Philanthropy backs Australian-first study of Three-Year-Old Kinder with $5.7 million

Australia’s largest philanthropic foundation will spend $5.7 million to undertake a landmark evaluation of the state-wide roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in Victoria.

The Paul Ramsay Foundation has committed $5.7 million to evaluate the impact of two years of kindergarten on children’s outcomes.

The study will be delivered over five years through a partnership with University of Melbourne and the Front Project, working closely with the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

CEO of the Front Project, a national enterprise committed to addressing disadvantage through the early learning system, Jane Hunt said the study will provide important information to families who access early learning and early childhood professionals – not just policy-makers.

“The commitment from the Paul Ramsay Foundation is exciting because it means that we can embark on this study to find out how Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is impacting children’s lives and give families up-to-date evidence based on experiences here in Victoria,” Ms Hunt said.

“We already know that two years of quality early learning in the years before school are better than one and this new funding will help us support educators and teachers to provide the right conditions for children in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten to set them up for life and overcome challenges.”

Victorian Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt welcomed the evaluation.

“The funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation towards this study will help generate critical insights about how we can continue to improve children’s learning and development outcomes,” Ms Stitt said.

“Victoria is leading the way with the introduction of universal funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs and our $5 billion investment over this decade is delivering benefits for our state’s youngest learners.

“We’re delighted to support the important work of University of Melbourne and the Front Project. We welcome any work that helps to build the store of evidence and collective knowledge about the impact of early education on children’s outcomes. This is in line with our commitment to ensure access to quality early learning experiences for Victorian children.”

Professor Tricia Eadie, Director of the University of Melbourne’s Research in Effective Education in Early Childhood, said the funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation will help fill the gap in Australian evidence on the impact of two years of kindergarten.

“Delivering two years of high-quality kindergarten before school is vital for our youngest citizens as it provides the opportunity to gain an edge in learning and development, narrows the disadvantage gap and sets them up for future educational success,” Professor Eadie said.

“By funding this study, the Paul Ramsay Foundation is supporting our ability to make a sustained impact on the lives of young Australians by better understanding and advancing their early learning experiences.

“Evaluating the impacts of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in Victoria will go a long way towards showing us how participating in two years of quality early learning before school helps Australian children reach their full potential.

“Hopefully our findings will lead to real-life solutions that see even more children across the country participating in three-year-old kindergarten in the future.”

The funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation signals growing interest from philanthropy in supporting initiatives to improve Australia’s early childhood education and care system. It follows a $1 million funding commitment from the Ian Potter Foundation to the same study.

The study has been named the Education and Development Gains in Early Childhood or EDGE study and will be launched early next year. ENDS

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