



THE HON DR SHARMAN STONE MP

Federal Member for Murray
Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Childcare
Shadow Minister for the Status of Women

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The importance of a good pre-school program

The assessment of all kindergarten students in NSW via “Best Start” tells us what we all know. Children arrive at school with a wide range of early good, bad or indifferent learning experiences, reinforcing the Coalition’s commitment to a quality school preparation for all.

“It is recognised widely that children who fail to receive a quality formal school preparation are at a significant educational and social disadvantage compared with those who do.

Dr Sharman Stone, Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education, said unfortunately not all Australian children receive an adequate introduction to education during the year immediately before starting school.

Labor knew the problems and committed to 260 new pre-schools to be built this term. Only one of these has materialised.

“Primary principals have campaigned for pre-schools to be attached to government schools but the Rudd Government has instead stopped short at simply claiming ‘universal access’.

“Decoded this spin means nothing more than the status quo of a mix of fee charging, inadequate accommodation through to great low cost or subsidised centres for the lucky ones. For example over 70% of pre-schoolers miss out in Queensland.

“The NSW Best Start Program has shown what teachers have known for years. Children arrive at school at very different stages of development. Some can read while others do not know how to hold a pencil. We cannot wait until Labor’s timetable of 2020 to offer a better start to children. We need more than talk from this Government.

“Pre-schooling is the poor relation in the Australian Education System. Attendance is a hit and miss affair depending on parent’s capacity to pay and get their children to the two to three hour sessions. Labor seems happy for this to continue.

“Pre-school education in Australia widely varies from provision by government, community or private operators. Parents pay different amounts and teacher qualifications vary between states.”

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