



# Broadside BRIEFING

**PAPER#5 DEC12**

**What is the purpose of this *Broadside Briefing*?** Community Child Care understands that services often need just a quick snapshot of an issue. We have attempted to do this, and propose what we think would fix the issue. This *Broadside Briefing* is also our way of asking our members what they want. Do you agree with the draft advocacy positions Community Child Care has outlined? Please tell us!

## MAKING UNIVERSAL ACCESS WORK IN NSW

On 29 November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed a major National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

The aim of the agreement was to ensure that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program delivered by a university-trained early childhood teacher\*, for 15 hours per week, for 40 weeks per year, in the year before they start school. It was to be fully implemented by mid-2013.

When NSW signed its Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth Government

'Less children have access to a preschool program in NSW than other states and territories. Those that do, pay more. This *Broadside Briefing* explores the changes we need to ensure Universal Access works in our state.'

– Leanne Gibbs, Chief Executive Officer  
Community Child Care Co-operative NSW

under the National Partnership, we had:

- one of the highest number of early childhood teachers in the country;
- the lowest rates of preschool program participation, despite our established tradition of delivering preschool not just through dedicated preschools, but also in long day care services; and
- the highest preschool fees.

The NSW Government committed the state to 26 mostly existing strategies in pursuit of Universal Access. Two stood out:

- a substantial increase in per-child



funding rates for community-based preschools; and

- a teacher costs contribution scheme.

### Universal Access: The history

#### ■ First report to the Commonwealth:

The Commonwealth Government was critical of the progress in NSW. They were particularly critical of the NSW Government's action on discovering the inequity between the large fees charged by the preschools they funded and the free preschools they provided via the Department of Education. To remedy this inequity, a fee for all Departmental preschools was announced.

- **Second report (2012):** When the Commonwealth announced the release of funding owed under the National Partnership, there was no report or funding announcement for NSW.

- **NSW Budget underspend:** Perhaps the withholding of funding was not surprising, given the underspending of the early education and care budget in the previous 12 months.

- **Funding Review:** The NSW Government commissioned a review of early education and care funding in 2011, which has still not been released.

- **Extension of Universal Access:** The Commonwealth Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Peter Garrett, has now announced a \$1.1 billion extension of the program for three more years.

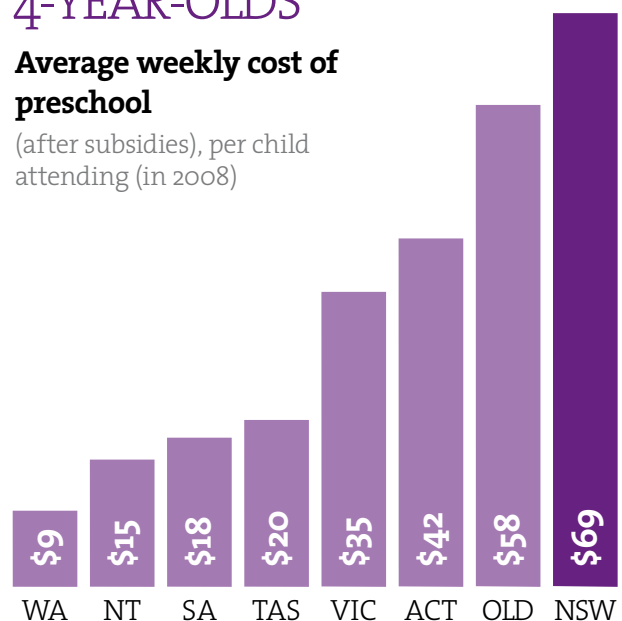
The extension of the program obviously means that NSW is not the only state or territory that has not yet achieved Universal Access.

**The strategies provided below are offered for discussion. Looking at what could be possible to ensure access a preschool program in the year 2015, it is continually re-examining why, in NSW, it is not as those in other states and territories.**

## 1 ENSURE THE COST OF PRESCHOOL IS NO BARRIER. \$15 A DAY PRESCHOOL FOR ALL 4-YEAR-OLDS

### Average weekly cost of preschool

(after subsidies), per child attending (in 2008)



Source: Table 3A.26 Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2012

### Percentage of children accessing preschool

Proportion of population enrolled in state government funded and/or provided preschool services in the year before full-time school



Source Table 3A.13 Report on Government Services 2012

red in the spirit of constructive  
ut in place to assist NSW children to  
before they start school, rather than  
, children do not have the same access

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

It cannot be just co-incidence that NSW, as the state with the highest preschool fees, also has the lowest preschool participation rates. Whenever preschools can lower fees, they report that participation rates increase, especially in low socio-economic areas.

### How could it be rectified?

By providing community-based preschools a subsidy designed to cover 80% of the cost of the educators required under the National Regulation, most services could drop their fees to a \$15 a day rate. Remove or match this fee in Department of Education preschools.

## 2 PROVIDE FUNDING TO ESTABLISH NEW NOT FOR PROFIT PRESCHOOLS IN AREAS OF DEMAND

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

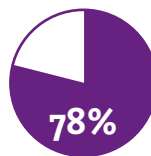
Due to the submission/advocacy-based model, NSW has a major imbalance in the location of preschools – there are more on the North Shore of Sydney and on the North Coast of NSW than anywhere else.

### How could it be implemented?

Undertake a supply and demand study (community mapping and the results of the Australian Early Development Index) to determine where children cannot access a preschool program easily and fund the establishment of services in these areas.

## 3 ENSURE EVERY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM IS RUN BY A UNIVERSITY-TRAINED EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER

### Percentage of preschool programs managed by teachers



Preschools



Long day care services

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

The first component of Universal Access is that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program **delivered by a university-trained early childhood teacher**. If 22% of existing preschools and 40% of existing long day care centres running a preschool program don't have teachers, then children attending these centres are missing out on this component of Universal Access.

### How could it be implemented?

Fund every service required to employ a teacher under the National Regulations for the cost of employing that teacher. Ensure they are contractually required to pay their teacher a salary that has parity with primary school teachers as a condition of funding.

## 4 PROVIDE FUNDING TO ENABLE SERVICES TO ADDRESS SPECIFIC LOCAL BARRIERS TO UNIVERSAL ACCESS

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

Services have strong local knowledge as to why children in their area may miss out on a preschool program. The reasons may include transport and locational barriers that could be rectified by the establishment of mobile and outreach services.

### How could it be implemented?

Provide a funding pool to which services could apply for specific funds to overcome local barriers.

**Children in NSW can access a preschool program through Commonwealth-subsidised long day care services, or through state-funded or managed dedicated preschools.**

## 5 OFFER INDIGENOUS CHILDREN VERY LOW-COST PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ACCESS

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

Cost is a reported barrier to Indigenous children accessing preschool.

### How could it be implemented?

Increase the current subsidy that preschools receive for Indigenous children to meet almost the full cost of care. Ensure this subsidy can be applied whenever an Indigenous child requests preschool access and ensure the subsidy is paid to the preschool promptly. The right of Indigenous children to very low-cost preschool would need to be advertised widely.

Percentage of Indigenous children accessing childcare in NSW



Percentage of Indigenous children **not accessing** childcare in NSW

\*Figures are not available for preschool programs.  
Source: National ECEC Workforce Census Report 2010

## 6 REVISE THE 15-HOURS REQUIREMENT

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

NSW is so far behind other states and territories in achieving access to a preschool program, that pushing for 15 hours access when so many children

miss out totally, pushes the focus on the wrong part of the equation. NSW has a strong tradition of preschool provision based on a model of six-hour days. Services and families have repeatedly said that families are not interested in changing this model. Research on preschool participation is not clear on the optimal hours of preschool for children. The *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE)* study in England showed that pre-experience, compared to none, enhances all-round development in children and that duration of attendance (in months) is important; an earlier start (under age 3 years) is related to better intellectual development. It also found that full time attendance led to no better gains for children than part-time provision.

### How could it be rectified?

Abandon the 15 hours requirement for NSW.

## 7 ENSURE SERVICES CAN CONTINUE TO OFFER PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS TO 3-YEAR-OLDS

### How would this help Universal Access to be achieved?

NSW community-based preschools have long provided preschool to three-year-olds, as well as children in their year before school. Ensuring this can continue provides services with a feeder group for four-year-old groups and ensures children get access to a longer preschool education, which research shows is beneficial.

### How could it be rectified?

Allow services to continue to operate using attendance patterns that allow access to three-year-olds.