

Queensland's 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 – 2018–2021 (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 all children enrolled in the year before full-time school for 600 hours per year, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher who meets the National Quality Framework (NQF) requirements. There will be 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 Queensland, 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 to demonstrate Queensland'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 the 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 QUEENSLAND 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. Queensland's strategy under the National Partnership is to continue the successful formulae employed under preceding agreements that have delivered significant increases in access and participation in kindergarten¹, and to continue to focus efforts to improve participation by Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
12. Queensland's implementation approach for 2021 will particularly focus on supporting every Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged child to participate in kindergarten through a range of strategies and initiatives across the domains of equity, affordability, continuity, accessibility and quality.
13. For the purposes of reporting, Queensland will continue to use the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measure (in particular the bottom quintile of statistical local areas) as a proxy measure of vulnerable and disadvantaged children. This will be supplemented by program level information, for example, provision of subsidies to low income families in more socio-economically advantaged areas (see Part 4 for further information on supplementary data).
14. The project elements planned are detailed in Table 1 Project elements.

¹ In Queensland, early childhood education programs in the year before full-time school are referred to as kindergarten.

Table 1: Project elements

No	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Access and Affordability	<p>This element will maximise kindergarten participation by meeting current and emerging demands. Key aspects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing subsidies for approved kindergarten programs across a range of settings through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS), which in response to demand, allows for an increase in the number of approved kindergarten program places • funding Kindergarten Central Governing Bodies to support eligible standalone and volunteer-managed kindergarten services • incorporating state-wide marketing and communications strategies, , to promote the value of early childhood education, playgroup, kindergarten programs, careers in teaching and drive demand for kindergarten participation • continuing the social marketing campaign to encourage participation in early learning and kindergarten programs • from 2020, reviewing existing communications campaigns and develop and implement targeted communication activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; regional and remote; and vulnerable and disadvantaged communities to encourage participation in early learning and kindergarten programs • supporting families to easily identify approved kindergarten providers • providing information and advice regarding early childhood education programs to families, educators and the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector • providing an ECEC Services Census - annual collection of information from the sector to inform planning and reporting • continuing the Translating and Interpreting Service to assist families of children from non-English speaking backgrounds with enrolment in early children education and care programs • assisting with transition to school - connecting the schooling sector with local ECEC services to encourage and strengthen the transition from early childhood education and care to kindergarten and to school <p>In addition to the above, in 2020 Queensland implemented a number of measures to</p>	1 January 2018	31 December 2021	nil

		<p>minimise disruption to children's participation in early childhood education as a result of the COVID-19 health pandemic. Key activities to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on access and affordability included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an allocation in 2020 of: \$16.6m to approximately 465 community kindergartens to enable families to access to free kindergarten in Term 2; \$1.1m to support 18 local council operated early childhood services; and \$0.3m in financial relief provided in the form of fee waivers • successful provision of alternative online programs for children and families in the community kindergarten sector for the first five weeks of Term 2, 2020 • a dedicated email address (ECEC.COVID19@qed.qld.gov.au) and hotline number (1800 454 639) established for the sector to raise concerns and seek information and advice on their particular circumstances • a dedicated website with updated guidance and support material for ECEC services and families. 			
2	Inclusion and Equity	<p>This element will maximise kindergarten participation by providing additional supports for target groups and facilitating inclusive early learning experiences across Queensland. Key aspects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing QKFS and QKFS Plus subsidies for approved kindergarten programs in low socio-economic areas; remote and very remote communities; families/children with Health Care Cards; families with multiple births; families/children who identify as Indigenous; and refugee and asylum seeker families • continuing delivery of quality kindergarten programs in 69 rural and remote state schools • providing access to 35 kindergarten programs for children living in discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; • from 2021, further expanding the number of kindergarten programs delivered in rural and remote state schools to include state schools more than 40km from the nearest kindergarten program provider • continuing the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Scheme to support children with disability and services deliver inclusive programs • from 2020, reviewing communications campaigns and developing and implementing targeted communication activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, regional and remote and vulnerable and disadvantaged communities to encourage participation in 	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2021	1

		<p>early learning and kindergarten programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing the Deadly Kindies marketing campaign in partnership with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, leveraging their successful Deadly Choices brand to promote the importance of kindergarten and early childhood education to Indigenous families • continuing the e-Kindy program (distance education) for children in rural and regional locations who cannot easily access a centre-based program due to distance, medical condition or itinerant family lifestyles • continuing the e-Kindy Pod program which provides socialisation opportunities for e-Kindy enrolled children in selected rural and remote locations • continuing to support children and families from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to access quality early childhood programs, including facilitating better access to kindergarten, and building service capacity to better respond to their needs • continuing to deliver kindergarten activities to children who are patients at the Queensland Children's Hospital and Mater Children's Private Brisbane Hospital who are unable to access a kindergarten program due to health related circumstances • providing access to educational resources to link concepts within the Sally and Possum episodes with the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework; and promoting a better understanding of deaf culture within the school environment • maintaining accredited kindergarten program guidelines, with amendments progressed as required to ensure alignment with the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum • delivering a coordinated and strategic response to align K-P (Kindergarten to the Prep Year) priorities including successful transitions and enhanced continuity of learning and development for young learners • continuing to provide data to inform planning and reporting and participate in national data strategy work to improve data quality to inform the development of targeted programs • continuing to support the ECEC sector to increase and retain the number of qualified early childhood teachers to support access to kindergarten programs, especially in rural and remote communities. 			
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15. As required by clause 22 (d) of the National Partnership, the 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 Implementation Plan.
16. 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.

Data Issues	
Issue	Strategy
(a) Performance indicators affected by significant <i>Not Stated</i> responses (e.g. self-declaring Indigeneity).	Assume that proportions calculated from observable data also apply to <i>Not Stated</i> responses.
(b) In relation to attendance (PI4), the number of hours currently collected through the NECECC is unreliable as it is collected for a single week, does not account for explainable absences and is inconsistently reported by services.	All jurisdictions have committed to working together to consider the most reliable datasets that could be used to overcome these data quality issues.
Implementation Issues	
Issue	Strategy
(c) Addressing barriers to effectively engage and support vulnerable, disadvantaged, non-English speaking background and Indigenous families to access and participate in kindergarten.	<p>Adopt a sustained approach to build trust and gain acceptance by families and communities regarding the value of participating in kindergarten programs.</p> <p>Ongoing investment in a range of proven strategies and the implementation of further initiatives across key areas as outlined below to drive increased enrolment and participation by Indigenous families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – build service and workforce capability – provide culturally appropriate kindergarten models – support families and communities – provide integrated services – reduce costs for families

Estimated costs

17. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Queensland is **\$343.6 million** payable in accordance with the milestones and performance benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
18. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and Queensland 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
Element 1 (Access and Affordability)	15.8	52.8	52.0	49.9	35.7	206.2
Element 2 (Inclusion and Equity)	10.6	35.2	34.6	33.2	23.8	137.4
49.9-Total estimated budget	**	**	**	**		**
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	26.4	88.0	86.6	83.1	59.5	343.6
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	**	**	**	**		**
Total Commonwealth contribution	26.4	88.0	86.6	83.1	59.5	343.6

Figures may not add due to rounding. All figures are estimates, including estimated allocations by element.

Queensland is responsible for providing funding to support all children's quality early childhood education participation and Queensland allocates its own source funding accordingly.

Program logic

19. 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.
20. 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

Summary of project to be continued or implemented during the 2021 calendar year.

Project elements	Outputs (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
1. Access and Affordability	<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>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>All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and can participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and can participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>All Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education.</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 programs for all children.	Queensland Government/ ECEC Sector

2. Inclusion and Equity	<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>All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and can participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and can participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>All Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education.</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 programs for all children.</p>	<p>Queensland Government/ ECEC Sector</p>
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Risk management

21. The Queensland Department of Education has a risk management plan in place. Risks are actively identified, entered into a risk log and categorised in terms of impact and likelihood.

Queensland Context

22. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to the current context in Queensland.
 - a) Queensland has made substantial progress towards universal access to kindergarten, improving from the lowest baseline nationally of 29 per cent in 2008 to exceeding its overall participation target of 95 per cent since 2013. There were 63,135 children enrolled in kindergarten in 2019. This included 5,637 Indigenous children and 11,281 children residing in low SES areas.
 - b) The Commonwealth's assessment of Queensland's performance in 2019 under the previous National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education – 2018 and 2019 showed that Queensland met or exceeded all of its targets except participation by children residing in low SES areas (83.2 per cent) and participation in a 600 hour program by children residing in low SES areas (93.5 per cent).
 - c) Provision of kindergarten programs is predominantly through a mixed-market approach with the private sector primarily responsible for the delivery of programs through for profit and not-for-profit long day care centres, community-managed stand-alone kindergarten services, and some non-State schools. Unlike other jurisdictions, the Queensland Government only delivers kindergarten programs in areas of market failure, including across 69 rural and remote communities, 31 discrete Indigenous communities and for isolated children through distance education (eKindy).
 - d) The Queensland model of kindergarten provision has been found to be of lower cost compared to other jurisdictions, mainly reflecting greater delivery in Queensland through the long day care sector (Deloitte Review of National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, 2014).
 - e) The cost of the provision of kindergarten programs in Queensland is shared between families (through fees), funding under the National Partnership Agreement, funding from the Queensland Government and, for programs delivered in long day care services, child care subsidies from the Commonwealth. The Queensland Government provides subsidies to approved kindergarten program providers, through the QKFS, to ensure that families, including Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged families, can access an affordable program.
 - f) Services offering an approved early childhood education program (i.e. compliant to the requirements of universal access and regulated under the National Quality Framework) can apply for funding under the QKFS regardless of delivery setting.
 - g) Additional per child subsidies are provided to kindergarten program providers for children eligible for the QKFS Plus subsidy. This subsidy is available for

families/children with a Health Care Card, eligible refugee and asylum seeker families, children who identify as Indigenous and for families with more than two children of the same age attending at the same time. Further information regarding the QKFS can be found at: <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industry/service-industries/child-care/qld-kindergarten-funding-scheme/subsidies>

- h) Queensland is large in size and has a relatively decentralised population, which adds to the cost and challenge of achieving and maintaining universal access to kindergarten.
- i) There are challenges in the planning, implementation and measurement of success of initiatives targeting kindergarten participation rates. Difficulty in obtaining accurate population estimates and projections of Indigenous families is acknowledged by the Australian Bureau of Statistics where figures are based on self-identification of Indigeneity by a population.
- j) The number of Indigenous four-year-olds in Queensland is expected to grow by 24 per cent from 2018 to 2026.
- k) Queensland's approach to maintaining universal access to early childhood education has been developed in the context of other Queensland Government services and existing reforms detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Links with existing reforms or projects

Proposed project elements	Existing reforms or projects	Complementary nature of activities
2	KindyLinQ	A facilitated playgroup program for children in the year prior to kindergarten focused on enhancing the confidence and capabilities of families to support their children's development and learning and supporting families to connect with and participate in approved kindergarten programs.
1&2	ECEC Workforce	<p>Every Queensland child has access to quality early years services through initiatives that develop the capacity of Queensland's early childhood education and care workforce. Queensland sets out a broad range of workforce development initiatives to deliver the sector's vision of a workforce that is "professional, qualified and valued". These initiatives are aimed to achieve the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being valued – promote the value and professional standing of careers in early childhood education and care • Qualifications – increase the number of suitably qualified early childhood education and care educators across the early childhood sector; and

		<p>Skills – increase and develop the skills of early childhood education and care educators to respond to the demands of their role.</p> <p>From 2020, Queensland will continue to implement key workforce initiatives to ensure that every Queensland child has access to quality early years services by developing the capacity of Queensland's early childhood education and care workforce.</p>
2	Early Years Places	The Queensland Government funds organisations throughout the state to deliver integrated services and programs which may include ECEC, child and maternal health and family support. Targeted services are delivered and/or brokered for vulnerable children and families, and referrals are made to specialist or intensive support services when required. Early Years Places focus on children's learning and development and support for families.
2	First 5 Forever	First 5 Forever is a universal family literacy initiative in Queensland aimed at supporting stronger language and literacy environments for young children from 0-5 years and their families. 320 public libraries will receive additional resources to deliver First 5 in partnership with the State Library of Queensland and local government councils.
2	Continuity of learning	To strengthen continuity of learning and successful transitions to school, investment in projects across all seven regions will focus on delivering a coordinated approach to maximise children's engagement in learning and to enhance outcomes.
2	Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)	The AEDC is a national collection of information on young children's development in Australia. Data is collected every three years on children in their first year of full-time schooling. The results provide a snapshot at a community level of how children are developing by the time they reach school. The AEDC data is used by early childhood services to engage their community and plan actions to better support local children and their families.
2	Play Stars	Play Stars is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Playgroup Queensland to provide every family in Queensland, with a child under one year of age, with 12 months' free membership to Playgroup Queensland. Playgroups are a universal, cost-effective early intervention activity that support young children's learning and development through play, building parenting support networks, encouraging greater participation in early childhood services and supporting transition to kindergarten.

PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

23. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
24. With regard to reporting on attendance, Queensland has agreed a target for 2021 with the Commonwealth, as set out in Table 5 below, and will report on progress towards this target as part of the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection.

Table 5: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2017 performance	2018 performance	2019 Performance	2020 Target	2021 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
96.1%	97.7%	97.5% [☆]	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.

*Performance against 2019 Target to be assessed as part of final performance assessment for the previous National Partnership for 2018 and 2019, with data expected in the first half of 2020.

Monitoring and reporting

25. 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.
26. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Queensland's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan.
27. Supplementary data will be sourced from the Queensland ECEC Services Census and/or other department administrative systems, and relevant Commonwealth data including, but not limited to:
 - a. proportion of families with kindergarten-age children with Health Care Cards enrolled in quality early childhood education programs
 - b. enrolment of refugee and asylum seeker children
 - c. early entry enrolment of children in Prep
 - d. Queensland ECEC Census Enrolment and attendance data
 - e. Queensland ECEC Census Indigenous enrolment data.

28. 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:



Signature Date 12/01/2021

The Honourable Grace Grace MP
Minister for Education
Minister for Industrial Relations and
Minister for Racing

Signature Date



The Hon Alan Tudge MP 20-1-21
Minister for Education and Youth