

Office for Early Childhood Development



Government of South Australia

Preschool for 3-year-olds is rolling out from 2026 to 2032

Generations of South Australian children will benefit from quality early learning, setting them up to thrive, following the state government's bold investment in early childhood development.

The roll-out of up to 15 hours of a quality preschool program for 3-year-olds will be staged from 2026 to 2032, with a focus on increasing accessibility, flexibility and providing quality education and services.

Children attending long day care when they are 3 will receive their program there, at services that have partnered with the government.

Other children not enrolled in a long day care offering 3-year-old preschool can attend a government or non-government preschool or long day care service offering this program.

The best learning is child's play!

3-year-old preschool is about learning through play and exploration. A qualified early childhood teacher will lead a quality preschool program that encourages curiosity and fun.

Play-based early learning helps develop social and emotional skills, and gives children better long-term outcomes in language, numeracy and cognitive skills, as well as better health outcomes.

The new model for 3-year-old preschool will include:

- a teacher-led preschool program
- support from allied health and other professionals
- early identification of a child's developmental needs, with organised pathways to interventions
- organised family and community supports for those who need it.

Early childhood matters

South Australian children are not faring as well as their counterparts elsewhere in Australia. These children are part of families across all walks of life. With 90% of a child's brain development happening by age 5, it is critical we get the early years right.

Following the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, we've set an ambitious 20-year goal to reduce developmental vulnerability at school starting age from the current 23.8%, to 15%.

Staging the preschool roll-out

Universal 3-year-old preschool will be introduced in stages between 2026 and 2032.

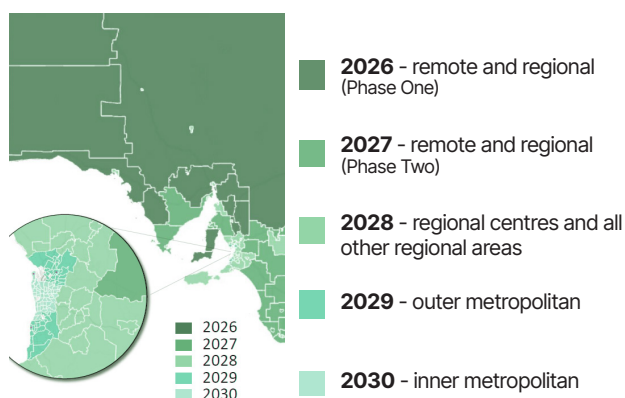
The number of services offering 3-year-old preschool will grow from 2026 as we build our workforce and early childhood infrastructure. By 2032, every child in South Australia will have access to 15 hours per week of 3-year-old preschool.

During the roll-out, children will receive a 6 to 15-hour program per week where programs have commenced, with hours building up across the roll-out as the capacity increases.

Roll-out schedule

From 2026, the government will partner with a wide range of long day care services from across the state to deliver 3-year-old preschool programs in their communities. Services will need to meet workforce and quality requirements.

The roll-out in government and non-government preschools will be geographic – starting with rural areas in 2026 and 2027, moving to large regional centres in 2028 and to metropolitan areas in 2029 and 2030.



Providing 3-year-old preschool in regional areas with limited access to early childhood education and care is a priority. More than 40 services in part of the state's Far North, West Coast, Flinders Ranges, Yorke Peninsula and APY Lands and Outback regions will be the first government services to offer a 3-year-old preschool program. Three demonstration sites in metropolitan Adelaide will commence from 2026.

Helping the children most in need

We're offering 30 hours of preschool a week to up to 2000 3- and 4-year-olds who need extra support by 2032.

Integrated hubs will bring preschool together with other services, so families and children are able to get the support they need in one place.

Twenty hubs will open across the state, with a focus on the areas where children will benefit most from integrated support.

We're opening 2 integrated hub demonstration sites in Port Pirie and Adelaide's northern suburbs by 2026. Demonstration sites will test integrated service models along with the provision of up to 30-hours of preschool. The Office for Early Childhood Development will evaluate the operations, to inform the broader roll-out so integrated hubs truly meet the needs of their communities, identifying and offering places to children who need it most.

South Australia's early childhood reform timeline

