

Australian Capital Territory'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 National Quality Framework (NQF) 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 Training, and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), represented by the Minister for Early Childhood Development.
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 ACT's capacity to achieve the outcomes of the National Partnership.
7. This Implementation Plan supports the national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services consistent with the NQF.
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 Minister 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 the ACT, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are defined as: those residing in communities identified in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) as having above the national average rates of vulnerability in two or more domains.
13. 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	Access for Indigenous children	Maintain 600 hours of service provision in suburbs with high numbers of Indigenous children	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2021	n/a
2	No fee is charged for government preschool programs	Maintain 600 hours of free preschool for government preschool programs, including provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged children	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2021	n/a
3	Promotion of preschool participation – all service providers	Promotion of preschool participation to all children, including Indigenous, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, through the <i>Preschool Matters Program</i> and <i>Setup for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT</i> .	1 Jan 2018	30 June 2018	n/a
4	Tertiary scholarship program for educators – non-government service providers	Tertiary scholarship program provided in non-government service providers to strengthen educator qualifications	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2021	n/a
5	Infrastructure support – non-government service providers	Annual allocation of capital grants to be provided to non-government preschools for expansion and upgrade of infrastructure in line with 'Supporting Non-Government Preschools' budget initiative ¹ .	1 Jan 2018	31 Dec 2021	n/a

¹ https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/455987/5.2-Expenditure-Initiatives.pdf

No.	Title	Short description	Planned start date	Planned end date	Dependent on projects
6	Delivery of <i>Preschool Matters Grants Program</i> – all service providers	Delivery of <i>Preschool Matters Grants Program</i> – Grants to facilitate parental engagement for ACT preschool or centre based services delivering a preschool program.	1 Jan 2018	30 June 2018	n/a

14. As required by clause 22 (d) of the National Partnership, the following 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.
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) The ACT has identified issues related to the accuracy of the data set used for performance measures, as well as issues related to the impact of the small cohort size for subpopulations within this National Partnership. Strategies to supplement the data set are identified below with the ACT also noting that if other data issues are identified during the life of this National Partnership, they will also be considered.
 - (b) The ACT conducts an enrolment census in ACT public preschools in February and August each year. The ACT may submit August Census data as supplementary data, as the current Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data counting rules create a discrepancy in the distribution of students across preschool and Centre Based Day Care (CBDC) services when the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection data and ACT public preschool census data are compared.
 - (c) The ACT notes there are issues with the methodology used to draw attendance data. For children attending a CBDC service, their attendance is captured in a one week window, and for children attending a government preschool, their attendance is captured in a two week window and averaged across the two weeks (attendance for children attending multiple settings is totalled and reported at the child level). This attendance data is then extrapolated across 40 weeks for government preschools, and the number of operating weeks for CBDCs to provide an indication of attendance across the year. The main issue with this approach is if a child is absent for any part of the preschool program during the sample weeks the extrapolation results in a distorted measure of actual attendance.
 - (d) The ACT may provide supplementary data related to students with special needs and Indigenous students enrolled in specialist ACT public preschool programs where program design impacts on ABS counting rules.
 - (e) The ABS SEIFA measure used to report against performance indicators 2.3 and 3.3 significantly under reports the number of vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the ACT. For supplementary performance indicator reporting, vulnerable and disadvantaged children are defined in the ACT as: those residing in communities

identified in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) as having above the national average rates of vulnerability in two or more domains

Estimated costs

16. The maximum financial contribution to be provided by the Commonwealth for the project to the ACT is **\$37.6 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 the ACT 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 for Indigenous children	0.75	0.77	0.84	0.87	0.90	4.13
Element 2 – Free government preschool	30.43	31.19	33.11	34.89	35.94	165.56
Element 3 – Preschool participation promotion	0.39	0.41	0.42	0.80	0.0	2.02
Element 4 – Tertiary scholarship program	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.74
Element 5 – Infrastructure support – non-government service providers	1.42	1.46	1.50	1.55	1.6	7.53
Element 6 – Preschool Matters	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.0	0.18
Total estimated budget	33.19	34.04	36.08	38.26	38.58	180.15
less estimated Commonwealth contribution	2.70	9.10	9.40	9.60	6.8	37.60
equals estimated balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	30.49	24.94	26.68	28.66	31.78	142.55
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Total Commonwealth contribution	2.70	9.10***	9.40	9.60	6.8	37.60

* Figures may not add up 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 ACT allocates its own source funding accordingly

***Note, following administrative correction, \$0.9 million of the 2018–19 allocation was transferred to, and paid in, 2019–20

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. The ACT has no remote communities, and this Implementation Plan therefore does not aim to meet the objectives or outcomes identified in clauses 14 and 15(c) of the National Partnership.
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 (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 1 – Access for Indigenous children	Delivering strategies and actions targeting the participation of Indigenous children	All Indigenous 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	ACT
Element 2 – No fee is charged for government preschool programs	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 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	ACT

Project elements	Outputs (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 3 – Promotion of preschool participation for all service providers	<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 centre based services</p>	<p>All children, including vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program</p> <p>All Indigenous children have access to, and participate in, an affordable, quality early childhood education program</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	ACT

Project elements	Outputs (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 4 – Scholarship program for educators from all service providers	<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>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 centre based services</p>	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	ACT
Element 5 – Infrastructure support for non-government service providers	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 centre based services	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	ACT

Project elements	Outputs (for example services delivered, buildings constructed)	Outcomes	Reform / Project Objectives	Responsibilities
Element 6 – Delivery of <i>Preschool Matters Grants Program</i> to all service providers	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	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	ACT

Risk management

20. The ACT Education Directorate 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.

Australian Capital Territory Context

21. ACT provides free preschool for 600 hours per year at 79 public preschools. The estimated resident population of four-year-olds in the ACT in June 2018 was 5,620 children of whom it is estimated 164 are Indigenous and approximately 720 are of low socioeconomic status. In 2018, a total of 4,539 four and five-year-olds residing in the ACT or NSW were enrolled in and attended public preschools in the year before full-time schooling. Additionally, in 2018 approximately 4,500 students were enrolled in and attended a long day care centre and/or a non-government preschool, noting that this information includes cross-border enrolment from NSW and children enrolled in multiple settings.
22. In developing this Implementation Plan consideration has been given to relevant ACT context. Key factors that have influenced the proposed direction are:
- (a) The ACT Government has a strong commitment to early childhood education and this is evident in its investment in preschools over the last 50 years.
 - (b) The ACT has no remote communities, and this Implementation Plan therefore does not aim to meet the objectives or outcomes identified in clauses 14 and 15(c) of the National Partnership.
 - (c) In 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, all ACT public preschools will continue to offer no fee public preschool programs. ACT public preschool programs are delivered by degree qualified early childhood teachers, aligned with the NQF, for 600 hours per annum.

- (d) The current and previous National Partnership Agreements contributed to an increase from 12 to 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) in the government preschool sector.
- (e) Maintain the targeted increased government preschool service delivery to schools in suburbs with higher numbers of disadvantaged and/or Indigenous populations. In addition, AEDC data was used to inform the selection of increased provision in areas of need.
- (f) The ACT Government has in place additional activities outside this National Partnership for cross-government collaboration to ensure wraparound service delivery for Indigenous children, and also for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- (g) Quality early childhood education in the year before full-time school is also delivered in other settings including non-government preschools and long day care centres.
- (h) The ACT will maintain support to other settings including non-government preschools and long day care centres through:
 - (i) provision of subsidies to non-government providers; and
 - (ii) capital upgrades and maintenance to long day care centres in ACT Government owned accommodation.

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, the ACT has agreed a target for 2019, 2020 and 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 Target	2020 Target	2021 Target	Performance Benchmark/Targ et
96.5%	96%*	90%	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.

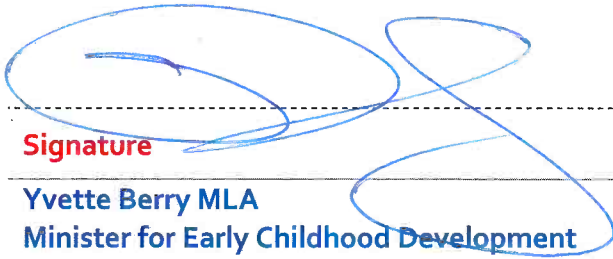
As per previous agreements, the methodology for calculation of performance related to attendance targets will be where a child has participated in a quality preschool program for a minimum of one hour during the collection period.

Monitoring and reporting

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 the ACT's performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Implementation Plan, as identified below:
 - a. Identification of vulnerable and disadvantaged children in communities identified in the 2015 and/or 2018 AEDC as having above the national average rates of vulnerability in two or more domains.
 - b. The ACT public preschool August census data as described in clauses 15 (a) to (d).
27. 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

Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Early Childhood Development

20 MAY 2021

Date

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

Yvette Berry MLA

Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development



17.5.21

Signature

Date

The Hon Alan Tudge MP

Minister for Education and Youth