

Northern 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 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 how universal access is intended to 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 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 State 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.

PART 3: STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN TERRITORY'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. Commonwealth, state and territory governments will collaborate to develop a nationally agreed definition of vulnerable and disadvantaged children over time. This will be progressed through the Early Childhood Policy Group and the Early Childhood Data Sub Group. 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 (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	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 programme is also distributed to non-government and long day care service providers.	1 Jan 2016	31 Dec 2017	N/A
2	Increase preschool participation by Indigenous 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 for Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children.	1 Jan 2016	31 Dec 2017	N/A

14. As required by clause 21(d) of the National Partnership, strategies are in place to ensure that 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 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.
- (a) There are issues with the timing of the Age Grade Census data collection for the Northern Territory. The collection period includes a public holiday and two remote schools have negotiated flexible attendance times that suit the community. In addition, attendance patterns for the Northern Territory show typical low school attendance during August. This is partially due to sporting and community events and the transience of remote and very remote populations at this time of the year. To address this, it is necessary for the Northern Territory to use other sources for 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.

Estimated costs

16. The maximum financial contribution to be paid by the Commonwealth for the project to the Northern Territory is \$10,269,783, 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 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)	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Element 1	1.1	3.8	2.7	7.7
Element 2	0.4	1.3	0.9	2.5
Total estimated budget	1.5	5.1	3.6	10.3
less estimated Commonwealth contribution equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	**	**	**	**
Total Commonwealth contribution	1.5	5.1	3.6	10.3

*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 the NT allocates its own source funding accordingly.

Note:

1. Funding has been notionally allocated based on enrolments and student characteristics for 2015.

2. Funding is provided to service providers on a calendar year basis.

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 element	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 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), 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 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.	Northern Territory

Project element	Outputs	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 2 – Increase preschool participation by Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children	<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>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 programme.</p> <p>All Indigenous children in remote and very remote areas have access to free preschool from age 3 years</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.	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 and impact on the delivery of services and achievement of outcomes¹.
- The Northern Territory has the lowest population of all states and territories with a small population of 244,500 people² representing approximately 1 per cent of the total Australian population, spread over an area of 1,349,129 sq.km.³
 - The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous people of all states and territories;⁴ with 68,850 people or 30 per cent (2011 ABS data)⁵ of the total population identifying as Indigenous.

¹ Data sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and other reliable sources.

² ABS, Australian Demographic Statistics, September 2015, www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0, released 24 March 2016.

³ Geoscience Australia, Area of Australia – States and Territories, www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/geographic-information/dimensions/area-of-australia-states-and-territories, accessed 14 January 2015.

- 80 per cent of the Indigenous population live in either remote or very remote localities.⁶
 - The Northern Territory has 18,574 children aged birth to four years⁷ of whom approximately 40 per cent (7,413 children) are Indigenous⁸ compared to 5.7 per cent nationally.⁹
 - Northern Territory children have high levels of developmental vulnerability across all five domains of the AEDC: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge.¹⁰
 - 23.1 per cent of Northern Territory children are vulnerable in two or more domains of the AEDC compared with 10.8 per cent nationally.¹¹
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, non-government preschools offering a preschool programme. Universal Access funding to all long day care centres with preschool programmes will be determined by an annual grant assessment of long day care centres' in May 2016.
23. Government schools represent approximately 81 per cent of all services that provide a quality preschool programme in the Northern Territory, and provide preschool for the majority of the Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged cohort.
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 Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and to promote quality preschool service provision.

⁴ ABS, Regional Statistics, Northern Territory, Mar 2011

www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/1362.7Feature%20Article1Mar%202011?opendocument, released 24 March 2011.

⁵ ABS, Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>, released 30 August 2013.

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015, The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: An Overview, p. 15,

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129551281> and ABS, 2011 Census Quickstats Northern Territory Outback,

www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/702?opendocument&navpos=220, released 28 March 2013.

⁷ ABS, 2014, Population Estimates by Age and Sex, Regions of Northern Territory (ASGS 2011), 2009 and 2014, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3235.02014?OpenDocument> released 18 August 2015.

⁸ ABS, 2015, Australian Demographic Statistics June 2015, [www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/C046861EA086C60BCA257DB100161BAA/\\$File/31010do001_201406.xls](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/C046861EA086C60BCA257DB100161BAA/$File/31010do001_201406.xls), released 18 December 2014.

⁹ The Australian Government, 2016, A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia 2015: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) National Report, p. 11, Canberra.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.42.

¹¹ Ibid., p.42.

25. Complementary Northern Territory Government 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 programmes and parental engagement in supporting their children's learning and development and the development of a Northern Territory Preschool Curriculum ;
 - implementation of explicit teaching and learning to prepare children for school;
 - working with families, communities and agencies to deliver quality early childhood education services to improve child wellbeing and 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 programme;
 - 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;
 - assessment of long day care services to determine if they provide a quality preschool programme to children in the year before full-time school, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, for 600 hours per annum, 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;
 - continuing to fund the Northern Territory More Early Childhood Teachers Scholarships Programme to increase the number of degree qualified early childhood teachers in preschools and the long day care sector; and
 - providing quality early childhood education and programmes to engage vulnerable and disadvantaged children, Indigenous children, parents and caregivers in remote and very remote communities including the Families as First Teachers and Mobile Early Childhood Education Programmes.

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 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
91 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

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 by the Parties to this Implementation Plan.
30. 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 Minimum 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

Hon Peter Chandler MLA
Minister for Education


Signature

Date

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training


Sign off

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

 30.5.16

Signature **Date**

**Hon Peter Chandler MLA
Minister for Education**

 6 May 2016.

Signature **Date**

**Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training**