

SCHEDULE I

Northern Territory's Implementation Plan

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

PART 1: PRELIMINARIES

1. This Implementation Plan is a schedule to the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (NP UAECE or National Partnership) and should be read in conjunction with that Agreement.
2. The objectives of the NP UAECE are:
 - to maintain Universal Access to quality early childhood education program(s), with a focus on improved participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and in a manner that meets the needs of children, parents and communities and ensures that cost is not a barrier to participation; and
 - for children living in remote Indigenous communities to remain a focus for Universal Access with an ongoing commitment to ensure that every Indigenous four year old in a remote community has access to a quality early childhood education program.

PART 2: TERMS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

3. This Implementation Plan will commence as soon as it is agreed between the Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Assistant Minister for Education, and the Northern Territory, represented by the Minister for Education.
4. As a schedule to the NP UAECE, the purpose of this Implementation Plan is to provide the public with an indication of how Universal Access is intended to be delivered and demonstrates Northern Territory's capacity to achieve the outcomes of the NP UAECE by the expiry of the National Partnership.
5. This Implementation Plan supports the national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services consistent with the National Quality Framework.
6. This Implementation Plan covers service delivery to 31 December 2014 and will cease on completion or termination of the NP UAECE, including the acceptance of final performance reporting and processing of final payments against performance benchmarks.
7. This Implementation Plan may be varied by written agreement between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Ministers with responsibility for Early Childhood Education under the overarching NP UAECE.

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8. 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

9. The NP UAECE supports Universal Access to and Improved participation by children in quality early childhood education in the year before full-time school, with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
10. 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 Development Working Group. In Northern Territory, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are provisionally measured by geolocations in bottom 20% using SEFIA Index of Socio-economic disadvantage.
11. Northern Territory's effort under the NPA UAECE will build on existing effort to deliver quality preschool programs in a diverse range of contexts. The following project elements are planned:
- (a) Maintain universal access to 600 hours of quality preschool for children in the year before schooling increased from a Northern Territory base of 480 hours of quality preschool in 2008; and
 - (b) Targeted approaches that encourage vulnerable, disadvantaged and Indigenous students' attendance and engagement with education. Activity will focus on building the capacity of parents and caregivers to understand the early developmental needs of pre-school aged students and the ways in which they can assist children in their care to build their knowledge and skills to successfully engage with schooling. These approaches are likely to include provision of child development resources and support for parents to use them as well as regionally-based services to support disadvantaged families to enrol their children in and ensure attendance at pre-school, and to overcome barriers affecting their ability to do this.

Table 1: Project elements

No.	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Maintain increased hours to preschool.	1 July 2013	31 Dec 2014	Refer context
2	Targeted approaches to encourage attendance and engagement through parental capacity building	1 Jan 2014	31 Dec 2014	Refer context

Estimated costs

12. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Northern Territory is \$8,264,975, payable in accordance with performance milestones and benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.

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13. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and 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

(\$)	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15*	Total
Non-Commonwealth contributions**	-	-	-	-
Total Commonwealth contribution***	\$185,319	\$5,118,334	\$2,961,322	\$8,264,975

* Funding for service delivery over the sixth month period to 31 December 2014.

** States are responsible for the provision of early childhood education services and allocate their own source funding and provide in-kind contributions accordingly. Funding contributions by each jurisdiction will be considered as part of the review of the National Partnership, consistent with clause 37(a) of the National Partnership.

*** Commonwealth is also separately contributing \$3 million in 2013-14 and \$1.5 million in 2014-15 nationally for early childhood data development, review and research activities.

Note: This table does not include direct child care assistance to parents, by the Commonwealth, to help improve the affordability of Child Care Benefit approved child care services that provide a preschool or kindergarten program.

Program logic

14. The project elements detailed in this Implementation Plan aim to achieve the outcomes and objectives stated in the National Partnership including for vulnerable and disadvantaged children as defined in Clause 10, by the Northern Territory.
15. 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: Program Logic

Project elements	Outputs (services delivered)	Outcomes	Reform/Project Objectives	Responsibility
<p>Element 1 Maintain increased hours to preschool</p>	<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>Vulnerable and disadvantaged children have access to and participate in an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>Indigenous children have access to, and participate in an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>The achievement of the Closing the Gap target is maintained, to ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities.</p>	<p>Maintain Universal Access to quality early childhood education programs with a focus on improved participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children in a manner that meets the needs of children, parents and communities and ensures that cost is not a barrier to access.</p> <p>Children living in remote Indigenous communities remain a focus of Universal Access with an ongoing commitment to ensure that every Indigenous four year old in a remote school has access to a quality early childhood education program.</p>	<p>Northern Territory</p>
<p>Element 2 Targeted approaches to encourage attendance and engagement through parental capacity building</p>	<p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.</p> <p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas.</p>	<p>Vulnerable and disadvantaged children have access to and participate in an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>Indigenous children have access to, and participate in an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>The achievement of the Closing the Gap target is maintained, to ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities.</p>	<p>Children living in remote Indigenous communities remain a focus of Universal Access with an ongoing commitment to ensure that every Indigenous four year old in a remote school has access to a quality early childhood education program.</p>	<p>Northern Territory</p>

Risk management

16. 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

17. The demographic, geographic, economic and historic characteristics of the Northern Territory differ extensively from other Australian jurisdictions. Data sourced from the COAG Reform Council's *Education in Australia 2012: Five Years of performance* report shows that:

- the Northern Territory's population is only one per cent of Australia's total population
- 44.2 per cent of the Territory's population live in remote and very remote areas - over six times greater than the proportion in any other jurisdiction in Australia
- 29.8 per cent of the population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander with 79.7 per cent of this group living in remote and very remote areas
- 27.6 per cent of the population live in the most disadvantaged areas – compared to a national average of 19.5 per cent
- 40.4 per cent of the student population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander – ten times greater than the national average and over five times greater than the proportion in any other jurisdiction in Australia
- 45.2 per cent of the Northern Territory's students live in remote and very remote areas.

As a consequence, the Northern Territory presents a unique and challenging environment in which to deliver education services. This is particularly relevant for preschooling which is a non compulsory stage of schooling in the Northern Territory, shown through research to be amongst the most important. A child's experiences and outcomes, especially in those identified as 'at risk' or from disadvantaged backgrounds, are optimised when they participate in high quality early childhood programs or in programs targeting specific areas of development such as early literacy.

In the Northern Territory, government preschools provide 93.6 per cent of all preschool services – one of the highest proportions in Australia. In 2012, provided 141 preschools and 7 Long Day Care services (ABS 4240.0 Preschool Education, Australia, 2012). The Department of Education provides access to preschool services free of charge for children aged from four years in provincial and remote areas and from three years in very remote areas. A range of non-government providers also deliver fee-for-service programs.

To cater for the diverse geographic contexts in the Northern Territory, students have access to preschool programs via a range of models, including on-site and stand-alone preschools, multi-level early years classes, outreach and mobile preschools, and where these options are not practicable, distance education. Work is continuing to refine these models to ensure quality pre-schooling services are accessible and delivered consistently across the Northern Territory. Non-government sector providers offer preschool services primarily through on-site preschools, currently there are nine non-government preschools in the NT. Seven 7 Long Day Care centres also provide programs as part of their early learning preschool program for 3-5 year olds.

In the 2012, 1239 Indigenous students and 2130 non-Indigenous students aged between 4 and 5 years were enrolled in Northern Territory preschools. Of the total 3369 students enrolled, 90.2 per cent attended the preschool program for at least one hour during the reference period and of the 1239 Indigenous students, 79.4 per cent attended for at least one hour during the reference period (ABS 4240.0 Preschool Education, Australia, 2012).

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In addition to widespread preschool availability, the Northern Territory continues to prepare children for school through programs such as Families as First Teachers (FaFT). In addition, the Northern Territory is exploring ways to streamline and improve the quality and provision of early childhood services in remote areas by developing a hybrid approach to combine elements of the FaFT program and mobile preschools. This emphasis on school readiness is showing progress. The 2012 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data indicated an improvement of 5.1 per cent, from the 2009 data collection of 27.7 per cent, in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in four or more domains (Australian Government DEEWR, unpublished *Australian Early Development Index* data, 2012 data collection).

Investment through the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (2009 – 2012) enabled the Northern Territory to increase access to preschool from 12 hours per week to over 15 hours per week in the year before full-time school. In 2012, 85.9 per cent of Northern Territory preschools were providing education programs for 15 hour or more per week. Attendance, however, continues to be a challenge, and requires a more targeted approach to addressing what is a very complex issue, particularly given the Northern Territory's geographic and demographic context.

In addition to universal access, the Northern Territory intends to focus on increasing preschool attendance and better managing the transition from early learning programs into preschool and from preschool into school. Targeted strategies will aim to strengthen the support provided to families to overcome the barriers that prevent regular preschool attendance, particularly for Indigenous students and those who experience a high level of disadvantage. These strategies will support the Northern Territory's increased regional emphasis on early childhood development and will be monitored to enable their impact to be measured to inform their future potential beyond the life of this agreement.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

18. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the NP UAECE.
19. With regard to reporting on attendance, Northern Territory has agreed targets for 2013 and 2014 with the Commonwealth, as set out in Table 5 below, and will report on progress towards these targets as part of the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection and via progress reports.

Table 5: Bilaterally agreed attendance target/s

Baseline data	2013 Target	2014 Target	Nationally Agreed Target
90.2% ^{2,2}	Target 90% ¹	Target 90% ¹	90 per cent of enrolled children attending an early childhood education program to be achieved over time

¹ 2012 National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection. Calculation of target is attendance divided by enrolment. Attendance is the number of child aged 4 and 5 years old as at 1 July of the collection year who are attending a preschool program in the year before full-time schooling. Enrolment is the number of children aged 4 and 5 years old as at 1 July of the collection year who are enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full-time schooling.

² Calculation excludes Long Day Care data. 2013 data that includes LDC children will be available through ABS Preschool Education Australia report in early 2014.

Monitoring and reporting

20. Commonwealth and State based collections or data sources and methodologies, agreed by both the Parties to this Plan, to measure progress against performance milestones and benchmarks and targets in the NP UAECE are set out in Schedule A of the NP UAECE.
21. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Northern Territory's performance. Data will be sourced from ABS 4240.0 - *Preschool Education, Australia*, publication which contains statistics of children's enrolment and attendance at preschool program, collected through the National Early Childhood Education and Care collection.
22. Reports in the manner stated at (i) and (ii) of Northern Territory's progress in achieving the performance milestones and benchmarks, targets and any supplementary data.
 - i. Progress Reports must contain:

Progress in implementing the project elements undertaken to achieve the performance milestones and benchmarks and the bilaterally agreed annual attendance targets in the reporting period, including challenges and mitigating strategies, where relevant
 - ii. Progress Reports could include:

Case studies of services or children who are benefiting from universal access or from increased access or attendance.

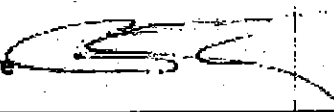
Review

23. Both parties will jointly review the Implementation Plan, prior to June 2014, with regard to progress made by the Parties in respect of achieving the agreed outcomes that are supported by the Implementation Plan.
24. If required, an updated revised Implementation Plan will need to be submitted to the Commonwealth before June 2014. Where a state is not on track to meet its performance benchmarks, the Implementation Plan may require amendment before July 2014 to ensure that its strategies are adequate to achieve its performance benchmarks.

Sign off

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

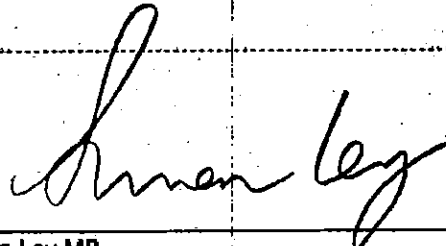
Signature



Date 15.4.14

The Hon Peter Chandler MLA
Northern Territory Minister for Education

Signature



Date 25 JUL 2014

The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Assistant Minister for Education

