

Tasmania's Implementation Plan

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – 2016 AND 2017

PART 1: PRELIMINARIES

1. This Implementation Plan is a schedule to the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education – 2016 and 2017 (the National Partnership) and should be read in conjunction with that Agreement.
2. The objective of the National Partnership is to facilitate children's early learning and development and transition to school, by maintaining universal access to, and improving participation in, affordable, quality early childhood education programmes for all children.
3. This objective is to be achieved through universal access to quality early childhood education programme(s) for all children enrolled in the year before full-time school for 600 hours per year, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher who meets National Quality Framework (NQF) requirements, and with a focus on participation by Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, regardless of the setting in which programmes are delivered.
4. Children living in remote Indigenous communities remain a focus for universal access.

PART 2: TERMS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5. This Implementation Plan will commence as soon as it is agreed between the Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Minister for Education and Training, and the state of Tasmania, represented by the Minister for Education and Training.
6. As a schedule to the National Partnership, the purpose of this Implementation Plan is to provide the public with an indication of how universal access is intended to be delivered and demonstrate Tasmania's capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. This Implementation Plan reflects Tasmania's parallel approach to the regulation and quality assurance of early childhood education programmes within schools to ensure compliance with the National Quality Standard.
8. This Implementation Plan will cease on completion or termination of the National Partnership, including final performance reporting and processing of final payments against performance benchmarks or milestones.
9. This Implementation Plan may be varied by written agreement between the Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for it under the overarching National Partnership.

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10. The Parties to this Implementation Plan do not intend any of the provisions to be legally enforceable. However, that does not lessen the Parties' commitment to the plan and its full implementation.

PART 3: STRATEGY FOR TASMANIA'S IMPLEMENTATION

Project information

11. The National Partnership reaffirms the commitment to provide universal access to, and improved participation by, children in quality early childhood education programmes in the year before full-time school, with a focus on Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children and in a manner that meets the needs of children, parents and communities at a cost which does not present a barrier to participation.
12. In Tasmania, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are defined as students who reside in areas with a SEIFA IRSD quintile 1 based on Statistical Area 1¹.
13. The project elements planned are detailed in Table 1: Project elements.

Table 1: Project elements

No.	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Universal access to kindergarten ²	Provision of 600 hours of free kindergarten in government schools ³	1/1/16	31/12/17	n/a
2	Maintain Indigenous children's participation	Maintain existing service provision for Indigenous children's participation in all locations	1/1/16	31/12/17	1
3	Maintain participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Maintain existing service provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	1/1/16	31/12/17	1

¹ Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) – the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD). The SEIFA IRSD is divided into five quintiles each comprising 20 per cent of areas; the most disadvantaged (lowest quintile) is quintile 1. Statistical Area 1 is the smallest geographic area possible for analysis of SEIFA.

² In Tasmania, preschool is referred to as kindergarten; the first year of full-time school is called 'Prep'.

³ Funding is also provided to non-government schools to top-up delivery to 600 hours of kindergarten to meet the objectives of the National Partnership.

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14. As required by clause 21(d) of the National Partnership, strategies are in place to ensure funding is directed to support participation by all children in all quality early childhood education programmes, regardless of whether programmes are delivered through schools (government and non-government), standalone preschools or long day care (LDC) centres. These strategies are included as Project Elements throughout this plan.
15. As required by clause 21(e) of the National Partnership, state specific data and implementation issues are identified below. Each of the identified issues includes strategies to overcome or address them.

State specific data issues identified by Tasmania and the strategies Tasmania proposes to employ through supplementary data processes to overcome these are outlined below:

- (a) To calculate enrolments, Tasmania will use as its denominator an average of the 4 and 5 year old estimated residential population (ERP), rather than 4 year olds. The median age of Tasmania's kindergarten students is 4.5 years old as at 30 June, as Tasmania's students are required to be at least 4 years old on 1 January in the year in which they commence Kindergarten.
- (b) In Tasmania, the year before full-time schooling (YBFS) is defined as children who are aged at least 4 years old or older *as at* 1 January of the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (National Collection) year. Any children who are 4 years old and born in the period after 1 January to 30 June (inclusive), as published by the ABS, are not in the YBFS, and are not included in the denominator student counts when calculating the performance indicator results for children's enrolments.
- (c) The Indigenous student count includes the Tasmanian ECEC students identified as Indigenous (Aboriginal, Torres Strait islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander) in Preschool Australia, and a proportion of students identified as 'Not Stated'. The proportion of 'Not Stated' students to be counted as Indigenous students is calculated by multiplying the Indigenous/Not Indigenous Tasmanian 0-4 year olds population ratio (ABS Cat No. 2002.0) by the number of 'Not Stated' Indigenous Tasmanian ECEC children published in Preschool Australia (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0).
- (d) The numerator used to calculate enrolments is also subject to under-identification of the number of Indigenous students, as some Indigenous families do not identify themselves as Indigenous when they first enrol in the school system.
- (e) Given these data volatility issues and under-reporting of Indigenous students in the Kindergarten year, it is proposed that Tasmania provides Prep enrolment data for the year after Kindergarten enrolment to support assertions that Tasmania's Kindergarten Indigenous participations rates are very high. Tasmania proposes to further measure the Indigenous participation rates in Kindergarten by retrospectively determining Prep year Indigenous enrolments compared to Kindergarten enrolments. This methodology will determine which students did not enrol in the previous year, but were eligible to, and hence determine an accurate participation rate. This is possible as Prep in Tasmania is the first compulsory year of school, and Tasmania has very accurate and detailed enrolment records in our schools enrolment administration system (EduPoint).

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- (f) Tasmania will provide reports as required by clause 29 of the National Partnership by 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018 detailing the number of children enrolled in the first year of compulsory schooling (Prep) compared to the students enrolled in the YBFS (Kindergarten). This would demonstrate the participation rate of the Tasmanian 2016 Kindergarten enrolments.

Estimated costs

16. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Tasmania is \$17,237,580 payable in accordance with the milestones and performance benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
17. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and Tasmania retains the flexibility to move Tasmanian contributions between components and/or years, as long as outcomes are not affected. The Commonwealth's contributions can only be moved between years with the agreement of the Commonwealth.

Table 2: Estimated financial contributions*

(\$ million)	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Elements 1 and 3	2.4	7.8	5.5	15.7
Element 2	0.2	0.8	0.6	1.6
Total estimated budget	2.6	8.6	6.1	17.2
<i>less estimated Commonwealth contribution equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>17.2</i>
Total Commonwealth contribution	2.6	8.6	6.1	17.2

*Figures may not add up due to rounding. All figures are estimates, including estimated allocations by element.

** States/territories are responsible for the provision of early childhood education and Tasmania allocates its own source funding accordingly.

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Programme logic

18. The project elements detailed in this Implementation Plan will achieve the outcomes and objectives stated in the National Partnership, including for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and Indigenous children.
19. The way in which these project elements will achieve the outcomes and objectives set out in the National Partnership is detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Programme logic

Project elements	Outputs (services delivered)	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibility
Element 1 – Universal access to kindergarten	<p>Implementing accessible, quality early childhood education programmes which meet the needs of parents and communities at a cost which does not present a barrier to participation, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged children</p> <p>Supporting all children’s quality early childhood education participation, regardless of whether quality early childhood education programmes are delivered through schools (non-government and government), standalone preschools or LDC centres</p>	All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education programme	To facilitate children’s early learning and development and transition to school, by maintaining universal access to, and improving participation in, affordable, quality early childhood education programmes for all children	Tasmania

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Project elements	Outputs (services delivered)	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibility
Element 2 – Maintain Indigenous children’s participation	Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas	All Indigenous children have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education programme All Indigenous four year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education	To facilitate children’s early learning and development and transition to school, by maintaining universal access to, and improving participation in, affordable, quality early childhood education programmes for all children	Tasmania
Element 3 – Maintain participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children	All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education programme	To facilitate children’s early learning and development and transition to school, by maintaining universal access to, and improving participation in, affordable, quality early childhood education programmes for all children	Tasmania

Risk management

20. The Tasmanian Department of Education (DoE) has a risk management plan in place. Risks have been actively identified, entered into a risk log and categorised in terms of impact and likelihood.

Tasmanian Context

21. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to the current context in Tasmania. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below.

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- (a) In 2015, Tasmania provided free kindergarten for 600 hours a year at 153 public schools and 56 non-government schools. For registered kindergarten programmes in government schools and not-for-profit non-government schools, ten hours per week are funded by the State, with the remaining five hours per week funded through this National Partnership. Funds for the extra five hours are allocated in accordance with enrolments. In 2015, quality early childhood education programmes were delivered in 88 LDC centres; however, because these were not registered kindergarten programmes they did not attract National Partnership funding (refer to paragraphs f through to h below for further information on the registration process).
- (b) The ERP of the average four and five -year-olds in Tasmania in 2015 was 6,256, of whom it is estimated 589 were Indigenous and 2,175 were of low socio-economic status. In 2015, 4,186 four and five-year-olds attended a registered kindergarten program in a government school, and 1,227 in a non-government school. An additional 924 four and five-year-olds accessed a quality early childhood education programme in an LDC centre for 600 hours or more. (Data Source: Tables 20 and 22 ABS Preschool Australia, 2015, 18 March 2016.)
- (c) The Tasmanian DoE has provided state-funded kindergartens linked to primary schools since 1911, along with other kindergarten programmes provided by the Kindergarten Union and parents. In 1968, a review recommended the provision of kindergarten as part of the school system, which led to a rapid expansion of places. By 1980 the State was responsible for most kindergartens in Tasmania. Rates of participation were high, the minimum age of enrolment was set at 4 as of 1 January each year, and the universal entitlement to enrolment was legislated in 1994. Non-government primary schools gradually established kindergartens during the 1980s and now all deliver a programme. Child care providers have also delivered a kindergarten programme (being registered by the Schools Registration Board (SRB) to do so) but currently none do – the cost to parents is provided as the main reason for lack of enrolments as well as the fact that, given the history above, parents see kindergarten as the first year of school.
- (d) Tasmania's high numbers of disadvantaged families who could not afford to participate in community kindergartens was a significant factor in the 1968 decision to embed kindergartens in the education system. There was evidence that the children who were most in need of a kindergarten education were those most likely not to be receiving it, and embedding kindergarten as part of the school system was a successful strategy in alleviating this risk with almost all eligible children in Tasmania attending kindergarten since then. The effectiveness of this approach was illustrated in the 2014 Deloitte review of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education where Tasmania met all the benchmarks that were able to be measured – the only jurisdiction to do so.
- (e) Kindergartens in Tasmania historically are regulated as part of the school system rather than the education and care sector, thereby avoiding duplication of some regulatory and administrative processes. It is important that kindergartens deliver quality early childhood programmes and in 2011 the then Tasmanian Government committed to ensure kindergartens substantially corresponded with NQF National Law requirements, without being subject to them.
- (f) Education and care service providers, for example in LDC centres, have always been able to seek registration as a non-government school (through the SRB, which registers non-government schools) in order to deliver Kindergarten. If an LDC registers as a school, regardless of its profit status, then it will receive National

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Partnership funding which would be allocated according to the existing procedures and methodologies for distributing funding to independent and Catholic schools (N.B. LDCs not registered as a school are not officially recognised as a kindergarten by the State Government).

- (g) Currently (in 2016) there are no child care service providers that are registered, with the last registration lapsing at the end of 2013 and no renewal sought because of lack of enrolments.
- (h) Registering as a school requires the LDC to account for matters such as the curriculum, qualifications of the teachers, facilities to be provided, the school procedures, the governance and administration arrangements, the school's financial viability, the grievance process, and any other prescribed matters as determined by the Minister. The Minister has instructed the SRB to take into account the fact that education and care providers are already meeting a regulatory framework. Where there is consistency between the school registration standards and the education and care regulatory requirements, evidence of compliance with those requirements will be accepted by the SRB as evidence of meeting the relevant school registration standard.
- (i) Other than the National Partnership funding, no Commonwealth child care subsidies/rebates are paid in respect of the Kindergarten year in government schools in Tasmania.
- (j) If a for-profit LDC service registers with the Tasmanian SRB to run a Kindergarten, they will be eligible for a share of the Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership. However, these for-profit services will not be eligible for the State subsidy (because the *Tasmanian Education Act 1994* (currently under review) does not allow State funding to go to for-profit schools).
- (k) If a not-for-profit LDC service registers with the Tasmanian SRB to run a Kindergarten, it will be entitled to the State funding subsidy for 10 hours (as for all non-government schools) and a share of the Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership. Currently in Tasmania, almost 70 per cent of long day care services are not-for profit.
- (l) There are three existing state-funded projects which focus on education during the pre-kindergarten years (birth to four years). These programmes are not funded under the National Partnership, but complement the National Partnership by supporting participation in learning by vulnerable and disadvantaged and Indigenous children. These projects are: Launching into Learning (in all government schools); Child and Family Centres (in 12 communities, including two with an Indigenous focus); and Aboriginal Early Years Liaison Officers (undergoing a name change to Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers).
 - (i) Launching into Learning (LiL) is a programme available in all government primary schools for children from birth through to age 4. LiL aims to give Tasmania's youngest children the best possible start in life by:
 - Supporting families as their child's first and most influential teacher,
 - Reaching families with highest need,
 - Facilitating a positive transition into kindergarten.

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A state-wide Early Years team supports consistent approaches to the ongoing implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework, which underpins the work of LiL teachers.

A longitudinal study of LiL shows that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds made significant gains in educational performance from regular participation in LiL. However, students from disadvantaged and low socioeconomic backgrounds benefited most.

- (ii) Child and Family Centres (CFCs) focus on improving the learning and care, and health and wellbeing of Tasmania's very young children by supporting parents and enhancing accessibility to services in the local community.
- (iii) The Aboriginal Early Years Program emphasises early literacy, language development and school readiness. The program has been running since 2005. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers (previously Aboriginal Early Years Liaison Officers or AEYLOs) provide professional learning and high level advice to early years' staff and agencies to enable successful implementation across the early years of the Aboriginal Education Framework 2012-2015 and Closing the Gap in Aboriginal Education Outcomes 2010-2014 strategy. AEYLOs are situated around the State in CFCs. They work closely with families of Aboriginal children from birth to four years of age to engage their children in a wide range of early years' activities and programs that nurture and stimulate young children's learning. AEYLOs play a key role in building connections between schools and families with young children by supporting families to engage in CFCs and the LiL.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

- 22. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
- 23. With regard to reporting on attendance, Tasmania has agreed a target for 2015, 2016 and 2017 with the Commonwealth, as set out in Table 4 below, and will report on progress towards this target as part of the National Collection.

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Table 4: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2014 performance	2015 Target	2016 Target	2017 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
99 per cent	90 per cent	90 per cent	90 per cent	Annual targets agreed in Implementation Plans taking into account a jurisdiction's starting point and moving to 90 per cent over time.

Payments under this agreement are not tied to achievement of attendance targets.

The methodology for calculation of performance related to attendance targets will be where a child has participated in a quality preschool programme for a minimum of one hour during the collection period.

Monitoring and reporting

24. Commonwealth and State based collections or data sources and methodologies, agreed by both the Parties to this Plan, to measure progress against the performance milestones and benchmarks and targets in the National Partnership, are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
25. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Tasmania's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below.
26. Supplementary data reports must contain the following details for each Performance Indicator (PI) where the method is not consistent with the Early Childhood Education and Care Minimal Data Set (NMDS):
 - PI calculation description (numerator, denominator, computation and presentation)
 - numerator information (collection name and population description)
 - denominator information (collection name and population description)
 - calculation notes (including any information about how the PI is calculated)
 - methodology
 - rationale for supplementary data and reporting (including any additional information to explain how and why the specifications for the supplementary data differ from the specifications in the NMDS).

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Sign off

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

Signature **Date**

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP
Minister for Education and Training

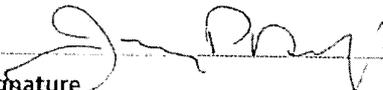
Signature **Date**

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training

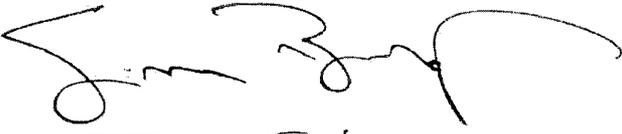
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Sign off

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

 _____ 23.5.16
Signature Date

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP
Minister for Education and Training

 _____ 6/5/16.
Signature Date

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training