

# Australian Capital Territory'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 programmes 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 Australian Capital Territory (ACT), 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 how universal access is intended to be delivered and demonstrate the ACT's capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. This Implementation Plan supports the national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services consistent with the NQF.
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 Territory Ministers responsible for it under the overarching National Partnership.
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.

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### PART 3: STRATEGY FOR AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL 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 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 the ACT, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are defined as: those residing in communities identified in the 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 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	Access for Indigenous children	Maintain 600 hours of service provision in suburbs with high numbers of Indigenous children	1 Jan 2016	31 Dec 2017	n/a
2	No fee is charged for government preschool programmes	Maintain 600 hours of free preschool for government preschool programmes, including provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	1 Jan 2016	31 Dec 2017	n/a
3	Promotion of preschool participation – all service providers	Promotion of preschool participation to all children, including Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, through the <i>Preschool Matters Program</i> and website	1 Jan 2016	31 Dec 2017	n/a

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No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
4	Scholarship programme for educators – all service providers	Scholarship programme provided in ACT preschool and long day care services to strengthen educator qualifications	Ongoing from 1 Jan 2016	Ongoing through 2017	n/a
5	Infrastructure support – non-government service providers	Annual allocation of capital grants to be provided to non-government preschools for expansion and upgrade of infrastructure in line with 'Supporting Non-Government Preschools' budget initiative. <sup>1</sup> Allocation based on a competitive grants process administered by the ACT Block Grant Authority where maximum amount per approved project is \$0.5 million.	Ongoing from 1 Jan 2016	Ongoing through 2017	4
6	Delivery of <i>Preschool Matters Grants Program</i> – all service providers	Delivery of Preschool Matters Grants Program - Grants of up to \$500 to facilitate parental engagement for ACT preschool or long day care services delivering 600 hours of preschool.	1 Sep 2016	31 Dec 2017	n/a

\*Website for Preschool Matters Grants Program is available at <http://www.preschoolmatters.act.gov.au/>

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 quality early childhood education programmes, regardless of whether programmes 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 21(e) of the National Partnership, Territory specific data and implementation issues are identified below. Each of the identified issues includes strategies to overcome or address them.

(a) The ACT has identified issues related to the accuracy of the data set used for performance measures, as well as issues related to the impact of the small cohort size for subpopulations within this National Partnership. Strategies to supplement the data set are identified below with the ACT also noting that if other data issues are identified during the life of this National Partnership, they will also be considered.

<sup>1</sup> [http://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/455987/5.2-Expenditure-Initiatives.pdf](http://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/455987/5.2-Expenditure-Initiatives.pdf).

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- (b) The ACT conducts an enrolment census in ACT public preschools in February and August each year. The ACT may submit August Census data as supplementary data, as the current Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data counting rules create a discrepancy in the distribution of students across preschool and long day care centres when the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) and ACT public preschool census data are compared. This supplementary data will assist in addressing attendance issues relating to the ABS methodology where a two week data collection sample period in August is used and extrapolated for the school year.
- (c) The ACT may provide supplementary data related to students with special needs and Indigenous students enrolled in specialist ACT public preschool programmes where programme design impacts on ABS counting rules.
- (d) The ACT is currently procuring a new school administration database that will increase accuracy and functionality of data collected in ACT public preschools. The new system is anticipated for implementation in 2017 and may be used to inform final reporting under this National Partnership where relevant.

### Estimated costs

- 16. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to the ACT is \$14,368,325 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 ACT retains the flexibility to adjust ACT contributions between components and/or years in line with movement on enrolments, as long as outcomes are not affected. However, 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
Element 1 <sup>#</sup>	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.6
Element 2 <sup>#</sup>	1.7	5.8	4.1	11.7
Elements 3, 4, 5 and 6 <sup>#</sup>	0.3	1.1	0.8	2.2
Total estimated budget	2.1	7.2	5.1	14.4
less estimated Commonwealth contribution equals estimated balance of	2.1	7.2	5.1	14.4
non-Commonwealth contributions**	-	-	-	-
Total Commonwealth contribution	2.1	7.2	5.1	14.4

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

<sup>#</sup>Element allocations are notional for the purpose of this plan. Notional allocations are calculated proportionately on 2015 enrolment data.

\*\*States and Territories are responsible for the provision of early childhood education and the ACT allocates its own source funding accordingly.

### 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. The ACT has no remote communities, and this Implementation Plan therefore does not aim to meet the objectives or outcomes identified in clauses 13 and 14(c) of the National Partnership.
- 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.

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Table 3: Programme logic

Project elements	Outputs	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 – Access for Indigenous children	Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children	All Indigenous 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	ACT
Element 2 – No fee is charged for government preschool programmes	<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>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 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	ACT

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Project elements	Outputs	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibilities
<p>Element 3 – Promotion of preschool participation for all service providers</p>	<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>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas</p> <p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of 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 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 programme</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education programme</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 programmes for all children</p>	<p>ACT Government preschools, Non-government preschools, long day care centres</p>

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Project elements	Outputs	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibilities
<p>Element 4 – Scholarship programme for educators from all service providers</p>	<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 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 programme</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 programmes for all children</p>	<p>ACT</p>
<p>Element 5 – Infrastructure support for non-government service providers</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 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 programme</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 programmes for all children</p>	<p>ACT</p>

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Project elements	Outputs	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 6 – Delivery of <i>Preschool Matters Grants Program</i> to all service providers	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	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	ACT

### Risk management

20. The ACT Education and Training Directorate 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.

### Australian Capital Territory Context

21. ACT provides free preschool for 600 hours per year at 78 public preschools. The estimated resident population of four-year-olds in the ACT in 2015 was 5,195 children of whom it is estimated 155 are Indigenous and approximately 650 are of low socioeconomic status. In 2015, a total of 4,417 four and five-year-olds residing in the ACT were enrolled in and attended public preschools in the year before full-time schooling. Additionally, in 2015 approximately 2,200 students were enrolled in and attended a long day care centre and/or a non-government preschool, noting that this information includes cross-border enrolment from NSW and children enrolled in multiple settings.

22. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to relevant ACT context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below:

- (a) The ACT Government has a strong commitment to early childhood education and this is evident in its investment in preschools over the last 50 years.
- (b) The ACT has no remote communities, and this Implementation Plan therefore does not aim to meet the objectives or outcomes identified in clauses 13 and 14(c) of the National Partnership.
- (c) In 2016-17, all ACT public preschools will continue to offer no fee public preschool programmes. ACT public preschool programmes are delivered by degree qualified early childhood teachers, aligned with the NQF, for 600 hours per annum.



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- (d) The current and previous National Partnership Agreements contributed to an increase from 12 to 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) in the government preschool sector.
- (e) Maintain the targeted increased government preschool service delivery to schools in suburbs with higher numbers of disadvantaged and/or Indigenous populations. In addition, AEDC data was used to inform the selection of increased provision in areas of need.
- (f) The ACT Government has in place additional activities outside this National Partnership for cross-government collaboration to ensure wraparound service delivery for Indigenous children, and also for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- (g) Quality early childhood education in the year before full-time school is also delivered in other settings including non-government preschools and long day care centres.
- (h) The ACT will maintain support to other settings including non-government preschools and long day care centres through:
  - (i) provision of subsidies to non-government providers; and
  - (ii) capital upgrades and maintenance to long day care centres in ACT Government owned accommodation.

## 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, the ACT 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 Early Childhood Education and Care Collection.

Table 4: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2014 performance	2015 Target	2016 Target	2017 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
98 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, with a view to maintaining at least 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

- 25. Commonwealth and Territory based collections or data sources and methodologies, agreed by both the Parties to this Plan, to measure progress against the performance milestones

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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 the ACT's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below:
  - (a) Identification of vulnerable and disadvantaged children in communities identified in the 2015 AEDC as having above the national average rates of vulnerability in two or more domains.
  - (b) The ACT public preschool August census data as described in clauses 15(a) to (d).
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 NMDS:
  - (i) PI calculation description (numerator, denominator, computation and presentation);
  - (ii) numerator information (collection name and population description);
  - (iii) denominator information (collection name and population description);
  - (iv) calculation notes (including any information about how the PI is calculated);
  - (v) methodology; and
  - (vi) 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:

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Signature

Date

Shane Rattenbury MLA  
Minister for Education

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Signature

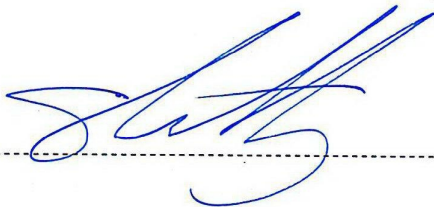
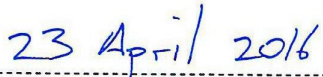
Date

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham  
Minister for Education and Training

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**Sign off**

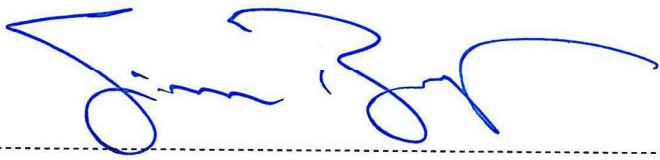

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

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**Signature** **Date**

Shane Rattenbury MLA  
Minister for Education

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**Signature** **Date**

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham  
Minister for Education and Training