

## **A submission to the Productivity Commission enquiry in Early Childhood Education and Care.**

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We wish to bring before the Productivity Commission enquiry evidence that ECEC does not routinely bring with it enhanced later school achievement. As researchers with expertise in literacy development, behavioural genetics and educational psychology, we have published direct empirical work with Australian children showing that neither attendance itself at preschool nor the length and intensity of preschool involvement for those who do attend shows up as superior literacy and numeracy development as reflected in NAPLAN scores throughout primary and high school. Here is a link to our article in the high-prestige journal *Behavior Genetics*, which, as well as documenting our research, also surveys relevant prior literature casting doubt on the widely accepted claim that ECEC is uniformly good for a child's subsequent academic development. [do.org/10.1007/s10519-020-10013-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10519-020-10013-z)

Importantly, there is also a recent article from an expert US group which indicates that by Grade 6 children who had attended preschool were performing *more poorly* than those who had not. This article is particularly compelling in that it comprised a difficult-to-achieve randomized control trial (RCT) of preschool attendance, it involved children of low-income families, and it used highly trained preschool educators. It *did* show an early boost to literacy foundations in the instructed group, evidence that the program was achieving desired results. But, as indicated, that boost faded and even reversed to a degree over the next six years of schooling. Here is a link to that article, also published in a high-prestige journal: [doi.org/10.1037/dev0001301](https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001301). Indeed, fade-out following preschool intervention is now recognized by educational researchers as a persistent problem, as these two links attest: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19345747.2016.1232459>; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19345747.2018.1441347?src=recsys>

Our point in making this submission is not to downplay the value of ECEC for families and for society via increased workplace involvement and other social and economic benefits. It is, however, an appeal not to base policy recommendations on an uncritical acceptance of the mantra that ECEC can only be good for children educationally. Not only may it not do as much good as many believe, the RCT evidence from the US that we have cited suggests that it might leave some children worse off academically.

Note: Should the Productivity Commission wish, we can access and submit the full articles for which we have supplied internet links.