



THE HON PETER GARRETT MP
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth

THE HON KATE ELLIS MP
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION AND CHILD CARE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Investing early is changing the lives of young Australians

Minister for Child Care Kate Ellis, today launched a new evaluation report on the Australian Government's \$32.5 million national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY).

The report shows that HIPPY is having a transformative impact on the lives of children and parents - helping bridge the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds with their peers, before they even start school.

"I'm thrilled to see that the Government's investment in the early years is paying off and helping some of our most vulnerable children to develop a solid foundation for future learning and creating a culture of valuing education at home," Ms Ellis said.

"This report estimates that this program is likely to deliver an ultimate return on investment of up to \$4 for every \$1 spent because the early years of a child's life really can shape their future."

The report shows that when compared with the Australian norm, parents involved in HIPPY were:

- 81% more likely to report that their child's maths ability was better than that of the child's classmates;
- Three times more likely to be in contact with their child's school and actively involved in their child's learning and development;
- 66% less likely to have concerns about the way their child made speech sounds; and
- 85% less likely to have concerns about their child's ability to understand spoken words.

"HIPPY is specifically targeted to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and yet, by the end of the program the gap between HIPPY children's pre-numeracy and pre-literacy scores and the Australian norm had been closed," Ms Ellis said.

“The Report also found that beyond the benefits for children, HIPPY has given many parents and carers increased confidence in their role as their child’s first teacher.”

“The benefits to the family unit as a whole from this program are remarkable, with 48% of parents were in paid employment after finishing HIPPY, compared with only 33% at the start of the program.”

HIPPY has been rolled out across 50 communities nationally and was on track to support around 3,500 families thanks to investment from the Australian Government.

The Australian Government also recently announced that 23 locations would receive additional funding to extend the successful initiative with a new group of children to start the two-year program in 2012.

Minister for Early Childhood Peter Garrett said that the Government’s record \$20 billion investment over the next four years in early childhood education and care is a reflection of the importance of learning in the earliest years of life.

“HIPPY is an example of a program that has been successful elsewhere in the world and Australia has been able to benefits from what has been learned abroad,” Mr Garrett said.

“An estimated 500,000 Australian children are growing up in poverty and may not be accessing the positive learning environment at home that is vital to their development.”

“Much of the program’s effectiveness comes from the work the program does with the family unit as a whole, empowering and supporting parents to become more involved in their child’s education.”

This innovative early learning program was first introduced in Melbourne by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, who have overseen its expansion and growing success as a result of funding of the Australian Government.

HIPPY uses structured materials and activities designed to be integrated into the daily life of the family. Home tutors schedule fortnightly visits to work through the program resources with the parent in the family’s home.

Parents then work through the materials with their children for around 15 minutes, 5 to 6 days each week. The materials include age appropriate storybooks and activity packs for parents and children to use over a period of several years.

Further information is available at www.hippyaustralia.org.au

Media Contact: media@deewr.gov.au

Non-media queries: 1300 363 079