

Northern Territory Implementation Plan

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 2018-2020

PART 1: PRELIMINARIES

1. This Implementation Plan is a schedule to the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education 2018-2020 (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 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 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 an agreement to its content is reached between the Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Minister for Education, and the Northern Territory, represented by the Minister for Education.
6. As a schedule to the National Partnership, the purpose of this Implementation Plan is to provide the public with an indication of the manner in which universal access will be delivered and demonstrate the Northern Territory's capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. This Implementation Plan supports the national approach to regulation and quality assessment of education and care services consistent with the National Quality Framework.
8. This Implementation Plan will cease upon 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 responsible Commonwealth and state/territory minister under the overarching National Partnership.
10. The Parties to this Implementation Plan do not intend any of the provisions to be legally enforceable. However, this does not lessen the Parties' commitment to the plan and its full implementation.

PART 3: STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN TERRITORY 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 programs in the year before commencing full-time schooling, 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. Commonwealth, state and territory governments will collaborate to develop a nationally agreed definition of vulnerable and disadvantaged children over time. In the Northern Territory, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are provisionally defined as children who reside in communities identified in the 2015 Australian Early Development Census as having above the national average rates of vulnerability in two or more domains.
- 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	Maintain universal access to 600 hours of quality preschool for all children in the year before full-time school	Provision of 600 hours per year of free preschool for children in the year before full-time school. Funding for the delivery of a quality preschool program is also distributed to non-government and long day care service providers.	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2020	N/A
2	Increase preschool participation of Aboriginal and vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Through the equity loadings within the current Northern Territory student needs based funding model, provide additional funding to preschools to support participation of Aboriginal and vulnerable and disadvantaged children.	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2020	N/A

- 14. As required by clause 22(d) of the National Partnership, the following strategies will ensure that funding is directed appropriately to support participation of 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.
- 15. As required by clause 22(e) of the National Partnership, jurisdiction specific data and implementation issues are identified below. The descriptions include strategies to overcome or address each issue.
 - (a) Issues have been identified relating to the timing of the Age Grade Census data collection for the Northern Territory. The collection period includes a public holiday and one remote school operates on negotiated flexible attendance times that suit

the community. In addition, attendance patterns for the Northern Territory consistently show low school attendance during August. This is partially due to sporting and community events and transience of remote and very remote populations at this time of year. To address this, it is necessary for the Northern Territory to use other sources of data such as internal data collections and data drawn from different weeks.

- (b) The Northern Territory only has access to data from school-based preschool services. Data for preschool services run in a long day care setting are captured in the child care information technology system (currently Child Care Management System), which is included in the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (National Collection), held by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Northern Territory will continue to work with Commonwealth officials to access all National Collection data on a regular basis.

Estimated costs

16. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to the jurisdiction is **\$14.4 million**, 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 the Northern Territory retains the flexibility to allocate 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.

Table 2: Estimated financial contributions*

(\$ million)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Element 1	1.1	3.6	3.6	2.5	10.8
Element 2	0.4	1.2	1.2	0.8	3.6
Total estimated budget	1.4	4.8	4.8	3.3	14.4
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	1.4	4.8	4.8	3.3	14.4
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	**	**	**		**
Total Commonwealth contribution	1.4	4.8	4.8	3.3	14.4

*Figures may not add up 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 the Northern Territory allocates its own source funding accordingly.

Note:

1. Funding for 2018 and 2019 has been notionally allocated based on enrolment and student characteristics for 2016.
2. Funding for 2020 has been notionally allocated based on enrolment and student characteristics for 2017.
3. Funding is provided to service providers on a calendar year basis.

Program logic

18. The project elements detailed in this Implementation Plan will achieve the outcomes and objectives outlined in the National Partnership, including for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and Indigenous children.
19. 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	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 - maintain universal access to 600 hours of quality preschool for all children in the year before full-time school.	<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) 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.	Northern Territory
Element 2 - increase preschool participation by Aboriginal and 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>Delivery of strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas.</p> <p>Delivery of strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.</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 Aboriginal children in remote and very remote areas have access to free preschool from three years of age.</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.	Northern Territory

Risk management

20. The Northern Territory Department of Education 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.

Northern Territory context

21. In developing this Implementation Plan, consideration has been given to the unique demographic, geographic, economic and historic characteristics which differentiate the Northern Territory from other jurisdictions that impact the delivery of services and achievement of outcomes.
 - The Northern Territory has the lowest population of all states and territories with a population of approximately 228 833 people¹ representing approximately one per cent of the total Australian population, spread over an area of 1 349 129 sq.km.²
 - The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people of all states and territories, with 58 248 people, or 25.5 per cent (2016 ABS Census)³ of the total population identifying as Aboriginal.
 - 77 per cent of the Aboriginal population live in either remote or very remote localities.⁴
 - There are 17 630 children aged birth to four years in the Northern Territory of whom approximately 31 per cent (5596 children) are Aboriginal.⁵
 - Northern Territory children have high levels of developmental vulnerability across all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge.⁶
 - 23.4 per cent of Northern Territory children are vulnerable on two or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census compared with 11.1 per cent nationally.⁷
22. The vastness of the Northern Territory, the small population and limited available skilled workforce add to the complexity of delivering educational services in the Northern Territory, particularly preschool which is a non-compulsory stage of schooling. The Northern Territory provides Universal Access funding to all government and non-government preschools offering a preschool program. Universal Access funding to all long day care centres with preschool programs will be determined by an annual grant assessment of long day care centres in May 2018, 2019 and 2020.
23. Government schools represent approximately 75 per cent of all services that provide a quality preschool program in the Northern Territory, and provide preschool for the majority of the Aboriginal and vulnerable and disadvantaged cohort.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census QuickStats, http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/7?opendocument released 27 June 2017.

² Geoscience Australia, Area of Australia – States and Territories, <http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/national-location-information/dimensions/area-of-australia-states-and-territories>, accessed 9 January 2018.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, 2016 <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/02D50FAA9987D6B7CA25814800087E03?OpenDocument>, released 27 June 2017.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2016, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3238.0.55.001June%202011?OpenDocument>, released 31 August 2018.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census of Population and Housing General Community Profile Catalogue number 2001.0 http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/CensusOutput/copsub2016.NSF/All%20docs%20by%20catNo/2016-Community%20Profile-7?File/GCP_7.zip?OpenElement.

⁶ Australian Early Development Census, Data Explorer <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer>, accessed 25 November 2019.

⁷ Australian Early Development Census, Data Explorer <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer>, accessed 25 November 2019.

24. Northern Territory Government schools provide 600 hours per year of free preschool for four year-old children. This National Partnership contributes to increasing the Northern Territory’s provision base of 480 hours of quality preschool to 600 hours. The Northern Territory has adopted a number of strategies to boost attendance and support the participation of Aboriginal, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and to promote quality preschool service provision.
25. Complementary Northern Territory Department of Education activities include:
- implementing initiatives under *A Share in the Future – Indigenous Education Strategy 2015-2024* including evidence-based, quality early childhood education programs;
 - continuing to embed the NT Preschool Curriculum;
 - working with families, communities and agencies to deliver quality early childhood education services to improve child wellbeing and ensure a positive transition to school;
 - working closely with schools to implement school attendance strategies;
 - using the Department of Education’s student needs-based funding model to allocate funding to non-government preschools to support the delivery of a quality preschool;
 - continuing to provide the Early Childhood Services Subsidy to all regulated long day care services in the Northern Territory to offset the cost for families and to encourage participation of children;
 - assessing long day care services and preschools to determine if they provide a quality preschool program to children in the year before full-time school, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, for 600 hours per year, in accordance with the Early Years Learning Framework, in a manner that meets the needs of children and their families, and at a cost that does not present a barrier for children, families and the community to access; and
 - providing quality early childhood education programs, in line with Northern Territory Government initiatives in *Starting Early for a Better Future*, to engage vulnerable and disadvantaged children, Aboriginal children, parents and caregivers in remote and very remote communities including the Families as First Teachers program.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

26. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
27. With regard to reporting on attendance, the Northern Territory has agreed to a target for 2018, 2019 and 2020 with the Commonwealth, as set out in Table 4 below, and will report on progress towards this target as part of the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection.

Table 4: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2017 performance	2018 Performance	2019 Target	2020 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
87.5%	89%	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.

Monitoring and reporting

28. 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.
29. These data and performance specifications will be used to report the Northern Territory's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed to by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below.
30. 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 performance indicator 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:

Selena Uibo

Signature

Hon Selena Uibo MLA
Minister for Education

Date

21 JAN 2023

Signature

The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education

Date

20/1/20