

# Victorian 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 Agreement 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 600 hours per year, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher who meets National Quality Framework requirements, and with a focus on participation by Aboriginal children, vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage, regardless of the setting in which programs are delivered.
4. Children living in remote Aboriginal 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 Victoria, 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 demonstrate Victoria’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 Aboriginal children, vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage and in a manner that meets the needs of children, families and communities at a cost which does not present a barrier to participation.
11. The project elements planned are detailed in Table 1: Project elements.

Table 1: Project elements

No.	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
1	Maintain universal access for all children to 600 hours of preschool	Kindergarten per capita grant funding to support affordability and participation; the grant rate varies depending on the service setting and where the service is located  Teacher supplement to support services with the higher cost of employing more experienced teachers	1 January 2018	31 December 2021	N/A
2	Maintain participation for vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage	Kindergarten Inclusion Support program to support children with a disability, high support needs and/or with complex medical needs  Kindergarten fee subsidy (KFS) for holders of a Health Care Card, Refugee visa etc.	1 January 2018	31 December 2021	N/A
3	Maintain participation for Aboriginal children	KFS for Aboriginal children	1 January 2018	31 December 2021	N/A

12. As required by clause 22 (d) of the National Partnership, the strategies are 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, and additional strategies are listed in the Victorian context section.

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) The use of 4 and 5 year-olds enrolled in a preschool program as the denominator for Performance Indicator 3 inflates Victoria's year-before-school cohort. This is because Child Care Subsidy System data includes 4-year-olds who are not eligible for enrolment in a preschool education program in Victoria because they turn 4 after 30 April (the enrolment cut-off date for kindergarten<sup>1</sup> and school entry). National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (National Collection) birth month data will be provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to allow an accurate count of Victorian year-before-school enrolments, excluding May and June born children, to be used for the calculation of achievement against performance indicators.
  - (b) While efforts by the ABS to encourage Indigenous people to identify as Indigenous have resulted in a large increase in the population count of Indigenous people, there are continuing problems with under identification in other data collections undertaken without the same resources and without the trusted anonymity offered by the ABS. Victoria undertakes regular improvements to data collection and messaging to services about the importance of accurate and consistent statistics on Indigenous children.
  - (c) Funding applications and associated enrolment information can be sent to the Victorian Department of Education and Training up until March for children enrolled in the previous year. Therefore, some records for 4 and 5-year-old children enrolled in kindergarten programs for the whole of that year are not available at the time of the National Collection (reference week usually in August). In such instances, these records are not part of the Victorian Unit Record Level Child file and will be provided as supplementary data by 1 March following the National Collection year.
  - (d) To resolve any unexpected data issues Victoria may provide supplementary data from the Kindergarten Information Management system to aid interpretation of data and inform the assessment of Victoria's achievement of performance benchmarks.

### Estimated costs

14. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to Victoria is **\$503 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 Victoria 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.

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<sup>1</sup> In Victoria, quality early childhood education programs in the year before full-time school are referred to as kindergarten.

Table 2: Estimated financial contributions\*

(\$ million)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Element 1	30.8	103.7	108.1	111.6	77.1	431.3
Element 2	5.0	16.8	17.5	18.2	12.6	70.1
Element 3	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	1.6
Total estimated budget	35.9	120.9	126.0	130.2	90.0	503.0
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	35.9	120.9	126.0	130.2	90.0	503.0
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	**	**	**	**	**	**
<b>Total Commonwealth contribution</b>	35.9	120.9	126.0	130.2	90.0	503.0

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

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

Note 1: Element 1 includes funding aimed at maintaining universal access for the whole population of Victorian Kindergarten-aged children. Element 2 includes additional assistance (on top of Element 1, which is for all children) provided for vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage to maintain their participation rate. Likewise, Element 3 includes the additional assistance provided for Indigenous children. Element 2 does not include assistance provided to Indigenous children as this is counted in element 3. The assistance is primarily in the form of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS).

Note 2: The activities undertaken, which provide significant additional assistance to these cohorts, are listed beginning in paragraph 26. This table only includes funding under the National Partnership.

## 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 children, children experiencing disadvantage and Aboriginal 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 (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 - Maintain universal access for all children to 600 hours of preschool	<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 children and children experiencing disadvantage.</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>	All children, including vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage, 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.	Victoria

<p>Element 2 - Maintain participation for vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage</p>	<p>Implementing accessible quality early childhood education programs which meet the needs of parents and communities at a cost which does not present a barrier to participation, particularly for vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage.</p> <p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage</p>	<p>All children, including vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage, 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>	<p>Victoria</p>
<p>Element 3 - Maintain participation for Aboriginal children</p>	<p>Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Aboriginal children, including in remote areas.</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 children and children experiencing disadvantage, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program.</p> <p>All Aboriginal 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>	<p>Victoria</p>



## Risk management

18. The Victorian Department of Education and Training 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.

## Victorian Context

19. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to the Victorian context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are listed below:
  - a. the historic community ownership of kindergartens
  - b. the maturity of the kindergarten system which is operating at close to full capacity (spaces and teachers) in some areas such as growth corridors and inner metropolitan suburbs
  - c. the extent to which the full range of early years services (kindergarten for both 3 and 4 year olds, playgroups etc.) are embedded in and valued by local communities
  - d. anticipated continuation of the high participation rate in Victorian kindergarten programs
  - e. the ongoing implementation of the National Quality Agenda
  - f. a period of significant population growth in parts of Victoria
  - g. policy and legislation that may impact on access and participation (e.g. Victoria's No Jab No Play, the Australian Government's No Jab No Pay and the new Child Care Subsidy)
  - h. the ongoing impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the Victorian community.
20. A diverse range of service providers deliver kindergarten in Victoria, including government and non-government providers, private for-profit providers and community service organisations. The Victorian Government funds these services, irrespective of setting, to contribute to the cost of running a funded kindergarten program.
21. Services charge families fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual services and can vary depending on service type, how many hours a child attends, group size and extra costs such as excursions.
22. The below table shows the range of Victorian kindergarten service providers by service provider type in 2019.

Table 4: Victorian kindergarten sector by service type, 2019

			Non-Govt sector		Government Sector		Total all sectors
			Non-Government Private Providers*	Non-government Community Service Organisations**	Local Govt	State Govt	
Kindergarten Services	Long Day Care Settings	(n)	832	410	77	4	1,239
	All Other Settings***	(n)	90	808	244	38	1,184
	Total Services	(n)	922	1,218	321	42	2,503
		(%)	36.84%	48.66%	12.82%	1.68%	100.00%
Kindergarten Enrolments	Long Day Care Settings	(n)	15,629	9,536	2,189	160	27,514
	All Other Settings***	(n)	2,977	34,555	12,597	1,862	51,991
	Total Enrolments	(n)	18,606	44,091	14,786	2,022	79,505
		(%)	23.40%	55.46%	18.60%	2.54%	100.00%

1. The number of services from which funded kindergarten programs are delivered. These include long day care centres, community kindergartens and integrated children's centres.

2. Number of children enrolled in funded kindergarten in the year before school.

\* Includes: Proprietary Limited Company, Sole Traders, Partnerships & Company limited by share; Non-Govt Schools; Tertiary institutions & Hospitals

\*\* Includes: Church Organisation; Incorporated Association, Co-Operatives, Company Limited by Guarantee & Other

\*\*\* These other settings are mostly standalone settings but also include kindergarten in integrated Children's centres and budget based mobile services.

23. Victorian 2018-2021 funding rates for all services are provided below.

Per Capita funding rates*	2018		2019		2020	2021
	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - Dec	Jan - Dec
Standard	\$3,505	\$3,593	\$3,593	\$3,682	\$3,682	\$3,774
Standard – EA services**						\$3,931
Rural***	\$4,334	\$4,442	\$4,442	\$4,553	\$4,553	\$4,667
Rural – EA services**						\$4,860
Non-government school standard rate	N/A	N/A	\$3,593	\$3,682	\$3,682	\$3,774
Non-government school type 1	\$571	\$585	\$585	\$600	\$600	\$615
Non-government school type 2	\$1,852	\$1,898	\$1,898	\$1,946	\$1,946	\$1,995

\*Per capita funding is paid on a pro rata basis and the table above reflects the rates per financial year.

\*\* Once the new Victorian Early Childhood Teachers' and Educators' Agreement (VECTEA) and the Early Education Employees' Agreement (EEEA) have been finalised, services that are signatories to these agreements will be paid a higher per capita rate, backdated to 1 January 2021.

\*\*\* Base level funding applies in rural areas to support access to affordable kindergarten programs



24. Victoria funds some kindergarten services in non-government schools at a lower per capita rate, based on the former Australian Government Education Resources Index rating (measures need according to the capacity of a non-government school to generate its own income through fees, investments, fundraising and donations). Non-government type 1 rates apply to providers previously deemed to have an Index of Education Resources rating 1-4. Non-government type 2 rates apply to providers previously deemed to have an Index of Education Resources rating of 5-12. The lower the rating, the higher the economic advantage, hence the lower funding. In 2019, a new funding rate equivalent to the standard per capita funding rate was introduced for non-government schools in Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 1 areas.
25. In 2021, the Victorian Government is providing additional funding to offer free kindergarten at participating services. This initiative forms part of Victoria's economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. Under this initiative the following payments will be paid directly to service providers in addition to the per capita funding outlined above:
- Per child funding of an additional \$2,122 for every 15-hour enrolment in a funded sessional kindergarten program, and an additional \$2,000 to directly offset parent fees for funded kindergarten in long day care settings, subject to individual providers accepting the terms and conditions (outlined below).
  - Non-government school operated sessional kindergarten services receiving the Independent Schools Type 2 funding per capita rate will be supported to provide a free program through a per child funding 'top up' of \$1,779 to the standard per capita amount, as well as the \$2,122 Free Kinder subsidy.
  - Per child funding of \$1,600 for enrolments in unfunded three-year-old sessional programs (prorated where less than 5 hours a week).
26. In order to receive this funding, sessional kindergarten services are required to provide a free kindergarten program for 15 hours a week, not charge any compulsory out-of-pocket fees and refund and parent fees in full that have already been paid for 2021. This funding will replace the KFS for any eligible children at participating services. Long day care providers will be required to directly offset the full \$2,000 payment from parents' fee. This builds on funding the Victorian Government provided in 2020, to support families to participate in kindergarten and ensure that kindergarten services remained financially viable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding was provided to support:
- free sessional kindergarten for eligible services, to alleviate financial pressure on families
  - eligible sessional unfunded three-year-old programs to cover lost fees from children not attending and not paying fees
  - increased cleaning and hygiene requirements consistent with the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee guidance
  - the provision of learning from home resources for services to continue to deliver learning to children at home when they were unable to attend on-site transition to school for children, particularly vulnerable children.

27. The continued, well-established and highly valued partnership approach with local government and the Municipal Association of Victoria is critical to achievement of the objectives and outcomes set out in the National Partnership in Victoria. The Victorian Government will continue to invest in Education State reforms that will ensure all children participate in quality early childhood education and care.
28. The Victorian Government undertakes a range of activities to help meet the objective of facilitating children's early learning and development and transition to school by improving participation in affordable, quality early childhood education programs for all children. There is a focus on children experiencing disadvantage and Aboriginal children. Information on how different programs contribute to outcomes sought is provided below.
29. Maintain universal access by all children to 600 hours of preschool through:
  - a. Kindergarten per capita grant funding to support affordability and participation.
  - b. Base level funding to support access to affordable kindergarten programs in rural communities.
  - c. The roll-out of subsidised kindergarten for three-year-olds from 2020 to engage all children and families in kindergarten a year earlier.
  - d. The Building Blocks program to build, expand and improve early years infrastructure.
  - e. Providing additional funding to maintain participation and support kindergarten services during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, including providing free sessional kindergarten at eligible services.
  - f. Providing free kindergarten for most families in 2021.
30. Maintain participation for vulnerable children and children experiencing disadvantage through:
  - a. Kindergarten Inclusion Support program to support children with a disability, high support needs and/or with complex medical needs.
  - b. KFS for holders of a Health Care Card, Refugee visa etc.
  - c. Pre-Purchased Places – targeted services receive funding to reserve places for vulnerable or children experiencing disadvantage who enrol late.
  - d. Inclusion stream of the Building Blocks Program to provide upgrades to buildings, playgrounds and equipment to help kindergartens provide more inclusive environments for children with disability or additional needs.
  - e. Early Start Kindergarten (aged three years) if the child's family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child FIRST) and Early Start Kindergarten Extension for children aged four attending kindergarten in a setting where KFS does not apply. From 2021, the eligibility criteria for Early Start Kindergarten will be extended to include children from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.
  - f. Access to Early Learning program that provides additional support for children experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage to address complex barriers to participation in early childhood education and care, with an additional seven sites to be added to the existing seven sites in 2021
  - g. Early Childhood LOOKOUT to support children in out-of-home care to attend kindergarten and build the capacity of the sector to identify and engage children

in out-of-home care in kindergarten. From 2021, Early Childhood LOOKOUT will be expanded to meet additional demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and support vulnerable children at risk of entering out-of-home care.

- h. School Readiness Funding for programs and supports that build the capacity of kindergarten services, educators and families to support outcomes for children more likely to experience educational disadvantage.
- i. Early intervention specialist supports for vulnerable children impacted by COVID-19 including a new family group program to help vulnerable children transition to school.
- j. An expansion of the Access to Early Learning program in 2021 to provide additional outreach and wraparound services to support vulnerable children to participate in early learning.
- k. Specialist support to address barriers to participation experienced by children and families from CALD and refugee backgrounds; outreach workers to actively re-engage CALD children in learning in early 2021.

31. Increasing Aboriginal participation through:

- a. Facilitation of participation via Koorie Engagement Support Officers and elders
- b. KFS for Aboriginal children
- c. Koorie Preschool Assistants program
- d. 'Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten' campaign - a communications campaign promoting the benefits of kindergarten participation for Aboriginal children
- e. Early Start Kindergarten (aged three years) for Aboriginal children and Early Start Kindergarten Extension for Aboriginal children aged four attending kindergarten in a setting where the kindergarten fee subsidy does not apply
- f. Aboriginal Best Start - in six locations across Victoria, established to encourage Aboriginal families and communities to work with early years services to improve health and education outcomes for Aboriginal children, with a particular focus on kindergarten participation.
- g. Outreach workers to actively re-engage Aboriginal children in learning in early 2021.

32. System development and implementation through:

- a. Ongoing improvements to Aboriginal data collection; messaging to services on the importance of accurate and consistent statistics on Aboriginal children.
- b. The Central Enrolment Project with Municipal Association of Victoria to support local governments to adopt, expand and enhance central enrolment for kindergarten services – this includes both one-off development grants and ongoing administration grants that contribute to delivery costs.
- c. The Early Years Compact between the Victorian Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services and local government (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria), which is focused on improving the sharing of data and information about children and increasing the participation of vulnerable children in early years services.



## PART 4: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

### Performance indicators, benchmarks and targets

33. Key indicators, data sources and benchmarks for assessing and monitoring performance are set out in Part 4 and Schedule A of the National Partnership.
34. With regard to reporting on attendance, Victoria 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 Collection taking into account the supplementary approaches outlined in clause 26 of the National Partnership.
35. Attendance will be measured as the proportion of children enrolled in a quality early childhood education program for at least 600 hours per year and that attend for at least one hour during the reference week.

Table 5: Bilaterally agreed attendance targets

2017 performance	2018 Performance	2019 Performance	2020 Target	2021 Target	Performance Benchmark/Target
95%	96%	96%	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

36. 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.
37. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Victoria's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below.
38. 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:



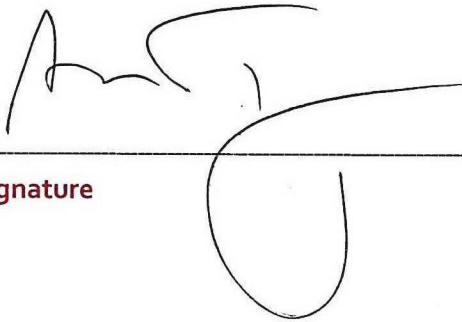
01/03/2021

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**Signature**

**Date**

**Ingrid Stitt MP**  
**Minister for Early Childhood**



18/3/21

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**Signature**

**Date**

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**The Hon Alan Tudge MP**  
**Minister for Education**