

**2010 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE
BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON
ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



1. PROGRAM TITLE	Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education
2. STATE/TERRITORY	South Australia
3. AGENCY	Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)
4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM	<p>Universal Access to Early Childhood Education aims to implement several strategies that will, by 2013, provide every child with access to an affordable, quality preschool education program in the year before full time schooling, delivered by a four year university qualified teacher, for 15 hours per week and 40 weeks per year.</p> <p>South Australian Context</p> <p>The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) is the agency responsible for leading the implementation of the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education strategies in South Australia. Preschool in South Australia is funded by the State Government. Under the current DECS preschool enrolment policy, four year old children and three year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children under the guardianship of the Minister for Families and Communities (children in care) may access four sessions (of between 2.5 hours and 3 hours) of preschool per week. Early entry preschool programs are also provided to children with additional needs including children with a disability and new arrival children from non English speaking background. In small rural communities children may access their entitlement to preschool from three years and six months of age and access their entitlement to preschool over six terms (or 18 months). This model of service ensures there is a sufficient number of children to deliver a play based preschool program and is also a cost efficient way to deliver a preschool program to small communities.</p> <p>Preschool programs were delivered at 424 services across the state in 2010 either in school based settings or 'stand alone' community based facilities. On average over the past five years, this system of South Australian government funded preschool has catered to 86.6% of the State's four year old population and provides preschool to approximately 17,800 children a year.</p> <p>South Australia is committed to an integrated approach to service delivery for families. New preschool facilities are built to accommodate child care programs and since 2005 South Australia has embarked on a program to develop <i>Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting</i> (Children's Centres) that provide a range of care, education, health and family services for families and their young children from birth to eight years of age.</p>

	<p>South Australia is using three key approaches to implementing the Universal Access initiative:</p> <p>1) Expanding service provision in existing preschool services: Children enrolled in government funded preschools will have increased provision from 11 hours to 15 hours of preschool per week.</p> <p>2) Expanded service provision to provide new preschool places: New partnerships will be entered into with child care operators and non-government schools to help deliver access to early childhood education to children currently not accessing, or unable to access, government funded preschools.</p> <p>3) New service delivery options for remote and isolated children, and children with complex needs: Particular emphasis will be given to meeting the needs of children who are geographically or socially isolated, as well as children with complex needs that are unable to access mainstream services. Service delivery options to be explored include mobile services to reach children in isolated areas and the use of new technologies to deliver preschool.</p>
<p>5. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES COMMENCED</p>	<p>Activity 1- Increasing Access to Preschool to 15 hours per week: Selection of preschools to participate in the third rollout of 15 hours of preschool access was finalised in December 2010 with 63 preschools submitted for approval to commence in Term 3, 2011. This will complete the strategic rollout of Universal Access to all DECS preschools located in areas of high disadvantage or with high Aboriginal populations. The third rollout will benefit a further 7% (or 1,132) of all four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools (based on 2010 average enrolments) and includes 6% (or 41) of all four year old Aboriginal enrolments.</p> <p>On completion of this rollout, half (209) of all the DECS funded preschools will be providing access to 15 hours of preschool to children in the year before formal schooling. Enrolments at these preschools represent 36% (or 5,903) of all four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools including 82% (or 579) of all four year old Aboriginal children enrolled.</p> <p>Activity 2 – Inclusive Preschool Program: DECS has approved the development of two new Inclusive Preschool Programs for children with a disability to be located in Port Pirie and Western Adelaide. Inclusive Preschool Programs provide a localised and inclusive model of preschool education for children with disabilities and high support needs and provide a staff to child ratio of 1:3. Children’s complex needs are met through a combination of an individually designed curriculum, small group work, dedicated and specifically designed facilities, and inclusion in the mainstream preschool program. The sites have been identified and consultation with the community undertaken.</p> <p>Activity 3 – Hospital Based Preschool Program: This strategy has commenced with approval to trial a hospital based preschool program for children requiring long term hospitalisation. A particular emphasis of the strategy is the provision of a preschool program for Aboriginal children and their siblings from remote and isolated communities. A preschool teacher will be employed to work within the existing Hospital Education Services based at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital located in North Adelaide. The role of the teacher will be to develop and trial the delivery of a preschool program that will meet the learning needs of preschool children faced with long term hospital stays. The initial appointment will be for a two year term, during which time the program will be evaluated.</p>

Activity 4 - Post Graduate Training Program - Scholarships: DECS Early Childhood Services is working in partnership with the University of South Australia to provide a customised post graduate Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (Inservice) program to increase the number of preschool teachers employed in government funded preschools who are four year university qualified. The aim of the post graduate award is to up skill (to a fourth year standard) Early Childhood teachers who do not currently hold a four year early childhood qualification. There are 56 early childhood teachers continuing the program with a further 36 due to commence in 2011. Of those 92 teachers, 43 are working in rural preschools and a further 11 are working in remote areas (that is, nearly 60% of the scholarships are for teachers in rural and remote areas).

Activity 5 - Data Development: To improve the quality and availability of data required for reporting against the annual performance benchmarks and the program deliverables as stated in the Bilateral Agreement, a new early childhood education administration system for DECS operated or government funded non-government preschools is currently in the development and implementation phase. It should be noted that government funded non-government preschools will be encouraged to use the new system, but it cannot be mandated until addendums to their current funding and service agreements have been approved. Further enhancements to the system planned for completion by the end of 2011 include an interface with the Child Care Management System (CCMS) to enable licensed child care providers to utilise the system. This interface is critical for providing DECS integrated services with the ability to manage all of their children on the one administrative system regardless of whether they are enrolled in the child care and/or preschool service.

The new '*Early Years System*' will be implemented as an operational information system, to be utilised by preschool service providers in their day to day operations. It will provide the facility for central electronic reporting of enrolment and attendance data at the unit record level utilising a unique student identifier. This will eliminate the potential for double counting of children across government and government funded preschool services. It will also improve the quality of data collected on teachers who are four year university trained and early education qualified. The data fields within the Early Years System (EYS) have been designed to comply with the "*Early Childhood Education and Care: Unit Record Level NMDS 2010*".

The system is due to be progressively rolled out to all DECS preschools from February to July 2011. The initial implementation plan was to have all DECS funded preschools utilising the system in time for the 2011 Annual Census in August 2011. It appears that this may no longer be feasible and DECS will need to provide for an alternative census data collection for a small number of service providers. Further implementation plans include releasing the EYS to non-government service providers participating in the proposed Universal Access grant funding program.

Activity 6 - Consultation / Stakeholder Advisory Committee: The Stakeholder Advisory Committee has commissioned a series of discussion papers on key issues that impact on the successful implementation of Universal Access to Early Childhood Education in South Australia. Discussion papers completed in 2010 include the following topics: workforce; service provision to remote and isolated children; and services for children with a disability. Recommendations from these papers will be utilised in the implementation plans of Universal Access.

**6. PROGRAM
ACTIVITIES
COMPLETED**

Activity 1 - Increasing Access to Preschool to 15 hours per week: South Australia has completed two rounds of implementation of 15 hours of preschool delivery to 136 DECS preschools in targeted areas of high disadvantage and Aboriginal populations. The rollouts have benefited approximately 27% (or 4,391) of all four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools (based on 2010 average enrolments) and includes 72% (or 510) of all four year old Aboriginal enrolments. Over two thirds of South Australia's most disadvantaged government preschools are now providing access to 15 hours per week of preschool.

Activity 2 - Scoping of Non-Government Preschool and Child Care Providers: In order to plan for the provision of Universal Access resources to the non-government sector, a survey was developed and implemented to gather information about the number of four year old children currently accessing early childhood education services in this sector. The object of the exercise was to fill the information gap relating to the number of four year old children who access a non-government provider and to identify the number of four year qualified teachers employed in this sector. A small working group consisting of non-government preschool and child care industry representatives together with DECS personnel was formed to develop and implement the survey. Cooperation from the non-government sector helped to develop a survey that duly considered keeping respondent burden to a minimum, and would be promoted by the industry representatives when it was implemented. A response rate of 78% was achieved that has enabled a report to be produced with details of four year old children attending DECS and Non-Government Preschool or Child Care Services by SA Government Region and Local Government Area (LGA). The report was an initial analysis of areas of high and low demand for early childhood education provision for South Australia.

Activity 3 - Provision of Universal Access to Non-Government Preschool and Child Care Providers: following the completion of the scoping of the non-government early childhood education and care sector, the data collected was utilised as part of the development of the Universal Access grant funding models for non-government early childhood education providers. The grant funding proposal was approved by the Minister for Early Childhood Development with plans to publicly release the program in early 2011. It is anticipated that up to 2,400 new preschool places may be delivered through this initiative by 2013.

The approved grant funding proposal is as follows:

- **Local Government Area (LGA) Subsidy** of \$500 – \$1500 per annum per child (based on a five category disadvantage rating assigned to each LGA, using the ABS SEIFA Index of Relative Socio- Economic Disadvantage);
- **Remote Area Subsidy** of \$500 per annum per child (for service providers located in areas classified as remote and very remote in South Australia);
- **Targeted Child Subsidy** of \$1500 per annum per child (that will be required to directly advantage the child to whom the subsidy applies through a reduction in fees and is available for Aboriginal children, and children and families holding specified concession cards or refugee and humanitarian visas).

Non-government preschool and child care providers will progressively be invited to apply for funding over the next three years using a similar rollout strategy as employed for the DECS funded preschools. That is, service providers operating in disadvantaged communities will be invited to apply for funding in the first year. A small number of service providers that are located in areas of unmet demand for preschool services will also be included in the first round. As such, a total of 42 non-government child care and preschool providers have been invited to apply for the first round commencing in the first half of 2011.

7. PROGRESS AGAINST:	PERFORMANCE BENCHMARK SUMMARY TABLE					
	Performance indicator	Baseline position	2009 performance benchmark target	2009 performance benchmark results	2010 performance benchmark target	2010 performance benchmark results
(i) The performance benchmarks and deliverables in the Bilateral Agreement (ii) The national priorities as outlined in paragraph 18 of the NP ECE	1. The proportion of children who are enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) an Early Childhood Education Program. ¹	87.9%	88.0%	84.5%	88.4%	87.7%
	2. The number of teachers delivering Early Childhood Education programs who are four year university trained and early childhood qualified. ²	300	300	225	352	273
	3.1 The proportion of children enrolled in an Early Childhood Education Program that is available for at least 15 hours a week.	0%	2.6%	2.3%	25%	28.8%
	3.2 The average number of hours per week of attendance at an Early Childhood Education Program. ³	11.0	11.0	11.1	11.9	12.2
	4. Distribution of children who attend an Early Childhood Education program by weekly cost per child (after subsidies) as defined by jurisdictions.	Current average hourly fee to parents using government preschool is \$0.45 per hour	Maintain	Maintained	Maintain	Maintained

¹ South Australia's base line position and performance benchmarks included four year old children only. It does not include 5 year old children who are accessing preschool in the year prior to school (referred to as the eligible year). There were 746 five year old children enrolled in DECS preschool in 2010, some of these children may be on extended enrolment. The majority of these children would be enrolled in their eligible year and if they were included in the count, the 2010 performance benchmark result would be 91.7%.

² The baseline position was recalculated to be a headcount (not FTE) of 225 teachers in 2009 using data reported in the 2009 Annual Census of Children's Services. This is a significant drop to the baseline position brought about by introducing a more definitive four year early childhood teacher qualification to the census staff qualification codes..

³ Based on the average hours of enrolment entitlement for four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools.

	Performance indicator	Baseline position	2009 performance benchmark target	2009 performance benchmark results	2010 performance benchmark target	2010 performance benchmark results
	5. The proportion of disadvantaged children enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) an Early Childhood Education Program. ⁴	23.3%	26.3%	26.3%	26.3%	27.3%
	6. The proportion of Aboriginal children (by geographic location as identified by the Australian Standard Geographic Classification), who are:					
	6.1 enrolled in an Early Childhood Education program;	100% enrolment of four year old Aboriginal children	Maintain 100% enrolment	100%	Maintain 100% enrolment	100%
	6.2 attending in an Early Childhood Education program.	81% attendance compared with 87% for all four year olds	6% attendance gap	1% attendance gap	5% attendance gap	2% attendance gap
<p>Progress against the Performance Benchmarks and Deliverables</p> <p><u>Performance Indicator 1: achieved 99.2% of enrolment target</u></p> <p>The performance target for 2010 of 88.4% was not met, although there was a marked improvement of 3.2% in the proportion of children enrolled in an early childhood education program from 2009. As at April 2010, 16,572 of South Australia's four year old population were enrolled in DECS funded preschools, an increase of 1,021 (or 6.5%) on the previous year. As reported in 2009, this increase continues the trend of fluctuating enrolments reported for DECS funded preschools in South Australia in recent years (refer Attachment 1). Based on the 87.7% proportion of children enrolled and using the high end ABS population projections, the revised estimate is for an additional 2,929 four old children that will need to be provided with access to an Early Childhood Education Program to achieve the deliverable of 95% by June 2013.</p>						

⁴ Based on four year old children attending DECS funded preschools who reside in areas that are in the lowest quintile in Australia of the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (SEIFA 2006).

In the development of the strategies to achieve Universal Access, South Australia had proposed in the Bilateral Agreement to “provide grants, or early childhood teachers through partnerships with local preschools, to childcare centres in communities with unmet demand for early childhood education” from 2011/12. The planning and development of this initiative is now complete and implementation will begin in 2011. It should be noted that the approved grant funding scheme will be made available to all non-government preschool and child care providers as opposed to the original plan of only providing to services in areas of unmet demand for preschool. This could provide up to 2,400 new preschool places, which if achieved, should ensure that the performance benchmark for 2013 of 95% will be achieved (subject to Item 3 in the statement of issues). The complementary strategy of providing preschool programs delivered by DECS early childhood teachers in child care centres will be discontinued in 2011 with the future budget being reallocated to the grant funding initiative. The revised budget plan has allowed for up to 500 children to be provided preschool through the grant funding strategy in 2011.

Performance Indicator 2: achieved 92.3% of required increase

The performance target for 2010 required an increase of 52 teachers with a four year university early childhood qualification, of which DECS achieved an increase of 48 teachers in 2010. As was reported in 2009, the performance benchmark of 300 FTE was recalculated to be a headcount (not FTE) of 225 teachers. A more definitive four year early childhood teacher qualification introduced to the census staff qualification codes in the 2009 Annual Census of Children’s Services was used again in 2010. It should be noted that the annual census does not require validation of the staff qualifications reported. If a staff qualification validation process were introduced in future years, there may be an impact on the reported number of four year qualified teachers.

The main reason for non-achievement of the benchmark increase of 52 four year qualified teachers in 2010 was due to the target of 20 upskilled teachers included in this increase not being met. As reported in activities commenced, there were 56 teachers continuing with the post graduate training program in 2010 but none of the participants have yet to complete the upskilling program. Current estimates are that 20 teachers will complete the qualification in 2011. The other main strategy for achieving the overall increase of 296 four year qualified early childhood teachers by 2013 is to fill preschool job vacancies that occur through the attrition of the existing workforce with recruits that are appropriately qualified.

Performance Indicator 3: exceeded targeted improvement

The performance target for the proportion of four year old children enrolled and receiving 15 hours per week of early childhood education and the target for the average number of hours per week of attendance at an Early Childhood Education Program have both been exceeded. South Australia had the capacity in the 2010/11 budget to bring forward by six months the rollout of 15 hours to 38 preschools - from 2011 to mid 2010. This was due to the delay in commencement of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. South Australia has now implemented 15 hours of preschool delivery to 136 DECS preschools in targeted areas of high disadvantage and high Aboriginal populations. The rollout has benefited approximately 27% (or 4,391) of all four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools (based on 2010 average enrolments) and includes 72% (or 510) of all four year old Aboriginal enrolments.

To achieve the deliverable of increased access to an Early Childhood Education Program within DECS funded preschools from 11 hours per week to 15 hours per week, South Australia will continue the staggered implementation for funding the 15 hours of access to the remaining DECS funded preschools. The next rollout scheduled for mid 2011 will be to the remaining 63 DECS preschools with the highest disadvantage category ranking and will be implemented six months ahead of schedule. This combined with the implementation of the Universal Access grant funding initiative to non-government child care and preschool providers should ensure that the 2011 benchmarks for this indicator will be met or exceeded.

Performance Indicator 4: maintained

The performance target for 2010 was maintained for government preschools with the performance result calculated at \$0.43 per hour compared to the baseline position of \$0.45 per hour. Fees charged to families by DECS preschools will continually be monitored throughout the implementation phase of Universal Access to Early Childhood Education to ensure cost is not a barrier to access. Of the 136 preschools that were provided with additional resources to implement 15 hours of preschool in 2010, 77 (57%) sites have increased their fees charged. However, these increases will not impact on the hourly charges; the average fee increases reported by sites was 28% compared to an average increase of 30% in preschool contact time.

Performance Indicator 5: exceeded targeted improvement

The performance target for 2010 has been exceeded for government funded preschools. There has been a 1% increase in the proportion of disadvantaged four year old children enrolled in and attending government or government funded preschools from 2009 to 2010. The lowest quintile in Australia of the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (SEIFA 2006) by postal area was used as the source for the calculation. In terms of providing 15 hours of access to preschool, DECS has deliberately targeted its implementation strategy specifically at South Australian regions with higher rates of disadvantage, and to preschools with high disadvantage rankings and high Aboriginal enrolments within these regions.

Performance Indicator 6: met targeted improvement


The performance targets for Aboriginal children enrolled and attending an Early Childhood Education program have both been met. The October 2010 Preschool Staffing Survey (PSS) data collection indicated that 715 four year old Aboriginal children were enrolled in government or government funded preschools. The number of children enrolled still exceeds the estimated four year old population for 2010, which was 702 (as estimated by DECS using 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing data). There were 616 four year old Aboriginal children attending preschool as per the October 2010 PSS data collection. The attendance rate for Aboriginal four year old children enrolled in government or government funded preschools as at October 2010 was 86%, compared to an attendance rate of 88% for all children enrolled in preschool. The 2010 rollout of 15 hours of preschool has benefited 72% of all Aboriginal enrolments in DECS funded preschools.

Progress against the national priorities:

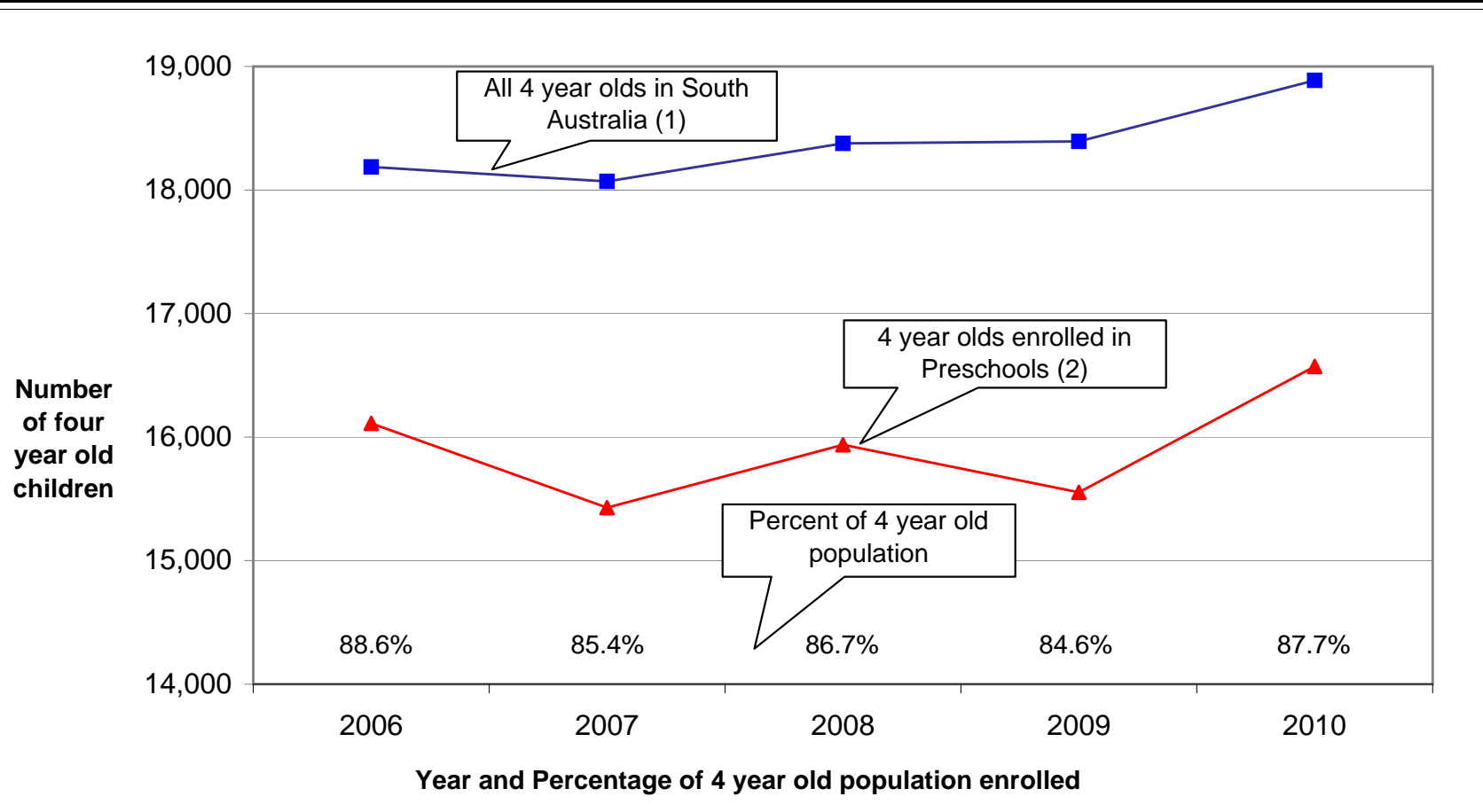
- i) ***Increasing participation rates, particularly for Aboriginal and disadvantaged children:*** The rollout of the initiative in the existing DECS funded preschool system has prioritised services in our most disadvantaged communities and services with high enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Using the same measure of disadvantaged that is applied in performance indicator 5, the proportion of disadvantaged children attending the 136 preschools that were included in the 2010 rollouts is 66.0% (or 2,651 out of 4,015 children attending). The high rate of disadvantaged children provides evidence of the 2010 targeted rollout strategy.

Other initiatives that have commenced and will continue to be implemented in 2011 include two new Inclusive Preschool Programs and the Hospital Based Preschool Program. The Inclusive Preschool Programs will benefit up to 12 children with disabilities and high support needs every year. The Hospital Based Preschool Program will be developed with an emphasis on the provision of a preschool program for Aboriginal children and their siblings from remote and isolated communities.

- ii) **Increasing program hours:** South Australia has targeted 136 DECS funded preschools (or 30% of all government funded preschools) in the strategic roll out of 15 hours of preschool that will benefit approximately 27% (or 4,391) of all four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools and includes 72% (or 510) of all four year old Aboriginal enrolments. It will also include more than half of South Australia's most disadvantaged government preschools.
- iii) **Ensuring cost is not a barrier to access:** The public information sessions conducted in 2009 included affordability as a topic of discussion. Preschool leaders included in the 2010 rollout were advised that if preschools were intending to increase fees in 2010, the increases should be no greater than the increase in the hours provided, which on average was 30% (11 hours per week to 15 hours per week). Further to this, the standard preschool constitution used by all DECS funded preschools states in paragraph 10.2 that:
- "No child shall be excluded from the departmental funded preschool program operated at the centre, because of the inability of his or her parent or guardian to contribute financially."*
- Of the 136 preschools that were provided with additional resources to implement 15 hours of preschool in 2010, 77 (57%) sites have increased their fees. These increases will not impact on the hourly charges, however, and the average fee increases reported by sites was 28%.
- iv) **Strengthening program quality and consistency:** From the beginning of 2010 the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) became the official early childhood curriculum framework for South Australia. It replaces the first two phases of the Early Years Band of the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) framework. SACSA and its resources remains a useful source of information and will continue to complement the EYLF. The "RESPECT REFLECT RELATE" resource, published in 2009, also supports the implementation of the EYLF, providing detailed guidance and processes for improving and assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning environments in the early childhood sector. The upskilling of early childhood education teachers to a four year early childhood qualification in 2010 has had a positive impact on strengthening program quality.
- v) **Fostering service integration and coordination across stand-alone preschool and child care:** "Wrap Around Child Care" is an integrated model of service delivery that will be given a limited trial in 2012 (refer also to Item 2 in the statement of issues). This strategy provides for DECS preschools to deliver child care in preschool, with the aim of providing a service to working families that will be more accessible.
- An initiative funded by the state government has been to establish Children's Centres, particularly in areas of high disadvantage. Children's Centres bring together care, education, health, and family services for families and their young children from birth to eight years of age. At the end of 2010, a total of 19 Children's Centres had been constructed across metropolitan and major regional centres, with a further 15 centres in various stages of development.

8. A STATEMENT OF ISSUES	<p><u>Item 1 – Performance Reporting</u></p> <p>The current early childhood education data collections conducted by DECS do not have the capacity to identify children who are enrolled and attending more than one preschool service or setting, or identifying children who attend preschool for more than one year. It is not possible to estimate the extent of this issue, but it is likely there will be some impact on the current estimated preschool participation rate for four year old children of 87.7% if a large number of duplicate enrolments in DECS funded preschools were to be discovered. The implementation of the Early Years System in 2011, together with the first unit record level early childhood education data collection scheduled for August 2011, will enable the preschool participation rate for four year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools to be calculated with a higher degree of accuracy.</p> <p><u>Item 2 – Wrap Around Child Care</u></p> <p>South Australia will be unable to commence the trialling of wrap around child care programs from the beginning of 2011 as was originally planned due to the delay in approval to allow Child Care Benefit to this service delivery model. When progressed, this initiative will represent a significant step in transforming the existing DECS preschool system to a service delivery model that better caters for the emerging needs of families, particularly those in the workforce. The provision of wrap around child care will support a key objective of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education by providing services that are responsive to the workforce participation needs of families. It will also enable the existing preschool infrastructure to be better utilised and relieve pressure on child care services that have reached their full capacity.</p>
9. REPORTS	<p>There are no additional reports included with the annual report.</p>
10. DATA CAPABILITY REPORT	<p>A data capability exception report is not required for 2010 as there were no changes made to preschool data collections. There are expected to be significant changes in 2011 when undertaking the first unit record level data collection of DECS preschool services.</p>
11. SIGNATURE	<p>Signed for and on behalf of the State or Territory Delegate or the Delegate's authorised representative</p> <p></p> <p>.....</p> <p>Patricia Winter Executive Director, Early Childhood Services</p> <p>Date: 6.7.11</p>

Number of 4 year old children enrolled in DECS funded preschools compared with ABS population estimates of all 4 year old children residing in SA, 2006-10



Notes:

(1) Source: Population estimates for 2006-2010 based on ABS estimated resident population figures as at 21 Dec 2010 (3201.0, Table 4.1 Estimated Resident Population by Single Year of Age, South Australia).

(2) Source: DECS Preschool Staffing Collection, Term 2. Includes children enrolled in all DECS funded or managed preschools (ie including integrated centres and children's centres), and excludes Playcentre enrolments.