

Western Australia'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 objective of the NP UAECE is 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.

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 State of Western Australia, 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 demonstrate Western Australia'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 delivery of quality education and care services consistent with the National Quality Standard (NQS).
6. This Implementation Plan 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 State Ministers with responsibility for Early Childhood Education under the overarching NP UAECE.
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.

SCHEDULE E

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 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 lowest socio-economic quintile. This definition is provisionally proposed because school-level ICSEA values are readily available for all schools and the community as well as the family has a bearing on children's outcomes (Bronfenbrenner 1974).
11. The project elements planned are as follows:
 - (a) Maintain universal access to 600 hours of quality kindergarten in the year before full-time school, increased from a State-funded base of universal access to 440 hours of quality kindergarten in 2009;
 - (b) enhance program quality; and
 - (c) enhance transition to school.

Table 1: Project elements

	Title	Short description	start	end	Dependent on projects
1	Maintain 600 hours of Kindergarten	Public, Catholic and Independent schools will continue to offer 600 hours per year of Kindergarten (up from 440 hours in 2009). This element includes overall project administration and a small amount of capital works to ensure guaranteed local access to Kindergarten for all age-eligible children.	ongoing	ongoing	N/A
2	Enhance program quality	Professional learning will be provided to early childhood teachers in every public, Catholic and Independent school to facilitate high quality programs in accordance with the NOS.	ongoing	ongoing	N/A
3	Enhance transition to school	Establish/consolidate community-led and (in some cases) supported playgroups hosted on/near school sites. This element will include continuation of the State-funded <i>Best Start</i> program and will be characterised by 'proportionate universalism' and a 'two generations' approach to focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged children.	ongoing	ongoing	N/A

SCHEDULE E

Estimated costs

12. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Western Australia is \$70.8 million, payable in accordance with performance milestones and benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
13. 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)	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15*	Total
Element 1 – Maintain 600 hours of Kindergarten (up from 440 hours in 2009)	1.6	41.0	21.5	62.0
Element 2 – Enhance program quality		2.3	2.3	4.9
Element 3 – Enhance transition to school		2.1	1.6	3.9
Non-Commonwealth contributions**				
Total Commonwealth contribution***	1.6	43.8	25.4	70.8

* Funding for 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.

SCHEDULE E

Program logic

14. 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 as defined in Clause 10, by Western Australia.

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.

Table 3: Program Logic

Project elements	Outputs (services delivered)	Outcomes	Reform/Project Objectives	Responsibility
Element 1 – Maintain 600 hours of Kindergarten (up from 440 hours in 2009)	A total of 600 hours per year of Kindergarten delivered through schools.	All four year old children have access to a minimum of 600 hours per year of Kindergarten in the year before full-time schooling.	All children have access to a minimum of 600 hours of quality early childhood education in the year before full-time schooling such that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program is delivered by a degree-qualified teacher; • Cost is not a barrier to access; and • Program quality is in accordance with the EYLF and NOS. 	State Government
Element 2 – Enhance program quality	Professional learning provided to early childhood educators working in all public, Catholic and independent schools to enhance program quality in accordance with the NOS. Community-led and supported play groups consolidated/established on/near public school sites across Western Australia.	Kindergarten program quality in all schools reflects the National Quality Standard (NQS). Enhanced transition to school entry for children through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced confidence among all families in their role as their children's first teachers; • Stronger and more enduring home-school collaboration; and • Enriched home learning experiences for children prior to school entry. 	Universally accessible Kindergarten programs are of high quality, leading to improved outcomes for all children.	State Government
Element 3 – Enhance transition to school	Continuation of the Best Start Program sites focusing on Aboriginal children prior to school entry.	Enhanced transition to school entry for children through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced confidence among all families in their role as their children's first teachers; • Stronger and more enduring home-school collaboration; and • Enriched home learning experiences for children prior to school entry. 	Improved attendance in early childhood education (and improved rates of school attendance to follow).	State Government

Risk management

16. The Western Australian 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 Australian Context

17. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to relevant context, as outlined below.

Kindergarten (the term synonymous with 'preschool' or 'early childhood education' in the NP UAECE) is widely understood by Western Australian families to be the first year of school.

The sheer size of the Western Australia (approximately 92% of the size of the eastern seaboard states) and the distribution of its student population results in Western Australia being one of world's the most unique and challenging settings for school delivery (including Kindergarten).

Over three-quarters (77.9%) of the State's population live in the Greater Perth area. A further 6.9% reside in the south west of the State and the remaining 15% live in other regional and remote areas, spread across some 2.5 million square kilometres. Of the State's primary schools (which offer programs from Kindergarten to Year 6 or 7) approximately 25% have less than 100 students and are located in regional and remote areas.

With a population density of 0.8 per square kilometre, Western Australia has one of the most geographically diverse schooling sectors in the world. By comparison New South Wales has a population density of 9.0 per square kilometre and Victoria 24.4 per square kilometre.

- *Early childhood education in Western Australia*

Since introduction of the *Good Start* program in 1995, Western Australian children have had universal access to at least 11 hours per week of Kindergarten at a public, Catholic or independent school. Through the *School Education Act 1999*, age-eligible children (those who reach the age of 3 years and 6 months by 1 January of the school year) are *entitled* to enrol in Kindergarten. In public schools, Kindergarten is free of compulsory charges while in non-government schools, the State funds an average of approximately 75 per cent of the cost of Kindergarten provision.

Kindergarten is not compulsory but participation is normalised in Western Australia and enrolment rates have consistently exceeded 95% for many years. Of the age-eligible four year old children who enrol, approximately 73.3% attend public schools which are free of compulsory charges, and 26.7% attend non-government schools which (typically) charge compulsory fees that vary significantly among schools (August School Census, 2012). In all cases, Western Australian families have the option of a no-cost Kindergarten program at a local school.

Through implementation of the Initial National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE), all age-eligible children now have universal access to a minimum

SCHEDULE E

of 15 hours per week of Kindergarten at a local school in every community across our vast state.

For many years, key regulatory features of the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (NP NQAECEC) have characterised Kindergarten delivery in Western Australia: the minimum staff-to-child ratio in public school Kindergartens is 1:10; all schools must ensure that all teachers they employ – including in Kindergarten – are registered with the State's teacher registration board; and Kindergarten has been subject to a legislated K-12 Curriculum Framework since 1994. Further, whole-school planning and improvement procedures, which reflect the Quality Improvement Plan requirement of the National Quality Framework (NQF), are well established in all schools and necessarily include Kindergarten.

Western Australia recognises, however, that there is always room for improvement, so it has embraced the National Quality Standard (NQS) as a landmark opportunity to leverage ongoing improvements across the early years of schooling.

- ***Profile of students in Western Australian schools***

The August School Census, 2012 found that Western Australia has 2,017 Aboriginal students in Kindergarten, 88.3% of whom attend a public school. The number of Aboriginal students in Western Australia is the third highest in Australia after New South Wales and Queensland. The proportion of Aboriginal students in Western Australia is the fourth highest in Australia at 6.4%; the national average is 4.6 per cent.

Most Aboriginal children in Western Australia reside in Greater Perth and the South-West whereas the largest proportion of Aboriginal students are in remote localities; the Kimberley, Pilbara, Midwest and Goldfields. National data indicates that rates of preschool participation are lowest in urban and rural localities where the number of Aboriginal children is highest.

Western Australia's 2012 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data indicate a recent drop in the proportion of five year old children who are vulnerable on one or more domains (23%, down from 24.7% in 2009), however due to Western Australia's rapidly expanding population the data also revealed a higher number of children entering school vulnerable, compared to 2009 (7,045 in 2012 up from 6,435 in 2009). These data demonstrate the need for ongoing efforts to improve children's development and learning prior to school entry. More detailed analysis of AEDI data also shows a higher incidence of multiple and complex vulnerabilities among children in low socio economic communities, particularly in rural and remote areas of Western Australia.

The fact that disadvantage and vulnerability are most prevalent in remote localities significantly exacerbates the complexity and cost of addressing them. The difficulty of attracting and retaining quality staff, limited staff housing and the additional costs of service provision in outlying areas impact on the delivery of all forms of education in Western Australia, including Kindergarten.

The above complexities of service delivery are compounded by the rapid rate of Western Australia's population growth, most of which comprises families with young children. In the year ended 30 June 2012, Western Australia recorded the

SCHEDULE E

largest percentage increase in the number of children aged 0-14 years (3.1%) and continued to record the fastest population growth rate of all states and territories at 3.3%. In coming to Western Australia, many interstate and international migrants with young children leave behind their support networks (family and friends). Despite possibly having high social capital, these families can quickly come to feel isolated within their community, especially if the bread-winner is engaged in fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) work arrangements. FIFO is more prevalent in Western Australia than any other state/territory (Report for Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, May 2012) and was estimated to apply to over 60,000 Western Australian families in 2012 (The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia Inc., April 2012).

• *Prior-to-school experiences of children in Western Australia*

While children who attend formal childcare services will derive significant benefits from the National Quality Agenda (NQA), most children in Western Australia do not attend formal childcare (see the table below) and the proportion of families who use formal childcare rises with family income (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Age (years)	Formal long day care, family day care, outside school hours care	Informal grandparent, neighbour, other relative	None
0-2	17%	43%	52%
2-3	45%	46%	30%
4-5	18%	38%	53%

Source: ABS 4402055003DO005_201106 Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2011

In recognition of this pattern of children's prior-to-school-experiences and the need to bolster support for new parents in the community, Western Australia has four existing initiatives to support children's prior-to-school development and learning which do not depend on attending formal childcare or pre-kindergarten services: 12 *Best Start* sites for Aboriginal children, 16 *Child and Parent Centres*, the *Better Beginnings* family literacy program and numerous community-based playgroups.

Significantly, all these initiatives adopt a 'two-generational' approach (Moore, 2008) which seeks to empower families, build local networks and focus on improving community 'child friendliness'. Research emphasises the benefits of supporting families (not only children) because:

- the home learning environment is a stronger predictor of children's success than socioeconomic status or the quality of service provision (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart 2008);
- stress levels for families are reduced when families are supported which in turn enables parents to interact with their children in more positive and productive ways, leading to better outcomes for children (Gunnar, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000); and
- sustained and regular conversational reading, enriched care-giving and learning games which are provided by parents to children from birth lead to positive long-term social and educational outcomes, and the benefits of these practices are most pronounced among children from low-education, low-income households (Sparling, 2010).

SCHEDULE E

The family seems to be the most effective and economical system for fostering and sustaining the child's development. (Bronfenbrenner 1974).

The Department for Communities operates 12 *Best Start* sites for Aboriginal children and families in identified high needs rural, remote and urban communities. Three of these sites have been funded through the NP ECE since 2009. The *Best Start* initiative recognises that nationally, the rate of preschool participation among Aboriginal children in remote, rural and urban localities is 99%, 76% and 63% respectively (*Experimental Estimates of Preschool Education Australia 2011*) indicating that in addition to pursuing *Closing the Gap* targets that focus on Aboriginal children in remote localities, significant work is also required to engage Aboriginal families and children who live in our cities and regional towns.

Western Australia is establishing 16 *Child and Parent Centres* (CPCs) on public school sites in rural and urban communities with concentrations of vulnerable children. The CPC initiative is an extension of the Children and Family Centre concept, except that CPCs do not include a childcare component because many families in disadvantaged communities are in need of broader 'two-generational' support programs. Each CPC is hosted on a public school site, serving children and families in the wider community. The services provided at and through each CPC are determined by a local advisory group (comprising school, health and child protection representatives) and managed by a non-government organisation through a local coordinator. As part of the CPC initiative, 76 public schools have also received Early Years Grants to establish and consolidate transition programs and support for the families of young children prior to school entry.

Better Beginnings has been developed by the State Library of Western Australia as a family literacy program that supports parents as their children's first teacher. It works through strong partnerships with public libraries, local governments, health professionals and schools to build awareness in the whole community of the value of reading and sharing stories with young children from birth and the vital role of public libraries as community resources.

Many community-initiated playgroups regularly meet across Western Australia, and an increasing number of schools have identified the benefits of offering venues for playgroups to meet, especially in communities with a high proportion of families with complex social and/or economic disadvantages. Most playgroups are affiliated with Playgroup WA which has well established links with local government and other non-government agencies. Programs for playgroups tend to be ad hoc and the quality of the experience for children and parents varies. In some cases, this is as the parents choose and the appetite for change may be minimal. In other cases, there is significant interest among families to enrich playgroup experiences to enhance children's eventual transition to school and facilitate early identification of growth or development concerns through informal contact with health and education professionals.

SCHEDULE E

18. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Links with existing reforms or projects

Proposed project elements	Existing reforms or projects	Complementary nature of activities
Element 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment that all children will have guaranteed access to their local intake school from 2014. 	Continuation of targets met through the initial NP ECE.
Element 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of existing school quality assurance procedures to incorporate the NQS. • Professional learning on the NQS for school administrators in all public, Catholic and independent schools. 	Professional learning on the NQS for early childhood teachers in all public, Catholic and independent schools to enhance program quality across the early years of schooling to Year 2.
Element 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Start program x 12 sites • Child and Parent Centres x 16 sites • Better Beginnings program • community-based playgroups 	Two-generational approach to consolidate home-school links, support parents as first teachers and enhance children's transition to school.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

19. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the NP UAECE.
20. With regard to reporting on attendance, Western Australia 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
100% ¹	90%	90% ²	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.

² 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection, Preschool program attendance Indicator, MEYcOR Identifier 436120

Monitoring and reporting

21. 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.

SCHEDULE E

22. 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 Plan in Schedule E.1 of this Plan.
23. Reports in the manner stated at (i) and (ii) of Western Australia'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
 - Where applicable, supplementary data reports for the performance milestones, benchmarks and targets listed in the NP UAECE or otherwise agreed in this Plan, and set out in Schedule A of the NP UAECE
 - ii. Progress Reports could include:

Case studies of services or children who are benefiting from universal access or from increased access or attendance.
 - iii. Supplementary data reports must contain the following details for each Performance Indicator where the method is not consistent with the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (NMDS).
 - Performance Indicator 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).

Review

24. 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.
25. 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.

SCHEDULE E

Sign off

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

Signature

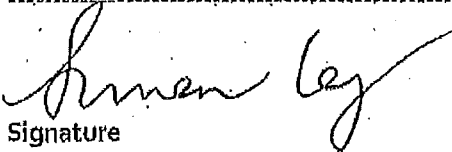


Date

6/11/13

The Hon Peter Collier MLC
Minister for Education

Signature



31/10/13

Date

The Hon Sussan Ley MP
Assistant Minister for Education

SCHEDULE E

Schedule E.1

Supplementary Data

Table 1: Western Australia's supplementary data specifications

Data function	Supplementary data specification
<p><u>Provisional definition of 'vulnerable and disadvantaged' children</u></p>	<p>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 lowest socio-economic quintile.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> ICSEA is produced for each school by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Details about ICSEA are provided at: http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Guide_to_understanding_ICSEA.pdf</p> <p>Every public and non-government school has an ICSEA value on a scale which has a median of 1000 and a standard deviation of 100. ICSEA values range from around 500 (representing extremely educationally disadvantaged backgrounds) to about 1300 (representing schools with students with very educationally advantaged backgrounds).</p> <p><u>Notes on the use of quintiles:</u> Across ICSEA quintiles, an even 20 cent enrolment per quintile would indicate parity across socio-economic communities.</p> <p>Steps to the calculation are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enrolment for compulsory years of schooling (Pre-primary to Year 7) and ICSEA values for each school are used to determine to which quintile each school belongs. 2. Number of kindergarten children enrolled in those schools used to determine which percentage of the overall cohort fits in each quintile. <p>Inevitably, individual schools straddle two quintiles at the boundaries. This contributes a degree of error to the figures. Also, it is necessary to calculate quintiles every year so longitudinal comparison will not always include the same schools over time.</p>