

New South Wales Implementation Plan

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – 2018- 2021

PART 1: PRELIMINARIES

1. This Implementation Plan is a schedule to the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education – 2018 to 2021 (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 programs for all children.
3. This objective is to be achieved through universal access to quality early childhood education program(s) 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 programs 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 the state of New South Wales (NSW), represented by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning.
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 NSW’s capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. 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.
8. This Implementation Plan may be varied by written agreement between the Commonwealth and State Minister responsible for it under the overarching National Partnership.
9. 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

10. The National Partnership reaffirms the commitment to provide universal access to, and improved participation by, children in quality early childhood education programs 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.
11. The project elements planned are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Project elements

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Start Strong Model	<p>Start Strong – needs-based funding investment aimed at making 600 hours of preschool participation more affordable in centre-based preschools. Start Strong also provides support for children participating in quality preschool programs in Long Day Care services. Start Strong provides increased support to children who enrol for 600 hours in the year before school, and to three-year-old children from low income and Aboriginal backgrounds and children with disability and/or additional needs in community preschools.</p>	1 Jan 2017	31 Dec 2021	N/A
		<p>The 2018/19 NSW State Budget extended the Start Strong program to include funding for all three-year-old children in community preschools in accessing 600 hours of quality ECE in the two years before school, effective from 1 January 2019.</p>	1 Jan 2019	As above	
	Community Preschools	<p>Under Start Strong, per-child base funding rates have increased across all socio-economic bands. These rates start at \$4,489 and increase to \$6,971 for services in the most disadvantaged areas. Children aged three and over from Aboriginal and low-income families receive the maximum base funding equity rate of \$6,971 regardless of socio-economic band.</p>	1 Jan 2017	As above	N/A

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
	Long Day Care	<p>From January 2019, non-equity three-year-olds have been funded at a proportion of their equivalent year before school rate. This proportion gradually increases from 25 per cent in 2019 to 50 per cent in 2022. Subsidies for non-equity 3 year olds will be paid to community preschools based on enrolment data.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Free Preschool Program which was provided in 2020 for Terms 2, 3 and 4 will be extended to the end of 2021. Funding will be provided as a top up payment to replace a high proportion of estimated fee income.</p> <p>Under the Start Strong Long Day Care (LDC) Program, long day care services will receive additional funding to support children aged four to five from low-income or Aboriginal families. Funding is provided to LDC services to deliver a preschool program as well as additional funding for children in services in low Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA).</p> <p>Long day care services that are listed on the Australian Government's Child Care Management System (CCMS) and regulated under the National Quality Framework are eligible to receive Start Strong LDC funding.</p>	<p>1 Jan 2019</p> <p>27 April 2020</p> <p>1 Jan 2017</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>31 Dec 2021</p> <p>As above</p>	N/A
2	Targeted Initiatives	Sector Support Program – supports the sector via a number of channels aimed at integrating effective business practices in the early childhood education sector in alignment with NSW Government and departmental objectives.	1 Jan 2017	31 Dec 2021	N/A

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
		<p>Rural and Remote Initiatives – support the delivery of universal access to early childhood education in rural and remote communities. Initiatives include Start Strong Community Safety Net and Mobile Preschool Contracts.</p>	1 Jan 2016	30 June 2021	N/A
		<p>Qualified early childhood workforce A range of existing scholarship programs continue to build a qualified early childhood workforce in 2021. This includes scholarships such as the Early Childhood Education Scholarships Program.</p>	1 Jan 2019	Until each scholarship completion (equivalent of four years full time)	N/A
		<p>Infrastructure – the Start Strong Capital Works Grants Program provides funding to increase 600 hour community preschool places in areas of need and demand. Funds may be used in a number of ways including to build a new centre-based community preschool, extend an existing community preschool or purchase a motor vehicle for an existing mobile preschool.</p>	1 Jan 2017	31 Dec 2021	N/A
		<p>Sector Development Program – supports the early childhood education workforce through the provision of training, support and resources to build sector capacity in alignment with NSW Government priorities.</p>	1 Aug 2015	30 June 2021	N/A
		<p>Disability and Inclusion Program The Disability and Inclusion Program provides funding and support to enable children with disability and additional needs in community preschools to participate in a quality early childhood education program on the same basis as their peers.</p>	1 Jan 2017	31 Dec 2021	N/A

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
		<p>Start Strong Pathways program - funds not-for-profit, community-based services to help support the early learning needs of young children by offering families a pathway into early childhood education. It aims to strengthen the engagement of children within these services, and help promote the importance of early childhood education to parents.</p>	Oct 2018	30 June 2021	N/A
		<p>Aboriginal Programs – a range of programs to support Aboriginal children and families to actively participate in early childhood education and to support the learning of Aboriginal children within the Early Learning Years Framework are funded. Programs include, Ninganah No More, an Aboriginal language program aiming to increase the level of Aboriginal languages being taught in early childhood services across NSW. Aboriginal Families as Teachers to strengthen the ability of Aboriginal families to build a rich home learning environment.</p>	July 2018	31 Dec 2021	N/A
			July 2018	31 Dec 2021	
			July 2018	31 Dec 2021	

12. As required by clause 22 (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 programs, regardless of whether programs 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.
13. As required by clause 22 (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) Data accuracy for Indigenous sub-indicators will require careful consideration, given the volatility of estimates of Indigenous cohort level population that are used to calculate performance against these indicators.

Estimated costs

14. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to NSW is **\$529.7 million** payable in accordance with the milestones and performance benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
15. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and NSW 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)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Elements 1 & 2#	37.0	124.9	131.2	138.0	98.6	529.7
*Total estimated budget	37.0	124.9	131.2	138.0	98.6	529.7
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	37.0	124.9	131.2	138.0	98.6	529.7
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions						
Total Commonwealth contribution	37.0	124.9	131.2	138.0	98.6	529.7

* Funding for 2018 and 2019 is based on enrolment growth projections based on enrolment data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Preschool Education, Australia, 2016, and funding for 2020 is based on enrolment growth projections based on enrolment data from the ABS' Preschool Education, Australia, 2017. Amounts may not add up due to rounding.

The maximum Commonwealth financial contributions have been allocated to each project element on a pro-rata basis and are indicative only

Program logic

16. 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.
17. The manner 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	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Elements 1 & 2 – Start Strong Model and Targeted Initiatives	Implementing accessible quality early childhood education programs that meet the needs of parents and communities at a cost which does not present a barrier to participation, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.	All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood	To facilitate children's early learning and development and transition to school, by maintaining universal access to, and improving participation in, affordable,	NSW

Project elements	Outputs	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
	<p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas.</p> <p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.</p> <p>Supporting all children's quality early childhood education participation, regardless of whether quality early childhood education programs are delivered through schools (non-government and government), standalone preschools, or long day care centres.</p>	<p>education program.</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p>	<p>quality early childhood education programs for all children.</p>	

Risk management

18. The NSW 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.

New South Wales Context

19. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to the NSW context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are below:
- (a) Changes to the funding system and the resultant Start Strong funding model build on the achievements of the Preschool Funding Model (PFM). The PFM stemmed from a review by Professor Deborah Brennan, which made recommendations to ensure that funding for early childhood education was simpler, better targeted, and easier to understand to support preschool access, including for three-year-old children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - (b) Community preschools make up approximately 20 per cent of preschool program provision in NSW, with a further 3 per cent located in schools, and the remaining 77 per cent in long day care. This is in contrast to other jurisdictions with smaller long day care sectors.
 - (c) The profile of preschool services NSW currently funds using both Commonwealth and NSW government funding includes:
 - i. 99 government-run preschools
 - ii. around 740 community preschools

- iii. over 2700 long day care providers.
- (d) In the 2018/19 budget the NSW Government allocated \$197.8 million over four years to extend the investment in preschool education under the Start Strong Program. The investment was directed to three key areas:
 - Extending funding to all three-year-olds in community preschools from 2019 to ensure universal access to two years of early childhood education
 - \$42.1 million in capital grants funding over four years to support the creation of community preschool places in growth areas
 - Continuing Start Strong funding for preschool education in community preschools and long day care services for children in the year before school and equity three-year-olds.
- (e) A further \$20 million over four years was allocated in the 2019/20 budget for new and existing community preschools to build, renovate or extend their facilities to cater for increasing enrolments across the state.
- (f) In the 2020-21 budget, \$120 million was allocated to extend free preschool for community and mobile preschools until the end of 2021. This continues the fee-free preschool offered in terms 2, 3 and 4 2020. Additional support was also provided during April to July 2020 to preschools run by Local Government who were not eligible for JobKeeper payments.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

- 20. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
- 21. With regard to reporting on attendance, NSW has agreed a target for 2021 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 target

2017 performance	2018 performance	2019 performance	2020 Target	2021 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
96%	99%	99%	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.

As per previous agreements, the methodology for calculation of performance related to attendance targets will be where a child has participated in a quality preschool program for a minimum of one hour during the collection period.

Monitoring and reporting

- 22. 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.

23. These data and performance specifications will be used to report NSW's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan.
24. 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 Minimal 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).

Sign off

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

Sarah Mitchell

18 February 2021

Signature

Date

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning

Signature

Date

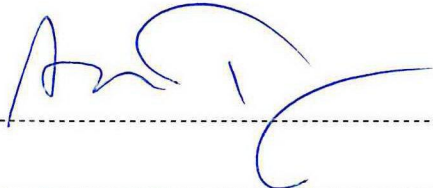
The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Minister for Education and Youth

Sign off

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

Signature **Date**

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning



20-1-21

Signature **Date**

The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Minister for Education and Youth