

MEDIA RELEASE

The Economic and Moral Imperative of Investing in Primary and Earlier

Australian Primary Principals Association

Primary Education Summit - May 2025

Investing in primary schooling and early education is not only the right thing to do, it is one of the smartest economic decisions Australia can make for its future.

The Australian Primary Principals Association Summit of national educators and associated professionals held last week in Canberra explored the critical link between strong early learning foundations and a confident, thriving nation.

The Summit agreed to advocate for national system priorities that focus on the urgency of early developmental support, equity for First Nations students, new measurements of success that recognise wellbeing and connection, and embed services and supports in schools.

Currently, one in four children start school developmentally vulnerable, as highlighted by the Australian Early Development Census. This is an early indicator of the broader systemic challenges facing the sector.

Primary schools are challenged by growing inequity, workforce shortages, escalating student wellbeing and behavioural needs, and increased administrative demands.

These challenges are compounded by under-resourcing for early intervention and a decline in public trust.

The APPA Summit consensus aligns with the aspirations of the *Mparntwe* Education Declaration, which calls for excellence and equity in education so that all young Australians can become confident, creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active, informed citizens.

The Summit affirmed that without coordinated, sustained action, the goals of the *Mparntwe* Declaration risk remaining out of reach.

The Australian Primary Principals Association and its partners are calling for urgent, collaborative efforts to ensure all children receive the support they need to thrive, and for Australia to realise the full promise of its education system.

The Summit committed to advocate for the following:

- Increasing cross-sector collaboration (health, education, housing, child protection) as fragmented and inaccessible services are failing to meet family needs.
- Investing early and wisely: early environments significantly influence later outcomes—early disadvantages accumulate and become harder to overcome.

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- Measuring what truly matters for lifelong success - expand what we measure and value so that we honour the full complexity of childhood and the true impact of teaching.
 - Embedding culturally safe practices and pedagogy - ensure First Nations children are better supported through community-led approaches that start well before school and continue with strength throughout the primary years.
 - **Elevating teacher and student voices to** ensure those at the heart of primary education help shape its future.

Primary education lays the foundation for every child's future - it is where learner identity, confidence, and possibility are shaped. When we get primary education right, we set children up not just for academic success, but for a life of meaning, contribution, and connection.

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APPA represents over 7,600 primary principals and school leaders across Australia; 200,000 primary teachers; and 2.2 million primary students; all working and learning in primary schools from 24 jurisdictions across all three education sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent).