

Media release



22 October 2026

Goodstart's FY26 Annual Report: our purpose making the difference

In a year when Australia's early learning sector faced strong headwinds, the nation's largest provider harnessed the strength of its charitable purpose to ensure it could continue to invest in providing high quality early learning for children, families and communities.

Goodstart CEO Dr Ros Baxter said sweeping policy reforms, softer demand in some communities and ongoing cost pressures were met with disciplined strategic decisions that kept the not-for-profit, charitable organisation strong and focused on children's education and the long-term benefits for children and the nation.

Safeguarding remained Goodstart's highest priority, with investments made in educator knowledge, resourcing and improvements to safeguarding processes and systems.

"Our clarity of purpose keeps us focused on the long term and guides our investments in quality education, keeping children safe, providing affordable access for children, and professional development for the people who deliver early learning every day," Ros said.

"Investments in early education are the key to making national progress in education outcomes, and ensuring all Australia's children can benefit from high quality education."

Across the Goodstart Early Learning Group's national network of 666 centres, one-third are in regional and rural communities and around one-third are in lower socio-economic communities with 99 percent of centres meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standard (the sector average is 91%).

The CEO said access to high quality early learning gave children important opportunities to learn and develop during the most formative years of their lives. She pointed to the strong investments Goodstart is making in uplifting children's early literacy, numeracy and self-regulation, fundamentals for later success in school and life.

"We have strong new evidence linking extra time and investment in early education to children being months ahead of their peers when they start school. The benefits of early learning, and Goodstart's focus on education fundamentals, is now indisputable."

"As a charity we direct resources to where they make the greatest difference, including supporting children who face barriers to participation and maintaining access to high quality early learning in communities where it is needed most," she said.

"The vital work our educators do improves children's education and life trajectories, particularly those experiencing disadvantage and the benefits of that extend beyond the child and to their family to the community and wider society.

"Goodstart invested \$75.98 million in delivering its social purpose during the year, providing additional support for children and families, investment in integrated services called Goodstart Plus, while maintaining a slender surplus of 0.6% of turnover to ensure we remain financially viable.

We're for children, not for profit

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Media release (continued)

"Our educators, teachers and centre leaders are the beating heart of Goodstart and we continued to invest in them, with \$25.9 million directed to professional development and qualification uplift, well above the minimum sector requirements.

"Teacher turnover fell to its lowest level in eight years while 2,000 team members were boosted by our Thriving Teachers program.

"We thank the Albanese Government for its Worker Retention Payments, which have helped boost educator pay to record levels across the sector. Goodstart has long invested in above award pay, and before the Worker Retention Payment was introduced, educators and cooks were paid at least 5% above award rates, assistant directors at least 7% above award rates, and centre directors at least 12% above award rates. The Worker Retention Payment has further boosted these existing above award arrangements.

Goodstart continues to explore opportunities to increase the number of communities we serve. In FY26, we upgraded 47 centres and opened four new purpose-built centres. Eight new centres are planned to open in 2027, half in lower socio-economic communities. In addition, Goodstart is undertaking due diligence in relation to the potential purchase of a number of Edge Early Learning centres to explore opportunities to extend our not-for-profit reach and impact and improve access to quality early learning for children from more communities.



For more information contact media manager Rachel Espiner on 0429 553 103 or media@goodstart.org.au.

Notes for editors

Goodstart Early Learning is Australia's largest early learning provider with 666 centres nationwide. We're a not-for-profit social enterprise committed to improving the lives of Australia's children and their families. For more information, visit goodstart.org.au.

Acknowledgement of country

Goodstart acknowledges all Traditional Custodians across Australia and recognises First Nations peoples' continued cultural and spiritual connection to the land, sky and waterways that surround us. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.