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New name plan for pre-primary

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Editor, The West Australian

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WA's pre-primary school year would be renamed "foundation" from next year under a plan to bring all States into line.

The Australian Government Primary Principals Association is pushing for all schools to use the same title for the year of schooling before Year 1 and it wants all States to agree on a common starting age.

The year WA calls pre-primary is named preparatory in Victoria and Tasmania, kindergarten in NSW, transition in the Northern Territory, reception in South Australia and pre-school in Queensland.

Association president Gabrielle Leigh said the new Australian Curriculum had settled on the title foundation for the year before Year 1.

"We would like consistency in the terminology so we can compare apples with apples," she said.

WA Primary Principals Association president Stephen Breen said the official cut-off date on which a child was deemed old enough to start the foundation year varied by a few months between jurisdictions.

This caused problems in WA with so many families moving from other States to take advantage of the mining boom.

Children who were in Year 3 in one State then had to move back to Year 2 because of their chronological age.

Education Department director-general Sharyn O'Neill said though the department agreed there could be benefit in having a consistent name across the country for the pre-primary year of schooling, it did not support the term "foundation" because that implied that children's learning started only at that point.

"Research tells us that children's learning starts from birth and our schools are putting considerable effort into working with parents to help them support their children's early learning before school begins," she said.

Ms O'Neill said there were no plans to shift WA's school starting age.

Pre-primary will be compulsory and full-time in WA from next year.

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