



Government of
South Australia

Flying Start

South Australian Early Childhood Multi-Disciplinary Workforce Strategy (2025 - 2027)

Acknowledgement of Country

From the heart:

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the First peoples of South Australia and as custodians of the lands, waters, skies and Communities where we live, learn and raise children.

We recognise Aboriginal peoples as having the longest living culture, raising children safe and strong in their identity, Community, culture, and connection to Country.

We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and their role as the first knowledge sharers for children. We follow in their footsteps.

Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enrich our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families.

We respect Aboriginal peoples' ways of being, doing and wise practices guiding our continual learning. Together we walk and build stronger, more supportive Communities for all children.

Notes

In South Australia, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which the staff of the Government of South Australia works. We respect preference to use the term 'Aboriginal peoples' to acknowledge in written and spoken language both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Contents

Introduction	5
What we heard	6
Key challenges	6
Opportunities for transformation	6
Our commitment	7
What we will do	8
Skilling and supply	8
Building local capacity	8
Effective professional learning	9
Developing contextual and reflective practice skills	9
Implementing the Strategy	10
Accountability and evaluation	10



How do you feel?



Introduction

The South Australian Government's landmark \$1.9 billion early childhood reform agenda will give every child a flying start to thrive in learning and in life.

With 3-year-old preschool rolling out from 2026, giving every child access by 2032, more children will benefit from teacher-led play-based early learning programs. Families will have better access to early engagement about developmental needs and the right information and supports.

Preschool Boost is a funding program designed to help Flying Start preschool partner services to do more to address developmental vulnerability and improve outcomes for 3- and 4-year-old children, their families and communities.

Partner services can use Preschool Boost funding to purchase a range of evidence-informed programs and supports, including group-based child interventions, educator training, leadership, mentoring, and family programs.

The Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care found evidence that all children benefit from 2 years of high-quality preschool, and that vulnerable children are likely to benefit the most from more hours.

Between 2026 and 2032, the state government will implement measures so that up to 2,000 3- and 4-year-old children at risk of developmental vulnerability will be able to access up to 30 hours of preschool in each of the two years before school.

The state government will rely on the best available data to identify children who would benefit most from access to 30 hours of preschool.

Integrated hubs will deliver some of these 30-hour preschool places and more community outreach and family support in areas of high developmental vulnerability.

To achieve this goal, the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECED) will engage with our partners to build a sustainable and connected early childhood multi-disciplinary workforce of teachers and educators, and allied health professionals including speech therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers. These professionals will connect with families about their child's development and strengthen the supports available in early childhood settings.

The Early Childhood Multi-Disciplinary Workforce Strategy (the Strategy) is a proactive effort to address long-standing, complex challenges. It responds to current and future demand for effective early childhood educators and teachers and allied health professionals working together in early childhood settings.

The state government will invest \$3.4 million over 2 years across a range of interwoven initiatives to build this early childhood multi-disciplinary workforce. A network of support around children will reduce developmental vulnerability, so that across our state, children have the best start in life.

We will evaluate our actions and make necessary adjustments to maximise the benefits of our investment in the early childhood workforce to secure the best outcomes for South Australian children.

We will know we are successful when the collective expertise of early childhood educators and teachers, together with allied health and social care service professionals, support diverse learning needs and inclusive education, and support the ongoing delivery of high-quality early childhood experiences.

What we heard

In 2025, we asked stakeholders across early childhood education and care (ECEC), allied health and the broader education and training sectors to help us understand potential barriers and opportunities in building a robust multi-disciplinary early childhood workforce. We also considered good practice models across Australia and internationally.

Insights from this valuable evidence base have shaped the Strategy, which aims to address systemic challenges and

Key challenges

- **Workforce shortages:** There is a long-standing shortage of allied health professionals, particularly in regional and remote South Australia. Limited access to essential supports for children is placing strain on the ECEC sector.
- **Training gaps:** Allied health graduates can lack exposure to early childhood contexts and may begin their careers with limited experience applying developmentally appropriate interventions or discipline-specific skills in ECEC settings.
- **Increasing complexity:** Early childhood educators and teachers are navigating growing diversity in child and family needs, contributing to stress and burnout.
- **Fragmented collaboration:** The absence of shared language, expectations, and reflective practice across sectors hinders effective inter-disciplinary collaboration.

Opportunities for transformation

- **Innovative placement models:** Explore alternative multi-disciplinary placements and supervision structures to support workforce development and retention.
- **ECEC workforce campaigns:** Leverage existing campaigns to promote the breadth of opportunities in early childhood settings to allied health professionals and graduates.
- **Community-responsive service models:** Pilot diverse employment and service models tailored to local needs, especially in underserved regions.
- **Professional learning:** Provide high-quality, targeted professional development to enhance reflective practice and build shared capability.
- **Neurodiversity knowledge:** Equip educators and allied health professionals with tools and insights to effectively support neurodivergent children.
- **Shared practice tools:** Develop resources that support shared learning, communication, and critical supervision and professional feedback loops across sectors.
- **Leadership and support:** Invest in supporting and developing leaders to foster their resilience and professional growth across disciplines.

Our commitment

Supporting every child to have a flying start in life demands a multi-disciplinary response—one that respects the unique contributions of each profession while keeping children and families at the centre. By connecting initiatives and creating opportunities for collaboration, we will be one step closer to helping every child to benefit from early childhood reforms.

The Strategy is grounded in a shared vision: **a connected, place-based workforce that puts children at the centre.**

Achieving this requires:

- **Systems leadership:** Coordinated leadership across government, institutions, and service providers.
- **Cross-sector partnerships:** Genuine collaboration between educators and teachers, allied health professionals, Aboriginal Communities and organisations, unions, and peak bodies.
- **Frontline voices:** Embedding the lived expertise of those working directly with children and families into every stage of strategy design



What we will do



Skilling and supply

Expanding the pipeline of allied health professionals who have contextualised skills for early childhood settings is imperative. This will be especially important for Preschool Boost suppliers across the state. We aim to increase the multi-disciplinary workforce supply through traditional and new training pathways, and by promoting opportunities for fulfilling careers in early childhood.

We will:

- Develop multi-disciplinary **placement and supervision models** to enhance collaboration, mutual understanding, and integrated practice between early childhood teachers and allied health professionals. These models will enhance the skills of allied health and early childhood students and graduates to work together in early childhood settings. They will be practical entry points for cross-disciplinary learning and longer-term workforce integration actions. This will recognise and respond to the intersectionality of the lives of children and their families, and support strengths-based approaches to working with children, including Aboriginal children and those who have additional learning needs.
- Promote **allied health career pathways in early childhood settings** through engagement and attraction activities that highlight benefits and impacts. To maximise opportunities, we will integrate activities into broader early childhood workforce attraction campaigns and targeted events.



Building local capacity

The shortage of allied health professionals has a profound impact in regional and remote communities. To alleviate the impact on children and families we will build the capacity of early childhood teachers and educators, and allied health professionals, to develop innovative and responsive local solutions through strengthened collaboration and understanding.

We will:

- Trial innovative approaches through **local grants** for roles that work across multiple ECEC services. This will build the capacity and capability of preschool partner services and allied health providers to collaborate in the delivery of educational programs that are responsive to the needs of children, maximising the impact of the multi-disciplinary skills, knowledge and experience of educators, teachers and allied health professionals within the local community.



Effective professional learning

There is a need to expand knowledge and expertise on successful approaches to reducing developmental vulnerability in young children. We will support early childhood educators and teachers and allied health professionals through targeted professional learning that develops capabilities and resilience in the professions. This work will be considered during the development of the broader inclusion program being established by the OECD.

We will:

- Develop a suite of **professional learning modules** to build knowledge and skills, foster continuous improvement, deepen professional insight, and support responsive service delivery centred around children and families. Modules will include topics such as child development, reducing developmental vulnerability, inclusive support for neurodiverse children, building shared capability, and working collaboratively in preschool settings.



Developing contextual and reflective practice skills

By focusing on capacity building across disciplines, there is potential to create a shared foundation of knowledge among all professionals in ECEC settings. This will strengthen team-based approaches, reduce workforce fragmentation, and improve outcomes for children. We aim to build capacity to develop shared understanding, learn from other disciplines and reflect on practice.

We will:

- Develop a practical **contextual and reflective practice toolkit** for early childhood educators and teachers and allied health professionals working in preschool settings. The toolkit will include practical resources to build understanding of each other's roles and ways of working, and to provide the opportunity to reflect on practice and approaches to supporting children and families.
- Establish a **leadership peer exchange** through pairing senior allied health professionals with early childhood leaders. The peer exchange will develop shared understanding across disciplines and foster collaborative and reflective ways of working. This will involve hosting several group sessions in local communities and may include backfill costs where there are barriers to participation.

Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy will be implemented alongside the *Early Childhood Workforce Strategy* launched in 2024, and the *Aboriginal Early Childhood Workforce Strategy* launched in 2025. It will complement initiatives designed to grow the scale and diversity of the early childhood workforce.

The Strategy's initiatives respond to the challenges identified by stakeholders. They are practical approaches to strengthen the ECEC workforce at a time when opportunities are emerging through:

- roll-out of 3-year-old preschool across the state
- growing emphasis on high-quality, play-based learning programs for children; and
- the developing network of Preschool Boost suppliers.

A staged approach to implementation will help adapt initiatives through partnership and input from stakeholders across the state. We want to have meaningful feedback from regional and primary health networks, allied health services, ECEC services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, universities and the vocational education and training sector, as well as professional associations.

Addressing the unique challenges in rural and remote communities will require strong collaboration with local government, non-government organisations, and local communities. We will pay particular attention to workforce supply and access to specialist services in these areas. Ongoing state and national partnerships and opportunities for collaboration are also critical.

Accountability and Evaluation

The OECD will evaluate the overall effectiveness and impact of the Strategy, as well as the success of specific actions.

We will investigate evidence, support continuous improvement and maintain strategy actions so they remain relevant, targeted, and responsive to the needs of the sectors.

This evaluation will also consider the context of broader workforce strategies and early childhood reforms.





Government of
South Australia

Flying Start