

3-year-old preschool fact sheet

For families and communities

As parents and carers, you play the most important role in your child's development. But you don't have to go it alone.

The state government is rolling out 3-year-old preschool to help give your child a flying start to life.

Two years are better than one

The evidence shows that 2 years are better than one when it comes to play-based early learning. This is why we're giving children access to the quality, teacher-led preschool programs they deserve earlier.

Preschool programs help children to thrive when they are young and set them up for a stronger start to school and beyond.

All children benefit, especially children who have additional needs, or are experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

It is for this reason, consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, South Australia is introducing universal 3-year-old preschool from 2026.

The roll-out

We'll be partnering with long day care services, government and other sessional preschools to deliver universal 3-year-old preschool programs.

The roll-out of this new program will happen from 2026 to 2032. A staged approach is required to build the necessary workforce supply of qualified staff and, in some cases, create more infrastructure.

For more information, see the FAQs in this document and www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/3-year-old-preschool-roll-out.

Our vision

Over the next decade, we will purposefully build a stronger early childhood system that puts children and families first, where:

- you and your child can build trusted relationships with quality early childhood education and care providers who understand your child
- extra support is available for children who need it to reach their full potential, embedded within and connected to preschool programs
- you'll have greater access to quality preschool programs that meet the practical needs of you and your child's everyday lives.

The best learning is child's play!

In a teacher-led, play-based 3-year-old preschool program at long day care or sessional preschool you will find children:

- playing, getting messy, and being involved in moments of wonder
- laughing and engaging with each other and their teachers and educators, which helps them to make friends and build social skills
- expressing their feelings in a safe and secure environment, which builds their capacity to understand and manage their emotions
- learning through well-designed play-based experiences, including mastering new words and ideas, becoming more physically confident, learning about nature and cultures, and sharing and creating great stories.

Early learning services should also be inclusive of children and families with a diverse range of needs and abilities, welcoming and culturally safe for all families, and support Aboriginal children to have a strong sense of identity and culture.