



# Toward **2**

Tomorrow's Queensland

Delivering world class education – **starting early**





## Message from the Premier

As a parent and a former Education Minister, I know that education is the key that unlocks a child's potential.

That is why I identified boosting the early years of education as one of the priorities of my Government when I became Premier 12 months ago.

Now more than ever, I am convinced that learning is a part of every child's development from birth, and the early health and well-being of a child are critical to their later success.

That is why my Government is committed to providing all Queensland children with access to a high quality early education service before they start school.

This is a key step Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland.

Anna Bligh MP  
Premier of Queensland

## Provide better quality early childhood education through:

- **An extra 240 kindergarten services in Queensland by 2014.**
- **Extra support to help children and families most in need to access early education services.**
- **A new Office for Early Childhood Education and Care.**

### Securing the best start for Queensland's children

We know that high quality education early in life gives children the best start. That's why last year the government introduced a Prep year before Year 1 in every state, Catholic and independent school in Queensland.

This year 97 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in Prep across Queensland and they are reaping the benefits. They are making gains in numeracy and literacy and even greater gains in their physical development, social skills and communication skills.

With the overwhelming success of Prep, the government is now turning its attention to the year before Prep so we can provide the head start our children deserve.

There are about 53,000 kindy-aged children in Queensland but only 12,000 of them attend kindergarten where a qualified teacher delivers a recognised education program.

Another 29,000 children attend child care centres but less than 10 per cent of these have access to an education program delivered by a qualified teacher.

The remaining 12,000 children do not attend any early education or child care services and are generally cared for by their parents or grandparents or use some form of family day care service.

Queensland's kindy participation rate of 29 per cent is very low compared with other states where participation rates range from 85 per cent to 96 per cent.

As a community we can do a lot more to support parents and give all children the best chance to reach their full potential.

Like Prep, kindy needs to be available to, but not compulsory for, all Queensland children.

Delivering world class education to our children, starting in early childhood, is a key step Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland.

## An extra 240 kindergarten services for Queensland

To ensure every child can access a high quality education program, the Queensland Government will establish another 240 kindergarten services across Queensland.

These new or extended kindergartens will cater for the 12,000 children not currently accessing any early education or care services and where possible, will be co-located with schools.

Building these new kindergartens will require up to \$300 million – representing the single largest investment in kindergarten by a Queensland Government.

The size of this task cannot be underestimated. Delivering this massive expansion by 2014 will involve a concerted effort by government as well as community organisations.

While there are more than 350 community kindergartens already across the state funded by the Queensland Government, demand for places significantly outstrips supply particularly in high growth areas.

The government's additional investment in new kindergarten services will double the capacity of Queensland's existing community kindergarten sector. It will support more than 24,000 children to access kindy in the year before starting Prep at school.



The Crèche and Kindergarten (C&K) Association of Queensland is a well-respected, not-for-profit organisation with a long track record of providing high quality early education programs.

That is why the Queensland Government will extend its partnership with C&K and other providers to establish these extra kindergarten services across the state.

With more than 100 years of practical experience and proven positive outcomes for children, C&K has grown from a single day nursery for working women at the turn of last century to now boasting more than 350 kindergarten services.

More than half of these services are in regional areas covering the length and breadth of Queensland from Cooktown to Coolangatta to Cloncurry.

### Extra support for families with greatest need

The Queensland Government has also committed \$32 million to develop integrated Early Years Centres where parents can access early education services, child care, child health services, parenting programs and other family support all at one location.

Two centres are now operating at Caboolture and Nerang, with planning underway to open a centre at Browns Plains in 2009 and another in Cairns by 2010.

These one-stop-shops will provide services for families expecting a child or with children aged up to eight years.

The Queensland Government will continue planning to provide more of these centres in partnership with the Australian Government, particularly in areas of high population growth and to support children and families most in need.

Because children's educational opportunities should not be limited by where they live, we will also test a range of services such as mobile kindergartens to reach families living in small rural and remote communities.



## Recognising high quality child care centres

Young Queenslanders attending child care also need to be able to participate in high quality early education programs.

Queensland is fortunate to have an extensive child care sector with more than 1400 long day care centres providing a high quality and valuable service, particularly for parents in the workforce.

The Queensland Government will work with the Australian Government to provide better early childhood education through child care centres, particularly for kindy-aged children.

This means children can access early education programs in whichever service best meets their family's needs.



## Improved government support

The Queensland Government will improve the early years system for parents and service providers by creating a new Office for Early Childhood Education and Care, which will report directly to the Minister for Education. This will bring together responsibility for early education and child care services in one agency.

Taking lead responsibility for children's early development, this office will manage the roll-out of the extra kindergarten services, support the child care sector to offer recognised early education programs, and provide extra support where needed so that all children can access early education services.

## Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland

Increased investment in the early years is essential for our children to have the best chance to succeed.

The Queensland Government will work closely with our key partners in early childhood education including the C&K, child care sector, Catholic, independent and state schools and the Australian Government to establish the extra 240 kindergarten services and integrate early education programs within existing child care services.

The Queensland Government is committed to securing the best start for our future generations by delivering world class education and training.

It's one step toward making tomorrow's Queensland everything it is today, only better.

