

The Australian Early Childhood Educational Development Experience (AECEDE) Research Project: Early Findings

Telethon Kids Institute
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Melbourne, Australia



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Background

- There is growing interest globally about the impacts of different early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs and pathways on children's development.
- Much of this research has been conducted outside of Australia, and may not generalise to the local context





Background

- In terms of ECE, the evidence base comes mainly from overseas and concentrates on “formal” preschool/kindergarten.
- An economic analysis by Heckman’s team on universal ECE across countries shows inconsistent results particularly for younger children
- In Australia we have no solid evidence on the best ECE pathway considering dose by age by ECEC type and quality by socio-economic background.
- What pathways are right for who?





Aim

- To help policy makers understand how children's education and care experiences in the years before full time school can be delivered in a way that best supports children's development and learning using an Australian evidence base





Project partners

- AG Department of Education and Training
- NSW Department of Education
- NT Department of Education
- Telethon Kids Institute
- Social Research Centre





Study design

1. Collection of child development in the preschool year on the basis of teacher report by preschool and long-day care centre teachers using the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument (*July/Aug 2017*)
2. Primary caregivers of these children will be invited to complete a survey about early childhood education and care histories of their child (*September/October 2017*)
3. Collection of child development in the first year of full time school on the basis of teacher report using the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument through the 2018 AEDC collection (*May/July 2018*)





Measures

Child Development

The Australia version of the Early Development Instrument (AvEDI) will be used to collect child development information in *both* the preschool year and the first year of full time school

Children's ECEC experiences and home environment

A short survey has been created using standard scales that have been used successfully in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC); parental warmth, parenting practices, child's participation in child care and early education, and the home activities scale. For socio-demographic background we will ask for primary caregiver education attainment.





Selected communities

- The study is being conducted in specific communities in New South Wales and the Northern Territory that have been selected to be broadly representative of the Australian population in terms of socio-economic, cultural diversity and demographics
 - NSW Sydney Northern Beaches (Pittwater, Manly, Warringah)
 - NSW South West Sydney (Fairfield)
 - NSW Blacktown (Blacktown, Mt Druitt)
 - NSW Mid North Coast region (Port Macquarie, Taree)
 - NSW Shoalhaven region
 - NT Darwin city and suburbs





Phase 1: Collection of child development data in preschools and LDC centres

- Preschools and long-day care centres were considered to be eligible to participate if they were located in one of the target communities, and they *met* or *exceeded* the *National Quality Standard (NQS)* or had *not yet been assessed*
- 30% of services in these communities were excluded from the “in scope” list because they were still working towards the NQS or needed further assessment
- A total of 397 services were in scope for the study





Phase 1: Participation rates

	Participation status		
	Yes	No	Total
Long Day Care Centres	68 (24%)	219 (76%)	287
Pre-schools (non-government run)	29 (41%)	41 (59%)	70
Pre-schools (government run)	28 (70%)	12 (30%)	40
TOTAL	125 (31%)	272 (69%)	397





Phase 1: Participation rates

Communities	Participation status		
	Yes	No	Total
Sydney – Blacktown	11 (19%)	46 (81%)	57
Sydney – South West	14 (28%)	36 (72%)	50
Sydney - Northern Beaches	27 (26%)	79 (75%)	106
NSW Mid North Coast	29 (39%)	46 (61%)	75
NSW Southern Highlands/Shoalhaven	15 (27%)	40 (73%)	55
Darwin	29 (54%)	25 (46%)	54
TOTAL	125 (31%)	272 (69%)	397





AECEDE preschool sample characteristics (n=4,271)

		N	%
State/Territory			
	New South Wales	3342	78.2%
	Northern Territory	929	21.8%
Sex of child			
	Male	2206	51.7%
	Female	2065	48.3%
Age			
	4 years	2828	66.2%
	5 years	1441	33.7%
Indigenous			
	Non-Indigenous	3877	90.8%
	Indigenous	394	9.2%
English as a second language			
	No	3423	80.1%
	Yes	848	19.9%





Next steps

- **Primary caregiver survey**
Low participation rates achieved in 2017
Exploring alternatives for re-administering survey in 2018
- **2018 AEDC collection**
Link the 2017 AvEDI and 2018 AvEDI data
Provide estimate of change in development from preschool to school in each of the five developmental domains
- **All three datasets linked**
Answer primary research question about the impact of different ECEC pathways on children's development

