

MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland peak kindy body raises concerns about early start to prep

Queensland's largest kindergarten provider is concerned some parents will be sending children straight to prep this Tuesday, without having completed a kindy year.

This follows changes which allow children born in July of the year they're turning five, to go to prep, with School Principals having the final decision on whether the child is ready.

C&K's CEO Michael Tizard says he's concerned Queensland children will be disadvantaged later in the school system if they start prep too early without experiencing a year at kindergarten.

He is urging parents to send their July-born children to kindy, rather than fast-tracking them into Prep, saying parents should not under-estimate the developmental benefits for their child, from attending a quality kindy program.

"A year at kindergarten where the child is engaged in developmentally appropriate play-based learning, helps children build their social skills and gets them used to routines prior to commencing their formal education."

Enrolment rates in kindergarten in Queensland have risen from 29% to more than 97% in recent years and Mr Tizard said it would be very disappointing to see this go backwards.

"There are thousands of children across Queensland who could be missing out on the vital year of experience that kindy can offer."

C&K says the lasting benefits from kindergarten include:

- improved educational performance – NAPLAN scores have been shown 20 to 30 points higher among children who had attended a kindy program
- evidence that Year 4 students who attended one year of formal pre-primary education scored 11 points higher in reading and 18 points higher in maths/science than those who did not attend
- an OECD finding that the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reading assessment results of 15 year old students in most countries who had attended preschool outperformed those who had not attended, even after accounting for their socioeconomic background
- preschool increasing a child's future earning capacity by 7-12%
- significant benefits for disadvantaged children

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Australia currently ranks number 34 of 38 OECD countries on early childhood education enrolment rates.

Kirsten Alexander has had four children attend kindy and the youngest will start prep on Tuesday. She says the kindergarten year has been an important part of the education journey for her children.

“I believe their time there has enabled them to have a smooth and easy transition into prep.

“I’ve watched prep change somewhat over the years and knowing what is expected at prep level now, I am glad that my youngest starting school this year, has had kindy as a stepping stone. He has begun the basics in learning and socialising and is now more than ready to begin his school journey.

“The kindy experience has helped each of them build the independence, confidence and social skills they need to hit the ground running in prep”, she said.

Mr Tizard says fast-tracking children into the prep year is not only a risk for children, but will put more pressure on prep teachers to deal with children who may not be ready for school.

“We join with other early childhood education and care providers in Queensland to raise concerns about these changes because we care about the future of Queensland children.

“We have an election just around the corner in Queensland, so we are encouraging all Queensland parents to put early childhood education high on the agenda.”

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