

Victorian 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 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 State of Victoria, represented by the Minister for Families and Children.
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 supports the national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services consistent with the National Quality Framework.
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.

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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 VICTORIAN 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 Victoria, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are provisionally defined as children living in communities with Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas in the lowest quintile.
13. The project elements planned are detailed in Table 1: Project elements.

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Table 1: Project element

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	The Victorian Government has 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 2016	31 December 2017	N/A
2	Maintain participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Kindergarten Inclusion Support programme 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 2016	31 December 2017	N/A
3	Maintain participation for Indigenous children	KFS for Indigenous children	1 January 2016	31 December 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, and additional strategies are listed in the Victorian context section.
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.

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- (a) The use of 4 and 5 year olds enrolled in a preschool programme as the denominator for performance indicator 3 inflates Victoria's year before school cohort. This is because Child Care Management System data includes four-year-olds who are not eligible for enrolment in a preschool education programme in Victoria because they turn four after 30 April (the enrolment cut-off date for kindergarten 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 has planned 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 programmes 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) Approximately 30 per cent of kindergarten enrolments in Victoria are in long day care services that operate for 48 weeks a year (compared to usual 40 weeks in standalone services). For this reason, a service's operation weeks must be used in the calculation of performance indicator 4 regarding attendance. The use of a service's operation weeks is consistent with the methodology outlined in the Performance Indicator Specifications schedule to the National Partnership.
- (e) 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

- 16. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Victoria is \$204,229,773 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 Victoria retains the flexibility to move Victorian contributions between components and/or years, as long as outcomes are not affected. However, the Commonwealth's contribution can only be moved between years with the agreement of the Commonwealth.

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Table 2: Estimated financial contributions*

(\$ million)	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Element 1	26.0	87.1	62.0	175.1
Element 2	4.2	14.1	10.1	28.4
Element 3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.6
Total estimated budget	30.3	101.6	72.3	204.2
less estimated Commonwealth contribution equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	30.3	101.6	72.3	204.2
	**	**	**	**
Total Commonwealth contribution	30.3	101.6	72.3	204.2

*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.

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 KFS.
2. The activities undertaken, which provide significant additional assistance to these cohorts, are listed below, from clause 31. This table only includes funding under the National Partnership.

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.

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Table 3: Programme logic

Project elements	Outputs	Outcomes	Reform/Project Objectives	Responsibility
Element 1 - Maintain universal access by all children to 600 hours of preschool	<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>	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	Victoria
Element 2 - Maintain participation for 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>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	Victoria

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<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 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>Victoria</p>
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Risk management

20. DET 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

21. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to relevant contextual information in Victoria. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below.
22. Key factors:
 - 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 programmes
 - e. the parallel reform processes from the National Quality Agenda including implementing the improved educator to child ratio requirements, which increase from 1:15 to 1:11 from 1 Jan 2016
 - f. a period of significant population growth in Victoria
 - g. a significant increase in Indigenous population estimates in Victoria
 - h. 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)
 - i. Enterprise Bargaining Agreements negotiations
 - j. a new requirement for Early Childhood Teacher registration, recognising early childhood teachers as professional educators who meet consistent standards of practice.
23. 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 programme.
24. Services charge families fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programmes. 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.
25. The below table shows the range of Victorian kindergarten service providers by service provider type in 2014.

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Table 4: Victorian kindergarten sector by service type, 2014

			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)	543	360	67	3	973
	All Other Settings***	(n)	93	826	241	35	1,195
	Total Services	(n) (%)	636 29.34%	1,186 54.7%	308 14.21%	38 1.75%	2,168 100.0%
Kindergarten Enrolments ₂	Long Day Care Settings	(n)	10,873	7,474	1,826	131	20,304
	All Other Settings***	(n)	3,270	36,668	11,885	1,649	53,472
	Total Enrolments	(n) (%)	14,143 19.17%	44,142 59.83%	13,711 18.58%	1,780 2.41%	73,776 100.0%

1. The number of services from which funded kindergarten programmes 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 Companies, Sole Traderships, Partnerships & Companies limited by shares; Non-Government Schools; Tertiary institutions & Hospitals

** Includes: Church Organisations; Incorporated Associations, Co-Operatives, Companies 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.

26. Victorian 2016 funding rates for all services will be adjusted to reflect updated salary structures to be introduced once the new Early Childhood Enterprise Bargaining Agreements are ratified by the Fair Work Commission in the middle of 2016. As a guide, kindergarten funding rates for 2015 are provided below.

Per Capita funding rates*	2015	
	January - June	July - December
Standard	\$3,168	\$3,247
Rural	\$3,917	\$4,015
Small rural	\$5,780	\$5,925
Non-government type 1	\$516	\$529
Non-government type 2	\$1,674	\$1,716

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

27. The total population of children eligible for funding under the National Partnership is approximately 77,000 per year. The total number of vulnerable and disadvantaged children (excluding Indigenous children) in element 2 is approximately 20,000 per year (26 per cent of the population). The total number of Indigenous children is approximately 1,250 per year (1.6 per cent of the population).
28. 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

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Education Resources rating of 5-12. The lower the rating, the higher the economic advantage, hence the lower funding.

29. 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.
30. The Victorian Government will continue to invest in Education State reforms that will ensure all children participate in quality early childhood education and care.
31. 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 programmes for all children. There is a focus on disadvantaged and Indigenous children. Information on how different programmes contribute to outcomes sought is provided below.
32. Maintain universal access by all children to 600 hours of preschool by:
 - a. Kindergarten per capita grant funding to support affordability and participation
 - b. Small rural grants to support access to affordable kindergarten programmes in small rural communities and a new base level of funding for small rural services.
33. Maintain participation for vulnerable and disadvantaged children by:
 - a. Kindergarten Inclusion support programme to support children with a disability, high support needs and/or with complex medical needs
 - b. KFS for holders of a Health Care Card, Refugee visa etc.
 - c. Pre-Purchased Places pilot in 2016 – 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.
34. Increasing Indigenous participation by:
 - a. Facilitation of participation via Koorie Engagement Support Officers and elders
 - b. KFS for Indigenous children
 - c. Koorie Preschool Assistants programme
 - d. 'Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten' campaign - a communications' campaign promoting the benefits of kindergarten participation for Indigenous children

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- 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.
35. System development and implementation by:
- a. Planned 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 to improve and expand centralised enrolment and improve access for vulnerable families.
36. Ensuring a qualified early childhood workforce by providing scholarships and workforce incentives:
- a. Early Childhood Scholarships for Indigenous people
 - b. Early Childhood Qualification Fund to support early childhood professionals currently working in centre based Victorian licensed children's services who want to upgrade or attain an approved early childhood education qualification
 - c. Employment incentives to provide services with financial support to attract and retain qualified early childhood teachers to deliver an approved kindergarten programme.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

37. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
38. With regard to reporting on attendance, Victoria has agreed a target for 2015, 2016 and 2017 with the Australian Government, 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.
39. Attendance will be measured as the proportion of children enrolled in a quality early childhood education programme for at least 600 hours per year and that attend for at least one hour during the reference week.

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Table 5: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2014 performance	2015 Target	2016 Target	2017 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
95%	90%	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.

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

40. 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.
41. 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.
42. 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).

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Sign off

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

.....
Signature

Date

Hon Jenny Mikakos
Minister for Families and Children

.....
Signature

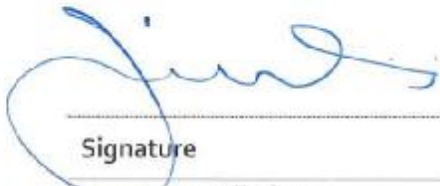
Date

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:



19 May 2016

Signature

Date

Hon Jenny Mikakos
Minister for Families and Children



6 May 2016

Signature

Date

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education and Training