres.

- Fact Sheet - Building Early Education Fund - Department of Education, Australian Government

Workforce

The Australian Government is investing $3.6 billion for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Worker Retention Payment to support a 15 per cent wage increase for ECEC workers over two years from December 2024.

- Fact Sheet - Worker retention payment - Department of Education, Australian Government

The Australian Government's Early Education Service Delivery Price (SDP) project will provide a data-driven understanding of the reasonable costs of quality ECEC service delivery. The findings from this project will be used to inform future funding reforms.

- Fact Sheet - Early Education Service Delivery Price - Department of Education, Australian Government

3 Day Guarantee – Early Education. The Australian Government is replacing the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Activity Test from January 2026 to guarantee at least 3 days of subsidised ECEC each week for children who need it.

- Fact Sheet - 3 Day Guarantee – Early Education - Department of Education, Australian Government

Have a question or comment?

Further information including previous Communiques can be found at: https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/about-us/community-and-engagement/early-learning-for-three-year-olds/

If you have any questions, please contact: el3@decyp.tas.gov.au