

Victorian Implementation Plan

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – 2018

PART 1: PRELIMINARIES

1. This Implementation Plan is a schedule to the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education – 2018 (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 programs for all children.
3. This objective is to be achieved through universal access to quality early childhood education program(s) for 600 hours per year, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher who meets National Quality Framework requirements, and with a focus on participation by Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, regardless of the setting in which programs 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 Victoria, represented by the Minister for Early Childhood Education.
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 Victoria’s capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. 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.
8. This Implementation Plan may be varied by written agreement between the Commonwealth and State Minister responsible for it under the overarching National Partnership.
9. 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 IMPLEMENTATION

Project information

The National Partnership reaffirms the commitment to provide universal access to, and improved participation by, children in quality early childhood education programs 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.

10. 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	Maintain universal access by all children to 600 hours of preschool	Kindergarten per capita grant funding to support affordability and participation; the grant rate varies depending on the service setting and where the service is located Teacher supplement to support services with the higher cost of employing more experienced teachers	1 January 2018	31 December 2018	N/A
2	Maintain participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Kindergarten Inclusion Support program to support children with a disability, high support needs and/or with complex medical needs Kindergarten fee subsidy (KFS) for holders of a Health Care Card, Refugee visa etc.	1 January 2018	31 December 2018	N/A
3	Maintain participation for Indigenous children	KFS for Indigenous children	1 January 2018	31 December 2018	N/A

11. As required by clause 21 (d) of the National Partnership, the strategies are to ensure that funding is directed to support participation by all children in all quality early childhood education programs, regardless of whether programs are delivered through schools (government and non-government), standalone preschools or long day care centres.

These strategies are included as Project Elements throughout this plan, and additional strategies are listed in the Victorian context section.

12. 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.
 - (a) The use of 4 and 5 year-olds enrolled in a preschool program as the denominator for Performance Indicator 3 inflates Victoria's year-before-school cohort. This is because Child Care Management System data includes 4-year-olds who are not eligible for enrolment in a preschool education program in Victoria because they turn 4 after 30 April (the enrolment cut-off date for kindergarten¹ and school entry). National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (National Collection) birth month data will be provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to allow an accurate count of Victorian year-before-school enrolments, excluding May and June born children, to be used for the calculation of achievement against performance indicators.
 - (b) While efforts by the ABS to encourage Indigenous people to identify as Indigenous have resulted in a large increase in the population count of Indigenous people, there are continuing problems with under identification in other data collections undertaken without the same resources and without the trusted anonymity offered by the ABS. Victoria undertakes regular improvements to data collection and messaging to services about the importance of accurate and consistent statistics on Indigenous children.
 - (c) Funding applications and associated enrolment information can be sent to the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) up until March for children enrolled in the previous year. Therefore, some records for 4 and 5-year-old children enrolled in kindergarten programs for the whole of that year are not available at the time of the National Collection (reference week usually in August). In such instances, these records are not part of the Victorian Unit Record Level Child file and will be provided as supplementary data by 1 March following the National Collection year.
 - (d) To resolve any unexpected data issues Victoria may provide supplementary data from the Kindergarten Information Management system to aid interpretation of data and inform the assessment of Victoria's achievement of performance benchmarks.

Estimated costs

13. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Victoria is **\$119,585,610** payable in accordance with the milestones and performance benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
14. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and Victoria retains the flexibility to move funds between components and/or years, as long as outcomes are not affected. The Commonwealth contribution can only be moved between years with the agreement of the Commonwealth.

¹ In Victoria, quality early childhood education programs in the year before full-time school are referred to as kindergarten.

Table 2: Estimated financial contributions*

(\$ million)	2017-18	2018-19	Total
Element 1	30.8	71.8	102.6
Element 2	5.0	11.6	16.6
Element 3	0.1	0.2	0.4
Total estimated budget	35.9	83.7	119.6
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	35.9	83.7	119.6
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	**	**	**
Total Commonwealth contribution	35.9	83.7	119.6

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

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

Note 1: Element 1 includes funding aimed at maintaining universal access for the whole population of Victorian Kindergarten-aged children. Element 2 includes additional assistance (on top of Element 1, which is for all children) provided for vulnerable and disadvantaged children to maintain their participation rate. Likewise, Element 3 includes the additional assistance provided for Indigenous children. Element 2 does not include assistance provided to Indigenous children as this is counted in element 3. The assistance is primarily in the form of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS).

Note 2: The activities undertaken, which provide significant additional assistance to these cohorts, are listed beginning in paragraph 31. This table only includes funding under the National Partnership.

Program logic

15. 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.
16. The manner 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: Program logic

Project elements	Outputs (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 - Maintain universal access by all children to 600 hours of preschool	<p>Implementing accessible quality early childhood education programs 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 programs are delivered through schools (non-government and government), standalone preschools or long day care centres.</p>	All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.	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 programs for all children.	Victoria
Element 2 - Maintain participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	<p>Implementing accessible quality early childhood education programs 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>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children</p>	All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.	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 programs for all children.	Victoria

<p>Element 3 - Maintain participation for Indigenous Children</p>	<p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas.</p> <p>Supporting all children’s quality early childhood education participation, regardless of whether quality early childhood education programs are delivered through schools (non-government and government), standalone preschools or long day care centres.</p>	<p>All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p>	<p>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 programs for all children.</p>	<p>Victoria</p>
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Risk management

17. The Victorian Department of Education and Training 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.

Victorian Context

18. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to the Victorian context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below:
 - a. the historic community ownership of kindergartens
 - b. the maturity of the kindergarten system which is operating at close to full capacity (spaces and teachers) in some areas such as growth corridors and inner metropolitan suburbs
 - c. the extent to which the full range of early years services (kindergarten for both 3 and 4 year olds, playgroups etc.) are embedded in and valued by local communities
 - d. anticipated continuation of the high participation rate in Victorian kindergarten programs
 - e. the parallel reform processes from the National Quality Agenda
 - f. a period of significant population growth in parts of Victoria
 - g. policy and legislation changes to the sector that may impact on access and participation (e.g. Victoria's No Jab No Play, the Australian Government's No Jab No Pay, the Child Care Assistance Package and Family Tax Benefit changes)
19. A diverse range of service providers deliver kindergarten in Victoria, including government and non-government providers, private for-profit providers and community service organisations. The Victorian Government funds these services, irrespective of setting, to contribute to the cost of running a funded kindergarten program.
20. Services charge families fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual services and can vary depending on service type, how many hours a child attends, group size and extra costs such as excursions.
21. The below table shows the range of Victorian kindergarten service providers by service provider type in 2016.

Table 4: Victorian kindergarten sector by service type, 2016

			Non-Govt sector		Government Sector		Total all sectors
			Non-Government Private Providers*	Non-government Community Service Organisations**	Local Govt	State Govt	
Kindergarten Services ₁	Long Day Care Settings	(n)	642	385	80	4	1,111
	All Other Settings***	(n)	92	814	244	39	1,189
	Total Services	(n)	734	1,199	324	43	2,300
		(%)	31.91%	52.13%	14.09%	1.87%	100.0%
Kindergarten Enrolments ₂	Long Day Care Settings	(n)	12,701	8,194	2,228	146	23,269
	All Other Settings***	(n)	3,074	35,744	12,228	1,950	52,996
	Total Enrolments	(n)	15,775	43,938	14,456	2,096	76,265
		(%)	20.69%	57.61%	18.95%	2.75%	100.0%

1. The number of services from which funded kindergarten programs are delivered. These include long day care centres, community kindergartens and integrated children's centres.

2. Number of children enrolled in funded kindergarten in the year before school.

* Includes: Proprietary Limited Company, Sole Traders, Partnerships & Company limited by share; Non-Govt Schools; Tertiary institutions & Hospitals

** Includes: Church Organisation; Incorporated Association, Co-Operatives, Company Limited by Guarantee & Other

*** These other settings are mostly standalone settings but also include kindergarten in integrated Children's centres and budget based mobile services.

22. Victorian 2018 funding rates for all services are provided below.

Per Capita funding rates*	2018	
	January - June	July - December
Standard	\$3,505	\$3,593
Rural**	\$4,334	\$4,442
Non-government type 1	\$571	\$585
Non-government type 2	\$1,852	\$1,898

*Per capita funding is paid on a pro rata basis and the table above reflects the rates per financial year.

** Base level funding applies in rural areas to support access to affordable kindergarten programs

23. Victoria funds kindergarten services in non-government schools at a lower per capita rate, based on the former Australian Government Education Resources Index rating (measures need according to the capacity of a non-government school to generate its own income through fees, investments, fundraising and donations). Non-government type 1 rates apply to providers previously deemed to have an Index of Education Resources rating 1-4. Non-government type 2 rates apply to providers previously deemed to have an Index of Education Resources rating of 5-12. The lower the rating, the higher the economic advantage, hence the lower funding.

24. The continued, well-established and highly valued partnership approach with local government and the Municipal Association of Victoria is critical to achievement of the objectives and outcomes set out in the National Partnership in Victoria. The Victorian Government will continue to invest in Education State reforms that will ensure all children participate in quality early childhood education and care.

25. The Victorian Government undertakes a range of activities to help meet the objective of facilitating children's early learning and development and transition to school by improving participation in affordable, quality early childhood education programs for all children. There is a focus on disadvantaged and Indigenous children. Information on how different programs contribute to outcomes sought is provided below.
26. Maintain universal access by all children to 600 hours of preschool by:
 - a. Kindergarten per capita grant funding to support affordability and participation
 - b. Base level funding to support access to affordable kindergarten programs in rural communities.
27. Maintain participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children by:
 - a. Kindergarten Inclusion support program to support children with a disability, high support needs and/or with complex medical needs
 - b. Kindergarten fee subsidy (KFS) for holders of a Health Care Card, Refugee visa etc.
 - c. Pre-Purchased Places – targeted services will receive funding to preserve places for vulnerable or disadvantaged children who enrol late
 - d. Early Start Kindergarten (aged three years) if family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child FIRST) and Early Start Kindergarten Extension for children aged four attending kindergarten in a setting where KFS does not apply.
28. Increasing Indigenous participation by:
 - a. Facilitation of participation via Koorie Engagement Support Officers and elders
 - b. KFS for Indigenous children
 - c. Koorie Preschool Assistants program
 - d. 'Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten' campaign - a communications' campaign promoting the benefits of kindergarten participation for Indigenous children
 - e. Early Start Kindergarten (aged three years) for Indigenous children and Early Start Kindergarten Extension for Indigenous children aged four attending kindergarten in a setting where the kindergarten fee subsidy does not apply
 - f. Aboriginal Best Start - in six locations across Victoria, established to encourage Indigenous families and communities to work with early years services to improve health and education outcomes for Indigenous children, with a particular focus on kindergarten participation.
29. System development and implementation by:
 - a. Ongoing improvements to Indigenous data collection; messaging to services on the importance of accurate and consistent statistics on Indigenous children
 - b. Central enrolment project with Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to adopt, expand and enhance central enrolment for kindergarten services

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

- 30. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
- 31. With regard to reporting on attendance, Victoria has agreed a target for 2018 with the Commonwealth, as set out in Table 5 below, and will report on progress towards this target as part of the National Collection taking into account the supplementary approaches outlined in clause 25 of the National Partnership.
- 32. Attendance will be measured as the proportion of children enrolled in a quality early childhood education program for at least 600 hours per year and that attend for at least one hour during the reference week.

Table 5: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2016 performance	2017 Target	2018 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
94.8%	90%*	90%	Annual targets agreed in Implementation Plans taking into account a jurisdiction’s starting point and moving to 90 per cent over time.

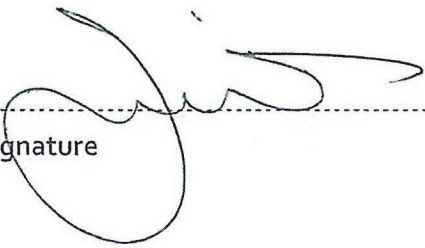
Payments under this agreement are not tied to achievement of attendance targets.
 As per previous agreements, the methodology for calculation of performance related to attendance targets will be where a child has participated in a quality preschool program for a minimum of one hour during the collection period.
 *Performance against 2017 Target to be assessed as part of final performance assessment for the previous National Partnership for 2016 and 2017, with data expected in the first half of 2018.

Monitoring and reporting

- 33. 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.
- 34. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Victoria’s performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below.
- 35. Supplementary data reports must contain the following details for each Performance Indicator where the method is not consistent with the Early Childhood Education and Care Minimal Data Set (NMDS):
 - performance Indicator 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).


Sign off

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



Signature Date 30/4/18

Jenny Mikakos MP
Minister for Early Childhood Education



Signature Date 23/5/18.

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training