

Tasmania'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 in the year before full-time school for 600 hours per year, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher who meets National Quality Framework requirements, and with a focus on participation by Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, regardless of the setting in which 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 Tasmania, represented by the Minister for Education and Training.
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 Tasmania's capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. This Implementation Plan reflects Tasmania's parallel approach to the regulation and quality assurance of early childhood education programs within schools to ensure alignment with the National Quality Standard.
8. This Implementation Plan will cease on completion or termination of the National Partnership, including final performance reporting and processing of final payments against performance benchmarks or milestones.
9. This Implementation Plan may be varied by written agreement between the Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for it under the overarching National Partnership.
10. The Parties to this Implementation Plan do not intend any of the provisions to be legally enforceable. However, that does not lessen the Parties' commitment to the plan and its full implementation.

PART 3: STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Project information

11. The National Partnership reaffirms the commitment to provide universal access to, and improved participation by, children in quality early childhood education 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.
12. In Tasmania, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are defined as children who reside in areas with a SEIFA IRSD quintile 1 based on Statistical Area 1¹.
13. The project elements planned are detailed in Table 1: Project elements:

No.	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Universal access to kindergarten ²	Provision of 600 hours of free kindergarten in government schools ³	1/1/18	31/12/21	N/A
2	Maintain Indigenous children's participation	Maintain existing service provision for Indigenous children in all locations	1/1/18	31/12/21	1
3	Maintain participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Maintain existing service provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	1/1/18	31/12/21	1

14. As required by clause 22 (d) of the National Partnership, strategies are in place to ensure 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 (LDC) centres. These strategies are included as Project Elements throughout this plan.
15. 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) To calculate enrolments, Tasmania will use as its denominator an average of the 4 and 5 year-old estimated residential population (ERP), rather than 4 year olds. The median age of Tasmania's kindergarten children is 4.5 years old as at 30 June, as

¹ Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) – the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD). The SEIFA IRSD is divided into five quintiles each comprising 20 per cent of areas; the most disadvantaged (lowest quintile) is quintile 1. Statistical Area 1 is the smallest geographic area possible for analysis of SEIFA.

² In Tasmania, preschool is referred to as kindergarten; the first year of full-time school is called 'Prep'.

³ Funding is also provided to non-government schools to top-up delivery to 600 hours of kindergarten to meet the objectives of the National Partnership.

Tasmania's children are required to be at least 4 years old on 1 January in the year in which they commence Kindergarten.

- (b) In Tasmania, the year before full-time schooling (YBFS) is defined as children who are aged at least 4 years old or older as at 1 January of the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (National Collection) year. Any children who are 4 years old and born in the period after 1 January to 30 June (inclusive), as published by the ABS in *Preschool Australia* (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0), are not in the YBFS, and are not included in the denominator student counts when calculating the performance indicator results for Tasmania's enrolments.
- (c) The Indigenous student count includes Tasmanian children identified as Indigenous (Aboriginal, Torres Strait islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander) in *Preschool Australia*, and a proportion of children identified as 'Not Stated'. The proportion of 'Not Stated' children to be counted as Indigenous children is calculated by multiplying the Indigenous/Not Indigenous Tasmanian 0-4 year olds population ratio (ABS Cat No. 2002.0) by the number of 'Not Stated' Indigenous Tasmanian ECEC children published in *Preschool Australia* (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0).
- (d) The Indigenous numerator used to calculate Indigenous enrolments is also subject to under-identification of the number of Indigenous children, as some Indigenous families do not identify themselves as Indigenous when they first enrol in the school system.
- (e) Given these data volatility issues and under-reporting of Indigenous children in the Kindergarten year, Tasmania proposes to provide Prep enrolment data for the year after Kindergarten enrolment to support assertions that Tasmania's Kindergarten Indigenous participation rates are very high (greater than 95% performance benchmark). Tasmania proposes to further measure the Indigenous participation rates in Kindergarten by retrospectively determining Prep year Indigenous enrolments compared to Kindergarten enrolments. This methodology will determine which children did not enrol in the previous year, but were eligible to, and hence determine an accurate participation rate. This is possible as Prep in Tasmania is the first compulsory year of school, and Tasmania has very accurate and detailed enrolment records in our schools enrolment administration system (EduPoint).
- (f) Tasmania will provide a report as required by clause 25 of the National Partnership by 31 March 2022 detailing the number of children enrolled in the first year of compulsory schooling (Prep) compared to the children enrolled in the YBFS (Kindergarten). This would demonstrate the participation rate of the Tasmanian 2020 Kindergarten enrolments.

Estimated costs

- 16. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to the jurisdiction is \$ 38.30 million payable in accordance with the milestones and performance benchmarks set out in the National Partnership. All payments are exclusive of GST.
- 17. The estimated overall budget (exclusive of GST) is set out in Table 2. The budget is indicative only and Tasmania 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 and 3	2.15	7.15	7.20	7.20	5.3	29.40
Element 2	0.65	2.15	2.20	2.30	1.60	8.90
Total estimated budget	2.80	9.30	9.40	9.90	6.90	38.30
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	2.80	9.30	9.40	9.90	6.90	38.30
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	**	**	**	**	**	**
Total Commonwealth contribution	2.80	9.30	9.40	9.90	6.90	38.30

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

** States/territories are responsible for the provision of early childhood education and Tasmania allocates its own source funding accordingly.

Program logic

18. The project elements detailed in this Implementation Plan will achieve the outcomes and objectives stated in the National Partnership, including for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and Indigenous children.
19. The way in which these project elements will achieve the outcomes and objectives set out in the National Partnership is detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Program logic

Project elements	Outputs (services delivered)	Outcomes	Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 Universal access to kindergarten	<p>Providing 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>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 participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</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>	Tasmania
Element 2 Maintain Indigenous children’s participation	<p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children, including in remote areas</p>	<p>All Indigenous children have access to, and 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>	Tasmania

Element 3 Maintain participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged children	Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.	All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.	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.	Tasmania
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Risk management

20. The Tasmanian 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.

Tasmanian Context

21. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to relevant state or territory context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below.
- In 2020, Tasmania provided free kindergarten for 600 hours a year at 151 public schools and 60 non-government schools. For registered kindergarten programs in government schools and not-for-profit non-government schools, ten hours per week are funded by the State, with the remaining five hours per week funded through this National Partnership. Funds for the extra five hours are allocated in accordance with enrolments. In 2019, quality early childhood education programs⁴ were delivered in 122 long day care centre-based services. However, because these were not registered kindergarten programs they did not attract National Partnership funding (refer to paragraphs (f) through to (h) below for further information on the registration process).
 - The ERP of the average four and five -year-olds in Tasmania in 2019 was 6,167, of whom it is estimated 611 were Indigenous and 2,129 were of low socio-economic status. In 2019, 3,862 four and five-year-olds attended a registered kindergarten program in a government school, and 1,098 in a non-government school. 998 children were enrolled in both a registered kindergarten program and a long day care centre-based service. (Data Source: ABS Preschool Australia, 2019, 22 May 2020.)
 - The Tasmanian Department of Education has provided state-funded kindergarten linked to primary schools since 1911, along with other kindergarten programs provided by the Kindergarten Union and parents. In 1968, a review recommended the provision of kindergarten as part of the school system, which led to a rapid expansion of places. By 1980 the State was responsible for most kindergartens in Tasmania. Rates of participation were high, the minimum age of enrolment was set at 4 as of 1 January each year, and the universal entitlement to enrolment was legislated in 1994.

⁴ Centre based long day care services report delivering 'quality early childhood education programs' in ABS Preschool Australia, this report includes children in the year before Tasmania's Kindergarten year.

Non-government primary schools gradually established kindergartens during the 1980s and most now deliver a Kindergarten program. Long day care centre-based services have also delivered a kindergarten program (being registered by the Non-Government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB) to do so) with one service registered in 2020. The main reason for lack of enrolments at long day care centre-based services is the fact that, given the history above, parents see kindergarten as the first year of school.

- (d) Tasmania's high number of disadvantaged families who could not afford to participate in community kindergartens were a significant factor in the 1968 decision to embed kindergartens in the school system. There was evidence that the children who were most in need of a kindergarten education were those most likely not to be receiving it, and attaching kindergarten to the school system was a successful strategy in alleviating this risk with almost all eligible children in Tasmania attending kindergarten since then.
- (e) Kindergartens in Tasmania historically are regulated as part of the school system rather than the early childhood education and care sector, thereby avoiding duplication of some regulatory and administrative processes. It is important that kindergartens deliver quality early childhood programs and in 2011 the then Tasmanian Government committed to ensure kindergartens substantially corresponded with the National Quality Framework National Law requirements, without being subject to them. In 2016, the Tasmanian Government determined that government kindergartens would be formally assessed against the National Quality Standards from 2020 and this work is progressing.
- (f) Early childhood education and care service providers, for example in long day care centre-based services, have always been able to seek registration as a non-government school (through the Non-Government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB), which registers non-government schools) in order to deliver Kindergarten. If a long day care centre-based service registers as a school, regardless of its profit status, then it will receive National Partnership funding which would be allocated according to the existing procedures and methodologies for distributing funding to independent and Catholic schools (N.B long day care centre-based services not registered as a school cannot officially be recognised as a kindergarten by the State Government. The Tasmanian *Education Act 2016* defines a kindergarten as the year of education immediately preceding the first year of compulsory education and delivered by a school).
- (g) Registering as a school requires the long day care centre-based service to meet standards in areas such as governance, the curriculum, qualifications of teachers, and facilities. The registration process takes into account where there is consistency between the school registration standards and the early childhood education and care regulatory requirements. Evidence of compliance with those requirements will be accepted by the NGSRB as evidence of meeting the relevant school registration standard.
- (h) Other than the National Partnership funding, no Commonwealth child care subsidies/rebates are paid in respect of the Kindergarten year in government schools in Tasmania.

- (i) If a for-profit long day care centre-based service registers as a school with the NGSRB to run a Kindergarten, it will be eligible for a share of the Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership. However, for-profit services will not be eligible for the State subsidy because the Tasmanian Education Act does not allow State funding to go to for-profit schools.
- (j) If a not-for-profit long day care centre-based service registers with the NGSRB to deliver kindergarten, it will be entitled to the State funding subsidy for 10 hours (as for all non-government schools) and a share of the Commonwealth funding under the National Partnership. Currently in Tasmania, almost 67 per cent of long day care services are not-for profit.
- (k) There was one long day care centre-based service registered to deliver kindergarten in Tasmania in 2019.
- (l) Early Learning is one of four priority areas in the Department of Education strategic plan 2018-2021. Tasmania's Strategy for Children – Pregnancy to Eight Years 2018-2021 was launched in November 2017. This strategy outlines a shared purpose and practices for all Tasmanian service providers that focus on improving the education, health and wellbeing outcomes of children from pregnancy to eight years.
- (m) There are five existing state-funded projects which focus on education during the pre-kindergarten years (birth to four years). These programs are not funded under the National Partnership or through other Commonwealth funding streams, but complement the National Partnership by supporting participation in learning by vulnerable and disadvantaged and Indigenous children. These projects are:
- Launching into Learning (in all government schools)
 - Child and Family Learning Centres (12 in local communities and 6 new centres to be established from 2019))
 - Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers
 - Early Childhood Intervention Service
 - Working Together – supporting early learning
- (i) Launching into Learning (LiL) is a program available in all government primary schools for children from birth through to age 4. LiL aims to give Tasmania's youngest children the best possible start in life by:
- Supporting families as their child's first and most influential teacher,
 - Reaching families with highest need,
 - Facilitating a positive transition into kindergarten.
- A state-wide Early Learning team supports consistent approaches to the ongoing implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework, which underpins the work of LiL teachers.
- A longitudinal study of LiL shows that children from all socioeconomic backgrounds made significant gains in educational performance from regular participation in LiL. However, children from disadvantaged and low socioeconomic backgrounds benefited most.
- (ii) Child and Family Centres (CFC) focus on improving the learning and care, and health and wellbeing of Tasmania's very young children by supporting parents and enhancing accessibility to services in the local community. In the 2018 State election, the Tasmanian Government committed to build on the success of the CFC by building six new early learning hubs across Tasmania. Over a six year period from 2019, work is progressing to establish these new Child and Family

Learning Centres (CFLC) in areas of highest need and community readiness. The CFLC will provide greater access for families to relevant early years' services, with a strong focus on improving place-based service delivery to communities around Tasmania. The CFLC will form part of the existing continuum of Department of Education services and support available to young children and their families.

- (iii) The Aboriginal Early Years Program emphasises early literacy, language development and school readiness. The program has been running since 2005. Aboriginal Early Years Education Workers (AEYEWs) provide professional learning and high level advice to early years' staff and agencies to enable successful implementation of departmental and Closing the Gap strategies.

AEYEWs are situated around the State in CFCs. They work closely with families of Aboriginal children from birth to four years of age to engage their children in a wide range of early years' activities and programs that nurture and stimulate young children's learning. AEYEWs play a key role in building connections between schools and families with young children by supporting families to engage in CFCs and other early years providers.

- (iv) The Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS) supports children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry, and their families. ECIS builds on opportunities for learning and development that are provided at home or through birth-4 programs and assists with transition to Kindergarten. Professional learning support for Kindergarten staff is provided where children with disability enrol for Kindergarten programs. A child-and-family-centered approach, based on a partnership between parents and professionals, is at the core of early intervention.

- (v) Working Together (WT) provides free, quality early learning for eligible children in the year before they start kindergarten. This initiative is addressing barriers to participation experienced by Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children, by funding places in quality early learning centres (up to 400 hours per year for each child). WT works in partnership with families, early childhood educators, government agencies and community services to provide holistic support to help children to thrive. WT also provides professional learning opportunities for the early childhood education and care sector so they can assist these children and their families in the best way possible. The initiative is supporting three year olds, along with their parents and carers, through the transition from home into early childhood education and care, and then into Kindergarten.

(N) PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

- 22. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
- 23. With regard to reporting on attendance, Tasmania has agreed targets for 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 targets

2017 Performance	2018 Performance	2019 Performance	2020 Target	2021 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
100%	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

- 24. 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.
- 25. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Tasmania’s performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below.
- 26. 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:



20 January 2021

Signature

Date

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP
Minister for Education and Training

Signature

Date

The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Minister for Education and Youth