

# Northern Territory: Implementation Plan and Performance Report (Plan) - 2026

Preschool Reform Agreement – 2022 to 2027

This Plan covers:

- the implementation activities for the period 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026 (Tables 2 – 4);
- the performance report for the period 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026 (Annex 1 and 2).

## PART 1: PRELIMINARIES

1. This Plan is a schedule to the Preschool Reform Agreement 2022 – 2027 (the Agreement) and should be read in conjunction with the Agreement. This Plan covers the period from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026.
2. The Agreement reaffirms a national commitment to provide universal access to, and improved participation by, children in quality preschool programs in the year before full-time school (YBFS), with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and disadvantaged children. These programs should be delivered in a manner that meets the needs of children, parents and communities at a cost which does not present a barrier to participation.
3. The objective of the Agreement is to facilitate children’s early learning and development and transition to school by maintaining universal access to quality preschool programs for all children, improving participation in preschool programs, and maximising the benefit of the preschool year by improving outcomes for children.
4. The Agreement supports the delivery of 15 hours a week, or 600 hours a year of quality preschool programs, by a degree qualified early childhood teacher for all children, regardless of the setting in which programs are delivered, in the year before school.
5. The Agreement has a focus on improving preschool participation and outcomes including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and disadvantaged children.
6. This Plan is the fifth of six annual implementation plans that build on each other to deliver the reforms outlined in the Agreement.

## PART 2: TERMS AND DEFINITIONS OF THIS PLAN

7. This Plan will commence as soon as it is agreed between the Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Minister for Early Childhood Education, and the Northern Territory, represented by their Minister for Early Education.
8. As a schedule to the Agreement, the purpose of this Plan is to provide the public with an indication of how the Northern Territory demonstrates its capacity to achieve and deliver the outcomes of the Agreement.
9. This Plan will cease on completion of the final performance reporting and the processing of final payments against the performance benchmarks or milestones set out within it for 2026.
10. This Plan may be varied by written agreement between the Commonwealth and the responsible State Minister.
11. The Parties to this 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: FUNDING CONTRIBUTION

### Commonwealth Funding Contributions

12. The Commonwealth's estimated total financial contribution to the Northern Territory is set out in Tables 1a (program year) and 1b (financial year) of the Agreement.
13. However, the Commonwealth's financial contribution in individual program years is adjusted in accordance with the notes to Tables 1a and 1b of the Agreement. Consistent with the agreed adjustment process, the final amounts for 2026 are set out in **Table 1**.
14. **Table 1** does not include funding for children who repeat the YBFS. This funding will be calculated and paid in arrears per Appendix A.1 to the Agreement.
15. The Commonwealth contribution can only be moved between years with the agreement of the Commonwealth Minister. This would address extraordinary circumstances only and details would be agreed in the context, noting Commonwealth Funding Follows Child requires funding is expended in the year for which it is provided.

**Table 1: 2026 Commonwealth financial contribution to the Northern Territory**

| Category   | Amount <sup>1</sup> |
|--|---------------------|
| YBFS financial contribution  | \$5,577,955         |
| Additional funding to maintain 2021 levels   | \$0                 |
| <b>Total Commonwealth financial contribution (excluding project support funding)</b> | <b>\$5,577,955</b>  |
| Preschool Outcomes Measure: Project Support  | \$2,250,000         |
| <b>Total Commonwealth financial contribution (including project support funding)</b> | <b>\$7,827,955</b>  |

<sup>1</sup>Figures may not add due to rounding. These figures are based on the most recent YBFS population projections estimated by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in January 2026.

16. **Table 2** shows how the Northern Territory will use Commonwealth funding to meet the objectives of the Agreement. This may include strategies to facilitate preschool attendance by children in the year before full-time school.

**Table 2: Program/activities objectives and outcomes**

|  | Program/activity  | Outputs  | Objectives   | Outcomes   | Estimated Cth funds allocated |
|--|---|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Program year funding (Commonwealth Funding Follows Child)</b> |   |  |  |  |                               |
| 1.   | Maintain universal access to 600 hours of affordable, high-quality preschool programs for all children in the year before full-time school. | Support quality early childhood education programs which meet the needs of Territory families and communities, regardless of service type. | To facilitate children's early learning and development. | All children, regardless of where they live or the level of vulnerability and disadvantage circumstances they may experience, have access to, and are able to actively participate in high-quality and culturally responsive early childhood education program.        | \$5.428 million               |
| 2.   | Increase participation in a quality early childhood program in the year before full-time school.  | Quality early childhood education programs which meet the needs of parents and communities.  | To facilitate children's early learning and development. | All children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, vulnerable and disadvantaged children, have access to, and regularly attend an affordable quality early childhood education program.<br><br>All children in remote and very remote areas have access to | \$0.150 million               |

|  |  |  |  |                                       |                 |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
|  |  |  |  | free preschool from the age of three. |                 |
| <b>Total all programs and activities</b> |  |  |  |                                       | \$5.578 million |

The Northern Territory will use the following methodology to calculate the number of children accessing a quality preschool program in each of the following service settings in which Commonwealth Funding Follows the Child will be directed:

- Preschool program delivered by a Northern Territory Government school
  - Funding for these preschool programs is allocated through government’s school resourcing model, noting the Commonwealth Funding Follows the Child represents a small proportion of the total funding allocated for each child.
  - Since 2025, preschool funding has been determined using a separate methodology to improve funding transparency. Preschool students receive funding through an enrolment-based approach determined by three components: a base rate, a weighting based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity for eligible students, and a size supplement.
  - Enrolment data collected in the 2025 Age Grade Census is used to inform preschool funding. The funded student number is determined based on the school’s average enrolments in week 4, Term 1 of 2025.
  - If a child is enrolled in multiple services, funding will be prioritised to a school based preschool program. The Northern Territory’s annual Quality Preschool Programs Survey will inform this data.
  
- Preschool program delivered by a non-government school where there is no childcare subsidy (CCS) provision
  - The Northern Territory will administer the Commonwealth Funding Follows the Child through enrolment data collected in the 2026 Age Grade Census.
  - Enrolment data collected through the 2026 Age Grade Census will be used to inform funding calculations.
  
- Preschool program delivered by a long day care service, including preschool provided by an Early Learning Centre and other non-government schools
  - The Northern Territory will administer its annual Quality Preschool Programs Survey to determine how many preschool aged children are receiving a quality preschool program through their service.
  - Enrolment data collected in the 2026 Quality Preschool Programs Survey will be used to inform funding calculations.
  - If a child is also enrolled in a school based preschool program, funding will be prioritised to the school.

## State context and funding contributions

17. Context influencing the Northern Territory delivery of preschool and the States’ investment in preschool for 2026 is covered in this section.

- a. In developing this implementation plan, consideration has been given to the unique demographic, geographic, economic and historic characteristics which differentiate the Northern Territory from other jurisdictions that affect the delivery of services and achievement of outcomes.

- i. The Northern Territory has the smallest population of all states and territories, with a population of approximately 264 400<sup>1</sup> people, representing approximately one per cent of the total Australian population, spread over an area of 1 349 129 sq. km.
  - ii. The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all states and territories, with 76 487<sup>2</sup> people, representing approximately 30.8 per cent of the Northern Territory's total population, most of whom reside in remote and very remote areas.
  - iii. Of the 76 487 who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, approximately 2.7 per cent are aged 0 to 4 years, compared with 0.41 per cent for the same cohort nationally.
  - iv. Approximately 26.9<sup>3</sup> per cent of Northern Territory children are vulnerable on two or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census compared with 12.5 per cent nationally. 2024 AEDC results are used to inform complementary activities.
  - v. Government schools represent approximately 75 per cent of all services that provide a quality preschool program in the Northern Territory and provide preschool for the majority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged cohorts.
  - vi. Majority of non-government schools that provide a quality preschool program in the Northern Territory do so under an Early Learning Centre (ELC) delivery model and provide families with access to the CCS.
- b. In the Northern Territory, government schools provide 600 hours per year of free preschool for four- and five-year-old children. Children in very remote locations can access preschool from the age of three. This Agreement provides a contribution towards the Northern Territory's provision of quality preschool of 600 hours per year for children in the year before fulltime schooling.
- c. The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training's Strategic Plan 2025-2028<sup>4</sup> includes system objectives and priority actions to improve access to quality early childhood programs and services to provide a strong start for all Territory children.
- d. The Early Childhood Safe Start Strong Futures Plan 2026<sup>5</sup> outlines the NT government's commitment to ensuring all children can access and experience quality early learning opportunities. This commitment will be achieved through four pillars of strengthened accountability, targeted investment, continuous improvement, and meaningful engagement.
- e. Insights from the Review of the Funding and Delivery of Preschool in the Northern Territory (funded under this Agreement), the three-year-old preschool trial in urban and regional government schools, and the Commonwealth funded quality review of 41 Community Child Care Fund Restricted services, together with the broader

<sup>1</sup> <https://nteconomy.nt.gov.au/population>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nteconomy.nt.gov.au/population#aboriginal>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aedc.gov.au/community-data-explorer/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://education.nt.gov.au/media/docs/education-nt-strategy/det-strategic-plan-2025-2028.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [https://nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1573587/early-childhood-safe-start-strong-futures-plan-2026.pdf](https://nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1573587/early-childhood-safe-start-strong-futures-plan-2026.pdf)

national early childhood reform agenda, will shape the roadmap for achieving universal ECEC reform in the Northern Territory.

- f. Complementary department activities include:
- i. Improve access to quality early childhood programs and services to provide a strong start for all Territory children
  - ii. Working closely with schools and system leaders to implement school attendance strategies
  - iii. Using 2024 AEDC results as evidence to support ongoing policy consideration, planning and action
  - iv. Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents and caregivers in remote and very remote communities to engage in quality early childhood education programs such as the Families as First Teachers program and programs delivered through Child and Family Centres and Connected Beginnings programs
  - v. Providing resources to support the delivery of quality preschool programs including the NT Early Years Curriculum Guide: Preschool, and the Preschool STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) Games
  - vi. Supporting schools and early childhood services and programs to develop effective transitioning periods for children and their families to and from preschool using the Northern Territory Early Childhood Transitioning Package
  - vii. Partnering with key early childhood stakeholders and financial support to deliver the annual Northern Territory Education and Care Awards and Little People Big Dreams Conference, which aim to promote quality early childhood practices and raise the profile of the sector
  - viii. Hosting Community of Practice forums with early childhood stakeholders to integrate sector input in shaping national and local ECEC reform agendas and foster collaborative approaches for improving children's learning outcomes
  - ix. Continuing to provide the Early Childhood Services Subsidy to all regulated long day care services in the Northern Territory to help with the cost of providing a service and subsequently reduce the cost of education and care for parents, while also enhancing accountability to ensure safety and quality standards are met
  - x. Implementing the Northern Territory Quality Preschool Programs Survey to determine if long day care, early learning centres and other non-government schools are providing a quality preschool program to children in the year before full-time school, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, for at least 600 hours per year, using the Early Years Learning Framework
  - xi. Publicly reporting preschool expenditure and attendance targets annually in the Northern Territory's Budget Paper (BP3) publication available on the Northern Territory Treasury website.

## Data Sharing and Transparency

18. The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory reaffirm their commitment to using their best endeavours to share data between jurisdictions as a default position, where it can be

done securely, safely, lawfully and ethically. This position is supported by the [Intergovernmental Agreement on data sharing between Commonwealth and State and Territory governments](#) and the Data Sharing Strategy endorsed by the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee.

19. Sharing of data in relation to the Agreement may occur for the purposes of research, statistical analysis or policy development that is in line with the stated objective of the Agreement to maximise the benefit of the preschool year by improving outcomes for children. Linkage and any subsequent publication of the results of linked data would only occur with the express consent of all parties. No outputs or outcomes of the research, statistical analysis or policy development would be used for determining payments under this Agreement.
20. The Commonwealth holds Child Care Administrative data. The Commonwealth undertakes to facilitate sharing of this data in accordance with appropriate legislation such as the Privacy Act 1988 and legislation underpinning the Child Care Subsidy. This may occur:
  - a. on an ongoing basis as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Secure Environment for Analysing Data (SEAD) platform once development has concluded;
  - b. on an ongoing basis as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA); or
  - c. via a data sharing agreement negotiated with the Commonwealth.
21. The Northern Territory holds data in relation to Northern Territory-funded preschool programs as part of the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection and National Preschool Attendance Collection. The Northern Territory undertakes to facilitate sharing of this data through:
  - a. the Australian Bureau of Statistics Person Level Integrated Data Asset for agreed projects that maximise the benefits of the year before full-time school (preschool) and early childhood education care to improve outcomes for children;
  - b. any other measures to be agreed
22. The Commonwealth may publish details regarding funding under the Agreement for the Northern Territory following completion of the final milestone for the program year.

## Implementation Project Funding Contributions

23. This section details implementation project funding provided by the Commonwealth and the State's progress in implementing the project to date. States will be required to provide details of how Implementation Project Funding will be used to deliver reforms, including key performance indicators (KPIs) and timing. Details will be captured at **Table 3**.

**Table 3: Overview of Implementation Project Funding for Northern Territory - Statement of Allocations (as per 2022 Implementation Plan)**

| Implementation Project (details)                         | Commonwealth funding | Actions (incl. deliverables)   | KPI  | Timing (incl. delivery schedule) |
|--|----------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Preschool in the NT review                               | \$0.65 million       | Support external consultant to conduct a review that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the current situation of preschool delivery and funding in the NT.</li> <li>Identify best practice approaches and opportunities for preschool reform, including ways to maximise existing funding.</li> <li>Engage and consult with NT stakeholders.</li> </ul> | Interim project deliverables (interim report and options paper)  | Completed                        |
|  |                      | Consider final report and recommendations to government  | Final Report   | Completed                        |
| Improving quality and child safety in preschool settings | \$0.1 million        | Implementation of the NT <i>Safe Start, Strong Futures Plan 2026</i> .   | Raise the percentage of approved education and care services delivering preschool to 'meeting' or 'exceeding' the national quality standard to 85% or higher | Throughout 2026                  |
| Develop capacity to deliver PRA from 2024                | \$0.25 million       | Assess existing system capacity and impact of proposed changes to attendance collection and reporting system, including FFC.   | Actions undertaken   | Completed                        |

24. Consistent with the terms of the Agreement, Commonwealth funding for Implementation Projects was provided as part of the first milestone payment of the Agreement, when the Commonwealth and State agreed the 2022 Implementation Plan.

### Preschool Outcomes Measure: Project Support

25. Table 4, below, agrees:

- a. Commonwealth project funding made available for 2026 to support participation in the Preschool Outcomes Measure, in particular the pilot of the national tool; and
- b. the ways in which States intend to spend this Commonwealth funding in 2026.

26. When completing Table 4, States are requested to also outline State contributions, where relevant, including in-kind contributions.

27. If necessary, Table 4 maybe agreed in an addendum attached to this Implementation Plan following Ministerial agreement to the PRA Appendix A.4 *Preschool Outcomes Measure 2026-2027*. If an addendum is needed, this should be noted in the table.

28. A clearly labelled copy of Table 4 may be inserted below to agree, in 2026, Commonwealth funding made available for 2027, and the ways in which States intend to spend that funding in 2027.

**Table 4: Overview of Preschool Outcomes Measure Project Support for Northern Territory - Statement of Allocations**

| Activities (details)            | Commonwealth funding  | State contribution  | Actions (incl. deliverables)                         | KPI   | Timing (incl. delivery schedule) |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Project Planning                | \$2.25 million (amount to be expended across 2026 and 2027) | Establish a governance structure for the pilot                        | Establish project plan and governance structure      | Jurisdiction roadmap                            | June to September 2026           |
| Pilot preparation               |   | Identify staff and training facilitator/s to support the project      | Communication and stakeholder engagement             | Sector correspondence regarding POM development |                                  |
|                                 |   | Develop funding criteria  | Information session                                  | Information session delivered                   | June to October 2026             |
|                                 |   | Grant administration  | Expressions of interest and assessment               | Service nominations received and assessed       |                                  |
|                                 |   |   | Grant administration                                 | Grants administered and service onboarding      |                                  |
|                                 |   |   | Portal administration                                | Grants administered and service onboarding      |                                  |
| Commence implementation in 2026 |   | Strengthen insights into the professional development requirements of | Contextualise professional development resources and | Participating services undertake professional   | October to December 2026         |

|   |  |   |   |  |                 |
|---|--|---|---|--|-----------------|
|   |  | teachers and educators including from First Nations, CALD, and other vulnerable cohorts   | flexible delivery models<br><br>Develop staff capacity through the train the trainer approach<br><br>Work with ACER to facilitate familiarisation with the national tool for educators and services participating in the pilot to undertake a round of measurement with a focus on teacher usability  | development & 1 assessment                         |                 |
| Ongoing Project Management & Evaluation in 2027 |  | Contribute to the evidence base for improving usability and accessibility of the national tool and learning progression across diverse service settings | Work collaboratively with ACER, the Australian Government, and participating jurisdictions to continue to pilot the national tool, with a focus on measuring each child's development over time.<br><br>Actively contribute to all participation and evaluation activities<br><br>Data management and monitoring pilot participation<br><br>Provide targeted training and support as required | At least 2 assessments in 2027 ahead of evaluation | Throughout 2027 |

## Risk Management

29. The Northern Territory will actively identify, monitor and manage the risks associated with delivering outcomes under the Agreement, such as through maintaining their own risk management plan.

## PART 4: REFORMS

30. As part of the Agreement, the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth agree to work collaboratively to implement reforms outlined in the Additional terms in the Agreement.
31. The actions that the Northern Territory will undertake to meet these commitments are detailed in **Table 5**.

**Table 5: Planned Actions for the period 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026 for the Northern Territory**

| Reform Element   | Actions   | Timing   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Reform Element One: Implement Commonwealth Funding Follows Child</b>  |   |  |
| <p>Details of how the Commonwealth Funding Follows Child at the setting level will be implemented in the State.</p>  | <p>Measures to be undertaken in 2026</p> <p>Funding will be disseminated in each setting as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Preschool program delivered by a Northern Territory Government school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Preschool funding allocated to schools in Term 1 of 2026</li> <li>o Confirmation of the funding allocation will occur via the Northern Territory Government Department of Education and Training’s centralised datasets.</li> <li>o Funding contributes to the provision of free access to a preschool program.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Preschool program delivered by a non-government school where there is no CCS provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Confirmation of enrolment will occur via the 2026 Age Grade Census process to inform funding allocation</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Preschool program delivered by a long day care service including preschool provided by an early learning centre and other non-government schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Administer the Northern Territory Quality Preschool Programs Survey 2026.</li> <li>o Provision of the Commonwealth Funding Follows the Child contribution through a Quality Preschools Program grant payment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The Northern Territory will administer an annual acquittal statement to confirm expenditure of the Commonwealth Funding Follows the Child.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Term 1, 2026</li> <li>b. Semester 2 2026</li> <li>c. Term 2, 2026</li> </ul> |
| <b>Reform Element Two: Implement a new national preschool attendance measure</b>   |   |  |
| <p>Agreed details of preschool enrolment and attendance targets for 2026, to be measured using data provided to the Commonwealth, in accordance with Appendix A.1.</p> | <p>Agreed baseline year 2025</p>  | <p>2026 performance data scheduled for delivery in</p>   |

| Reform Element   | Actions   | Timing  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>For 2026 targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2025 will be used as the baseline to measure 2026 performance.</li> <li>attendance targets will be measured according to the formula 'at least x% of children attend at least y% of 600 hours', where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'y' is the agreed proportion of 600 hours; and</li> <li>'x' is any improvement on the baseline year's proportion of YBFS children attending agreed proportion of 'y' hours.</li> </ul> </li> <li>enrolment targets are any improvement on the 2025 baseline figure.</li> </ul> <p>Targets will be set <i>and assessed</i> with reference to the PRA Appendix A, clause 15 and clause 21 and Appendix A.1 clauses 4.15, 4.16 and the principles set out in Appendix A.1 section 5, noting the Parties acknowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attendance in preschool programs is not compulsory and influenced by parental choice and other factors</li> <li>the attendance measure is based on an experimental data collection and may be subject to year-to-year volatility</li> <li>a range of sources of supplementary data may need to be provided and considered in good faith to properly assess performance against attendance targets</li> <li>capacity to demonstrate year-on-year improvements (x) reduces the greater the proportion of children attending at the target attendance rate (y)</li> <li>inclusion of targets within 2026 Implementation Plans do not constitute agreement to those same targets in future years or for future agreements.</li> </ul> | <p>Work towards meeting the following agreed targets for 2026:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement from the 2025 baseline proportion of children in the year before full-time school (x%) who attend a preschool program(s) for 75% of 600 hours (450 hours). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement from the 2025 baseline proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the year before full-time school who are enrolled in a preschool program(s) for 600 hours.</li> <li>Improvement from the 2025 baseline proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the year before full-time school (x%) who attend a preschool program(s) for 75% of 600 hours (450 hours).</li> </ol> </li> <li>Improvement from the 2025 baseline proportion of disadvantaged children in the year before full-time school who are enrolled in a preschool program(s) for 600 hours. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement from the 2025 baseline proportion of disadvantaged children in the year before full-time school (x%) who attend a preschool program(s) for 75% of 600 hours (450 hours).</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Measures to be undertaken in 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work collaboratively with the Australian Government and states and territories to facilitate the collection, reporting and analysis of enrolment and attendance data.</li> <li>Prepare and derive government school attendance data based on specific business rules as articulated in Appendix B of the agreement.</li> <li>In order to ensure accurate comparison between attendance collection years, the Northern Territory will work with the Australian Government Department of Education and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to provide supplementary data and information that enables ongoing performance to be measured.</li> <li>Ensure alignment with Northern Territory Government performance targets to provide consistency and support the delivery of the Northern Territory's quality improvement agenda.</li> </ul> | <p>March- April 2027</p> <p>Throughout 2026</p> |

| Reform Element   | Actions  | Timing   |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Strategies to facilitate participation in preschool by children in the YBFS. For strategies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, consistent with the Closing the Gap agreement, engage those communities and/or representative bodies in the design process.</p> | <p>Measures to be undertaken in 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop targeted communications including key messages and resources to promote enrolment and participation of preschool aged children, with a focus on Aboriginal and vulnerable families in both urban and remote communities.</li> <li>• Develop and implement targeted strategies to affect quality improvements across service settings.</li> <li>• Promote and support preschool children’s engagement in a quality preschool program through the following programs: Families as First Teachers Program, Learning with Families, Literacy for Parents, Child and Family Centres and Connected Beginnings.</li> <li>• Continue to promote the use of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Early Years Curriculum Guide: Preschool – a supporting resource to embed the Early Years Learning Framework; and</i></li> <li>2. <i>Northern Territory Early Childhood Transitioning Package</i> to help services develop effective transitioning periods for children and their families to and from preschool.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> | <p>Throughout 2026</p>   |
| <p><b>Reform Element Three: Implement a new national preschool outcomes measure</b></p>  |  |  |
| <p>Participate in activities that continue to support outcomes measurement</p>   | <p>Measures to be undertaken in 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the negotiation and finalisation of Appendix A.4 through active engagement in the POM Working Group.</li> </ul> <p><u>Pilot Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an NT project plan and governance structure to guide implementation of the POM Pilot.</li> <li>• Communicate with the ECEC sector regarding the development of the POM tool/Pilot, including delivery of a sector-wide information session.</li> </ul> <p><u>Pilot Preparation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate the process for seeking, assessing, and selecting expressions of interest from ECEC services interested in participating in the Pilot.</li> <li>• Develop, administer and oversee funding arrangements for participating services.</li> <li>• Portal administration</li> </ul> <p><u>Professional Development</u></p>  | <p>Semester 1, 2026</p> <p>From semester 2, 2026, ref. Table 4</p> |

| Reform Element  | Actions   | Timing                 |
|---|---|------------------------|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the development and delivery of contextualised professional development, including staff development through a train the trainer model.</li> </ul> <p><u>Project Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Preschool Outcomes Measure Pilot across participating ECEC services in the NT for the first round of assessments, with a focus on teacher usability, ensuring fidelity to national guidance and local requirements.</li> <li>• Monitor pilot participation, data quality and data management processes, addressing issues promptly to maintain integrity and consistency.</li> <li>• Contribute to participation, monitoring and evaluation activities, including data collection, feedback processes, and reporting to inform future refinement and national implementation considerations.</li> </ul> |                        |
| <b>Reform Delivery/Implementation</b>   |   |                        |
| <p>State-specific data and implementation issues and strategies for how these will be overcome in the context of assessing performance under the Agreement.</p> | <p>Measures to be undertaken in 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Northern Territory will work collaboratively with all Australian Government Departments to identify Northern Territory specific data, supplementary information, implementation issues and develop appropriate strategies to minimise any adverse impact on the Northern Territory's performance under the Agreement.</li> <li>• The Northern Territory will work with the Australian Government and the ABS to support the secure, appropriate and timely sharing of preschool enrolment and attendance data, in accordance with Appendix A.1 and relevant privacy and data governance requirements.</li> </ul>  | <p>Throughout 2026</p> |

## PART 5: PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

32. Part 5 sets out the performance and reporting arrangements for the Northern Territory for 2026.
33. The 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 Agreement, are set out in Part 5 of this Plan and Appendix B of the Agreement.
34. These data and performance specifications will be used to report Northern Territory performance, except for the supplementary data agreed by the Parties to this Plan.
35. Supplementary data reports must contain the following details for each Performance Indicator (PI) where the method is not consistent with the Early Childhood Education and Care Minimum Data Set (NMDS):
- a. PI calculation description (numerator, denominator, computation, and presentation)
  - b. numerator information (collection name and population description)
  - c. denominator information (collection name and population description)
  - d. calculation notes (including any information about how the PI is calculated)
  - e. methodology
  - f. 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).
36. Families as First Teachers (FaFT) delivers quality early learning and parent support programs to children and their families in the Northern Territory. It develops place-based programs to engage families and communities and builds parents' capacity to give their children the best start in life. All children from birth to four years of age may participate in a FaFT program with a parent or carer and is enrolled at the school in which the program operates.
37. From 2024, States were required to provide baseline enrolment and attendance data in order to receive their full performance funding. Appendix A.1 and Appendix B to the Agreement set out the nationally agreed approach for data collection, provision, and reporting.
- a. Where a State has agreed with the Commonwealth transitional arrangements for 2026, these should be detailed in Table 5 and 6.
38. Table 6 covers information states are required to report annually to facilitate application of Appendix A.1 and Appendix B in 2026.

**Table 6: State specific attendance and enrolment data considerations**

| Category                     | Required Information  |
|------------------------------|---|
| Attendance collection period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Northern Territory will supply Term 2 2026 preschool attendance data for the National Preschool Attendance Collection (NPAC).</li> </ul> |

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
|                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The standard Northern Territory Government School term dates for Term 2 2026 are from 13 April 2026 to 19 June 2026 (inclusive). Noting one government school in the Northern Territory has an approved flexible school calendar and the Term 2 dates for this school are from 7 April 2026 to 19 June 2026 (inclusive). Refer <a href="https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/school-term-dates-in-nt">https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/school-term-dates-in-nt</a>.</li> <li>Furthermore, Northern Territory non-government schools may operate with different dates to the above.</li> </ul>   |
| Data provision                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NPAC and National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (NECECC) datasets will be supplied as two different datasets at the same time.</li> <li>In 2026, the NT will supply de-identified address lists for NECECC and NPAC to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for geocoding by 20 September 2026. ABS to return geocoded address lists to the Northern Territory by 4 October 2026. Northern Territory to submit NECECC and NPAC data to ABS by the latest acceptable date.</li> </ul>   |
| Child and state specific YBFS      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A data quality statement will accompany the Northern Territory's submissions.</li> <li>In the Northern Territory, children are eligible to enrol in preschool at the beginning of the year if they turn 4 years of age on or prior to 30 June of the same year.</li> <li>Children in very remote schools may be enrolled in a preschool program when they turn three years of age. This is an important strategy to engage children in remote areas in early childhood education programs.</li> <li>The compulsory school age for children in the NT is when children turn 6 years of age on or prior to 30 June of the same year.</li> </ul> |
| Children who repeat YBFS preschool | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to claim funding for children who repeat in 2026, the Northern Territory will complete and provide the preschool repeater flag in the NECECC to the ABS.</li> </ul>  |

## Performance requirements, reporting and payment summary 2026

39. Performance Reporting for 2026 will capture progress against planned actions undertaken by the Northern Territory as detailed at Table 5. States should provide sufficient detail in performance reporting to enable consideration of progress against actions and provide the Commonwealth with a draft prior to submission of the final report.
40. Performance reporting will be signed off by the Commonwealth Minister who will then inform the Northern Territory Minister of the outcome through an exchange of letters.

**Sign off**

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

Signed for and on behalf of the Northern Territory by

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Signature Jo Hersey Date 16.6.26  
The Hon Jo Hersey MLA  
Minister for Early Education | Minister for Education and Training | Minister for Public Service

Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by

-----  
Signature Jess Walsh Date 22/6/26  
Senator the Hon Jess Walsh  
Minister for Early Childhood Education | Minister for Youth

## Annex 1 – Funding Follows Child Acquittals

### Commonwealth Funding Follows Child (CFFC) acquittals (updated by 31 March 2027)

Requirements for Commonwealth Funding Follows Child can be found in Appendix A to the PRA.

Examples of the types of program expenditure and subsidies that meet these requirements include:

- a. For enrolled children (in each setting):
  - i. Fee relief for families
  - ii. Provision of early childhood teachers to deliver preschool programs
  - iii. Quality improvements, including teacher recruitment and retention
  - iv. Program subsidies, including needs-based funding models or additional support
  
- b. For funding that cannot be attributed to any children enrolled in a quality preschool program:
  - i. Communication and outreach
  - ii. Enrolment and attendance strategies, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and disadvantaged children.
  - iii. Specialised programs, without which children would have no access to preschool programs, or programs that meet their individual needs

It is not the intention of Funding Follows the Child that per-child contributions are used to support:

- c. For enrolled children (in each setting):
  - i. Programs that cannot be attributed to settings
- d. For children who are not enrolled:
  - i. Universal program subsidies and fee relief for children enrolled in preschool programs.

States should provide an account of how CFFC is allocated across settings and describe their approach or methodology to derive their calculation for the number of children in the YBFS within a particular setting. States should also provide some explanation of their method for estimating the YBFS population which is not yet participating in preschool.

To acquit funding by setting, states will need to complete Tables 1, 2 and 3 below and submit these to the Commonwealth by 31 March 2027.

In Table 1, States should set out the number of children that attended preschool in their YBFS in each setting as determined using the methodology outlined in their implementation plans. They should also include the total funding spent in each setting.

**Table 1. Summary of children and Commonwealth funding spent by setting**

| Setting  | Number of Children attending preschool in the YBFS                 | Total Commonwealth funding spent in setting |
|--|--|---|
| CBDC   | State calculation of [n] children in YBFS counted against setting. | \$N.Nm                                      |
| Stand-alone                                      | State calculation of [n] children in YBFS counted against setting. | \$N.Nm                                      |
| School-based preschool                           | State calculation of [n] children in YBFS counted against setting. | \$N.Nm                                      |
| Total Commonwealth Funding spent in all settings |  | \$N.Nm                                      |

In Table 2, states should provide a summary of expenditure by program for initiatives that were undertaken to promote enrolment and attendance in preschool in reference to clause 7 of Appendix A. Again, this should reflect the methodology described in the State's implementation plan.

**Table 2. Summary of expenditure of Commonwealth funding not attributed to children in the YBFS enrolled in preschool (children in the YBFS who are not enrolled)**

| Estimated number of children in the YBFS, for which funding cannot be attributed to children in in any setting | Total Commonwealth funding spent |
|--|----------------------------------|
| State calculation of [n] children  | \$N.Nm                           |

In Table 3, States should acquit funding against programs outlined in Table 2 of Implementation Plans. Where a program runs across more than one setting, a row should be added for each setting. This table relates to clauses 6 and 7 of Appendix A which outline the purposes for which Commonwealth funding should be used.

**Table 3. Commonwealth funding by program and setting**

| Item          | Setting                  | Program description                       | Amount (\$)      |
|---------------|--------------------------|---|------------------|
| <i>Auto #</i> | <i>e.g. School-based</i> | <i>Type a description of the program.</i> | <i>\$NNN,NNN</i> |
| 1.            | Choose an item.          | Click or tap here to enter text.          | \$0              |
|               |                          |   | \$ 0.00          |

Additional funding to maintain 2021 levels is not required to be acquitted through this template. However, States may choose to acquit this funding in these tables if this cannot be separated. States may also choose to include state funding at their own discretion.

## Annex 2 – Progress Update

### Progress update on actions agreed in the Implementation Plan

State and Territory reporting should provide updates on work agreed in Implementation Plans (Table 5) including implementation of attendance strategies in the following tables. The below table provides a template for the submission of this progress update.

**Table 1: Reporting on delivery of Planned Actions for 2026 (update by 31 March 2027)**

| Element   | Agreed Action                                     | Progress Update                                 |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Reform Element One: Implement Commonwealth Funding Follows Child (CFFC)</b>  |   |   |
| How Commonwealth funding follows child at the setting level will be implemented in the State  | As per Table 5 in the Implementation Plan in 2026 | A progress update on actions agreed at Table 5. |
| <b>Reform Element Two: Implement a new national preschool attendance measure</b>  |   |   |
| The approach to measure preschool enrolment and attendance and how data will be provided to the Commonwealth, in accordance with Appendix A.1.  | As per Table 5 in the Implementation Plan in 2026 | A progress update on actions agreed at Table 5. |
| Strategies to facilitate participation in preschool by children in the year before full-time school. For strategies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, consistent with the Closing the Gap agreement, engage those communities and/or representative bodies in the design process. | As per Table 5 in the Implementation Plan in 2026 | A progress update on actions agreed at Table 5. |
| <b>Reform Element Three: Implement a new national preschool outcomes measure</b>  |   |   |
| How the State will work collaboratively with the Commonwealth to progress the preschool outcomes measure.   | As per Table 5 in the Implementation Plan in 2026 | A progress update on actions agreed at Table 5. |
| <b>Reform Delivery/Implementation</b>   |   |   |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| State-specific data and implementation issues and strategies for how these will be overcome in the context of assessing performance under the Agreement. | As per Table 5 in the Implementation Plan in 2026 |  | A progress update on actions agreed at Table 5. |
|--|---|--|---|