

Western Australia's 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 and 2019 (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 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 it is agreed between the Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Minister for Education, and the State of Western Australia, 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 Western Australia'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 the 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

10. 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.
11. In Western Australia, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are provisionally defined as children enrolled in schools with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value in the lowest socio-economic quintile within Western Australia. Each public and non-government school's ICSEA is calculated on the basis of the ICSEA profile of every enrolled student of compulsory-age and schools in the bottom quintile are the 20 per cent in Western Australia with lowest ICSEA.
12. The project elements planned are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Project elements

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Universal Access to Kindergarten at school	Provide funding for public and non-government schools to continue to offer 600 hours of Kindergarten, free of compulsory charges in public schools and significantly subsidised (over 75 per cent of costs) in non-government schools.	1 January 2018	31 December 2020	NA
2	KindiLink	To enhance Aboriginal children's transition to Kindergarten at school, the KindiLink program provides three year olds (and parent-caregiver) with supported playgroup sessions for six hours per week, jointly delivered by a teacher and an Aboriginal Islander Education Officer. KindiLink operates across 38 public schools which have a high number and proportion of Aboriginal enrolments – eight of which are in remote localities.	1 January 2018	31 December 2020	NA

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
3	Community Based Playgroups	Establish additional community-based playgroups on or near school sites – a universal strategy to enhance transition to Kindergarten at school.	1 January 2018	31 December 2020	NA
4	Education and Care Networks	Establish new Education and Care Networks in 2020, and support the 6 already established (2018 – 2019) Education and Care Networks, to enhance program quality through shared professional learning (i.e. reciprocal site visits and shared professional learning on the NQS and EYLF for long day care centres and nearby schools), and children's transition to school.	1 January 2018	31 December 2020	NA
5	Consolidate Program Quality (NQS)	Ongoing professional learning in the early years of schooling in all public and non-government schools, including any changes arising from streamlining the NQS.	1 January 2018	31 December 2020	NA

13. As required by clause 22 (d) of the National Partnership, the following 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 (LDC) centres. These strategies are included as project elements throughout this plan.
14. As required by clause 22 (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. There is a lack of clarity about the nature of programmes provided to four-year olds by LDC centres in Western Australia (for more information see Western Australia Context), and whether they are best characterised as:
 - 'outside school hours care' (OSHC) - before/after their school based Kindergarten sessions and/or on non-Kindergarten days; or
 - 'Kindergarten' - delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher and chosen by families as an alternative to school-based Kindergarten.

This issue was investigated for National Partnership extensions in 2015 and 2016-2017 by surveying LDC centres about programs provided for four year olds. Each time the

survey was conducted, response rates were low (25 to 35 per cent) and the results were inconclusive. Given the unique context of early childhood education policy, infrastructure and legislation in Western Australia and the inconclusive results of previous surveys, an alternative approach to implementation of the requirement at clause 21(d) of the National Partnership is required. The approach taken is outlined at Element 4: Education and Care Networks whereby shared professional learning for educators in LDC centres and schools will be funded through this National Partnership.

Estimated costs

15. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project for 2018 to 2020 to the jurisdiction is \$ 139.6 million payable in accordance with the milestones and performance benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
16. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and Western Australia 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.

Table 2: Estimated financial contributions

(\$ million)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Element 1	17.1	38.0	37	18.5	110.6
Element 2	3.0	6.5	7.6	3.7	20.8
Elements 3, 4 and 5	1.4	3.3	2.3	1.2	8.2
Total estimated budget	21.5	47.8	46.9	23.4	139.6
<i>less</i> estimated Commonwealth contribution	13.8	46.3	46.9	32.6	139.6
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	*	*	*	*	*
Total Commonwealth contribution	13.8	46.3	46.9	32.6	139.6

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

Program logic

17. 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.
18. 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: Program logic

Project elements	Outputs (services delivered)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 – Universal Access to Kindergarten at 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), standalone preschools or LDC centres</p>	<p>All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education programs</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education programme</p> <p>All Indigenous four year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education</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>	Western Australia

Element 2- KindiLink	Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Aboriginal children, including in remote areas	All Indigenous 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	Western Australia
Element 3 - Community-based playgroups	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	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	Western Australia
Element 4 - Education and Care Networks	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 LDC centres	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	Western Australia

Element 5 - Consolidate the NQS	<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 LDC 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>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>	Western Australia
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Risk management

19. The Western Australia 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.

Western Australia's Context

20. Western Australia offers free Kindergarten for 600 hours per year at 665 public schools and 18 community kindergartens, and subsidises over 75 per cent of the cost of Kindergarten in 253 non-government schools. Four hours per week of Kindergarten are funded through this National Partnership while 11 hours per week are funded by the State. Funds for the extra four hours are allocated to public schools in accordance with the Western Australia Department of Education's Student Centred Funding Model, and a pro-rata allocation based on market share is provided to each of the Catholic and independent school sectors.
21. The estimated resident population of four-year olds in Western Australia in 2017 was 34,612 of whom it is estimated that 2,109¹ were Aboriginal, in 2018 it was 34,336², of whom around 2,355 were Aboriginal³. In 2017, Western Australia's preschool participation rate for four year olds was 100 per cent, with 96 per cent participating in at least 600 hours

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026*, released 30 April 2014, 3238.0

² ABS, *Australian Demographic Statistics, Mar 2019*, released 19 September 2019, 3101.0

³ ABS, *Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2031*, released 11 July 2019, 3238.0

of preschool—these results remained steady for 2018.⁴ The overwhelming majority (96%) of preschool was delivered by a public or non-government school⁵.

22. In developing this Implementation Plan, consideration has been given to Western Australia’s context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below:

- (a) *Historical context regarding Kindergarten policy and provision* - Since 2001, all four-year-olds have been entitled to enrol, free of charge in a public school. Further, to facilitate parent choice, over 75 per cent of Kindergarten fees at non-government schools have been subsidised by the State. All programs in schools are delivered by degree-qualified teachers.

Over the past two decades, Kindergarten participation has been normalised among Western Australian families and is widely known as the first year of school (albeit part-time and pre-compulsory). Families have confidence in the quality of the learning programs provided in Kindergarten at schools⁶ and typically organise their work and child care arrangements around this provision.

Introduction of the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education in 2008 (and subsequent National Partnerships) enabled Western Australia to augment school-based delivery of Kindergarten by an extra four hours per week to efficiently expand provision to 15 hours per week in all public and non-government schools. Schools consult with their parent communities to determine the most convenient schedules for delivery of their 15 hour programs.

Despite the pre-compulsory nature of Kindergarten enrolment, Western Australia achieved a 100 per cent preschool participation rate for four year olds in 2016 and 2017, with 96 per cent enrolled at schools which provide quality preschool delivered by qualified early childhood teachers for at least 600 hours per year⁷. These rates were maintained in 2018. Of the 1,126 Western Australian preschool children in 2018 who did not participate in at least 15 hours of preschool per week, 518 (46%) participated in 10 – 14 hours per week of preschool, and 608 (54%) participated up to 10 hours of preschool per week – mostly in centre-based day care programs.⁸. There is very limited information available to the State about the *nature* of programs for four year olds provided by LDC centres, including the number of hours those programs are delivered by qualified early childhood teachers. The State conducted a survey in 2016 to address this but only 35 per cent of LDC centres responded. The reason for this low response rate is unclear, however it may be because most LDC centres in Western

⁴ Department of Education and Training (2018). *National Report on the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education 2016 – 2017*; Australian Government Department of Education—administrative data (performance results for 2018)

⁵ ABS, *Preschool Education Australia 2017*, released 15 February 2018, and *Preschool Education Australia 2018*, released 13 February 2019, 4240.0.

⁶ Hand, K. Baxter, J. Sweid, R., Bluett-Boyd, N. & Price-Robertson, R. (2014). *Access to early childhood education in Australia: Insights from a qualitative study* (Research Report No. 28). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019), 4240.0 *Preschool Education Australia 2018*, Table 13.

⁸ Ibid.

Australia attribute Kindergarten provision to the schooling sector and did not think the survey was relevant for them.

- (b) *Long day care centres* - The unique context of early childhood education policy, infrastructure and legislation in Western Australia requires an alternative approach to implementation of the requirement, at clause 21(d) of the National Partnership. The approach taken is outlined at Element 4: Education and Care Networks whereby shared professional learning for educators in LDC centres and schools will be funded through this National Partnership. Clear legislative separation exists between LDC centres that operate under provisions of the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) 2012 and Kindergartens that operate under the *School Education Act 1999*. It follows that the direct provision of funds to approved LDC centres to provide Kindergarten to children in the pre-compulsory period (four-year-olds) is uncertain.

As noted above at paragraph 14, surveys of LDC centres undertaken in the past have found that the majority of four-year-old children who attend centre-based services in Western Australia do so to access OSHC rather than Kindergarten, and are already beneficiaries of the National Partnership through the Kindergarten program they access at school.

- (c) *Demographic and geographic context* - Western Australia occupies approximately 2.5 million square kilometres. Most of the State's population live in the greater Perth area and the south west corner of the State, with the remaining 15 per cent in regional and remote areas. Approximately 3.9 per cent⁹ of Western Australia's population identifies as Aboriginal. The concentration of Aboriginal families is highest in remote localities, however the number of Aboriginal families is highest in greater Perth and towns in Western Australia's south-west. The dispersed nature of Western Australia's population in regional areas presents particular challenges (and costs) to the delivery of universal education programs, including Kindergarten. This has necessitated partnerships across the public and non-government school sectors to ensure economies of scale and avoid duplication and gaps. This is evident in cross-sectoral expansion of universal access to Kindergarten and implementation of the NQS across the early years of school. The opportunity to include providers of formal child care services in these partnerships via shared professional learning, especially in remote and rural localities, has been pursued through implementation of this National Partnership in 2019, and will continue into 2020.
- (d) *Existing State initiatives to target vulnerable and disadvantaged children* - Compared with other jurisdictions, a markedly lower percentage of Western Australian children attend formal child care services prior to school entry¹⁰. In recognition of this, the State's strategy to support children's learning prior to school entry is focused on forging partnerships with families and community-based non-government organisations to deliver an integrated suite of family-focused initiatives. These initiatives adopt a 'two-generational' approach to empower families, forge home-school links and build local networks to optimise children's learning, especially Aboriginal, disadvantaged and vulnerable children prior to school entry.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, June 2016, released 31 August 2018, 3238.0.55.001.

¹⁰ Productivity Commission (2018). *Report on Government Services 2018*, Child care, education and training chapter.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

23. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
24. With regard to reporting on attendance, Western Australia has agreed a target for 2018 and 2019 with the Commonwealth, as set out in Table 5 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
96.0%	96.7%	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 delivered by a degree-qualified teacher for a minimum of one hour during the collection period.

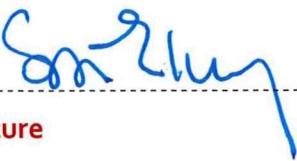
In Western Australia, all hours of Kindergarten received by children in schools are delivered by teachers with qualifications that meet requirements of the National Quality Framework.

Monitoring and reporting

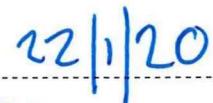
25. Commonwealth and State based collections or data sources and methodologies, agreed by both the Parties to this Plan, to measure progress against the performance milestones and benchmarks and targets in the National Partnership, are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
26. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Western Australia's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan.
27. 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 National 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).

Sign off

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



Signature



Date

**The Hon Sue Ellery MLC
Minister for Education and Training**





**The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education**

Sign off

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

Signature

The Hon Sue Ellery MLC

Minister for Education and Training

Date

20/1/20

Signature

The Hon Dan Tehan MP

Minister for Education

Date