**URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT:**

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Claire Grealy</td>
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<td>Associate Director</td>
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<td>Gaye Fitzgerald</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Job Code**: KAJ08710

Urbis Social Policy team has received ISO 20252 certification, the new international quality standard for Market and Social Research, for the provision of social policy research and evaluation, social planning, community consultation, market and communications research.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AECEWD</td>
<td>Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Workforce Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEDI</td>
<td>Australian Early Development Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEYLOs</td>
<td>Aboriginal Early Years Liaison Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGSRC</td>
<td>Average Government School Recurrent Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Assessing the Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education and Care in Australian Communities project</td>
</tr>
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<td>Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia</td>
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<td>AYEESOC</td>
<td>Australian Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA of ECE</td>
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<tr>
<td>C&amp;K</td>
<td>Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCB</td>
<td>Child Care Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCBI DW</td>
<td>Child Care Business Intelligence Data Warehouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCMS</td>
<td>Child Care Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSC</td>
<td>Child Care Service Census</td>
</tr>
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<td>Child Care Tax Rebate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Catholic Education Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>CS NMDS</td>
<td>Children’s Services National Minimum Data Set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCDERs</td>
<td>Data Capability Exception Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCRs</td>
<td>Data Capability Report</td>
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<td>DECKAS</td>
<td>Department of Education Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme</td>
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<td>Department of Education and Children’s Services</td>
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<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>Department of Community Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>DIWP</td>
<td>Data and Information Working Party</td>
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<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECEC NMDS</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECLSL-K</td>
<td>Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF</td>
<td>Evaluation Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIP</td>
<td>Early Intervention Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELCCs</td>
<td>Early Learning and Care Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPPE</td>
<td>Effective Provision of Preschool Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYLF</td>
<td>Early Years Learning Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FaHCSIA</td>
<td>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HECS-HELP</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme – Higher Education Loan Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HILDA</td>
<td>Household, Income and Labour Dynamics of Australia</td>
</tr>
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<td>HRMIS</td>
<td>Human Resources Management Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualised Educational Plans</td>
</tr>
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<td>IETA</td>
<td>Indigenous Education Targeted Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>Intelligence Quotient</td>
</tr>
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<td>IRSD</td>
<td>Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDC</td>
<td>Kindergarten Development Check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Long Day Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiL</td>
<td>Launching into Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSAC</td>
<td>Longitudinal Study of Australian Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAV</td>
<td>Municipal Association of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCETS</td>
<td>National Centre for Education and Training Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIA ECEC</td>
<td>National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICHD</td>
<td>National Institute of Child Health and Human Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICHD-ECC</td>
<td>National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLSCY</td>
<td>National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMDS</td>
<td>National Minimum Data Set</td>
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<td>NP ECE</td>
<td>National Partnership on Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>NPC</td>
<td>National Preschool Census</td>
</tr>
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<td>NP</td>
<td>National Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQA ITS</td>
<td>National Quality Agenda Information Technology System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Quality Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQS</td>
<td>National Quality Standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECCEC</td>
<td>Office for Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSHC</td>
<td>Outside School Hours Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEA</td>
<td>Priority Enrolment Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIPS</td>
<td>Performance Indicators in Primary Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCT</td>
<td>Queensland College of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROGS</td>
<td>Report on Government Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>School Attendance Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEIFA IRSD</td>
<td>Socio Economic Index for Areas Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage</td>
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<td>SEIFA</td>
<td>Socio Economic Index for Areas</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-economic Status</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Statistical Local Area</td>
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<td>Local Government Authorities</td>
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<td>Student Assistance Scheme</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<td>U.K.</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>Universal Access</td>
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<tr>
<td>UASG</td>
<td>Universal Access Steering Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCROC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Unit Record Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>West Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WACOT</td>
<td>Western Australian College of Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YBFTS</td>
<td>Year Before Fulltime Time School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

The National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE) contains the commitment that by 2013 every child will have access to a preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling. The NP ECE Agreement is part of Australia’s broader strategy to ensure that all children have the opportunity to maximise their potential and increase the nation’s future productivity. In the Australian context, the NP ECE provides the opportunity to take a nationally consistent approach to addressing the issues of social disadvantage and exclusion from the early stages of a child’s life.

The NP ECE Evaluation will be undertaken throughout the life of the Agreement (2009-2013) to determine its effectiveness in achieving its outcomes, including the outputs and performance indicators stipulated in the Agreement. The Evaluation will enable Governments to understand what is achieved and will provide insights to support implementation.

This is the first Annual Report of the four-year evaluation of the NP ECE. The data informing this report is drawn from the 2009 period. Where relevant however, programs or activity underway at the time of the report being written, in 2010, are also included in the report.

Overview of 2009 outcomes

Evaluation of progress in the first calendar year of the Agreement has focused on immediate outcomes, and to the extent possible, progress towards intermediate and ultimate outcomes, as identified in the NP ECE Evaluation Framework.

The key focus of jurisdictions is either handling an increase in enrolments, expanding to handle an increase in hours, or both. Some jurisdictions are finding this a significant challenge while others are managing the necessary infrastructure requirements comfortably. Assessment of affordability is difficult at this stage due to the lack of agreed measures.

Evaluation of intermediate outcomes was quite limited. Most jurisdictions met their 2009 targets or indicative trajectories in relation to the number and/or percentage of four-year ECE qualified teachers.

It was not possible to assess how well jurisdictions are responding to the challenge of providing preschool in a range of settings to accommodate the needs of different families. It was also too early to evaluate whether the States and Territories were making progress in removing barriers to accessing preschool. In terms of enrolment, it appears that most jurisdictions met their 2009 targets.

Table E1 below summarises the progress made by each jurisdiction after the first year of implementation of the NP ECE. The information in the table was sourced from 2009 Annual Reports and from bilateral discussions. It should also be noted that significant caveats exist around the data used and that these data should be read in conjunction with footnotes provided. It is neither possible nor appropriate to compare these data as there is currently no national consistency around their collection.

Key:

❖ indicates result is higher than target/indicative trajectory
❖ indicates result is lower than target/indicative trajectory
❖ indicates result is the same as the target/indicative trajectory.
Table E1: Implementation of the NP ECE –Summary of benchmarks/indicative trajectory achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Enrolments</th>
<th>Hours per week:</th>
<th>Four-year qualified teachers</th>
<th>Costs to parents</th>
<th>Disadvantaged children (share or rate)</th>
<th>Indigenous children share or rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>29% ⇒ 2.11(6 hour) days</td>
<td>4532 2,6,7</td>
<td>75.2% (rate) 6,14</td>
<td>88.2% (rate) 6,15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community preschools:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State-wide - $27.93 6,15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ATSI - $10.40 6,15</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low income - $16.62 6,15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>13.5% 3,7</td>
<td>829 5</td>
<td>95.1% 7 (rate) 6,14</td>
<td>69.3% (rate) 6,15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average weekly fee: $32.17 4,6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38% 13,7</td>
<td>892 8</td>
<td>52% (rate) 6,14</td>
<td>33% (rate) 6,14</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2006 Census denominator)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA 8</td>
<td>Over 95%</td>
<td>11 hours 9,10</td>
<td>584 10</td>
<td>20.8% 10 (share) 10</td>
<td>Maintained (rate) 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>2.3% 11,11 hours</td>
<td>225 13</td>
<td>26.3% (rate) 6,14</td>
<td>Maintained (rate) 6,15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
<td>23% 11.8 hours 11</td>
<td>351 14</td>
<td>Maintained – free 12</td>
<td>Maintained – 13 (share) 14</td>
<td>5.5% (share) 15</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>13.7% 13 hours 13</td>
<td>77% 15</td>
<td>Maintained – free 14</td>
<td>1.7% (share) 15</td>
<td>1.9% (share) 15</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>27.9% 12.9 hours</td>
<td>42.3% 16</td>
<td>Maintained – free 16</td>
<td>42.4% (share) 16</td>
<td>38.9% (share) 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table notes:

1. In NSW, the data for participation were collected in August 2009. These data do not reflect the impact of additional funding provided by National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education and the most current figures of Long Day Care Services delivering a preschool program in NSW.

2. NSW data now distinguish between Degrees and Degree equivalent qualifications and Diplomas, and distinguish Degrees by three-year or four-year duration of study. NSW reported a total of 5,741 teachers, this comprises 4,532 Degree or equivalent and 1,209 Diploma trained staff.

3. The distribution of state-funded preschool hours in the year before school varies across service providers ranging generally from 10-30 hours per week. This varied distribution skews any whole of sector average therefore averages should be used with caution. Victoria have advised that the use of median hours would provide a more representative measure in future.

4. Data on pre school specific hours in Long Day Care funded settings is not generally available. The figure of 14.6 hours is inclusive of LDC identified hours of provision which may reflect the whole day in which a child attends the setting, rather than specific preschool hours received.

5. Victoria reported as at April 2009, a total of 829 four year early childhood university trained individual teachers were employed across all state funded kindergarten services. As a teacher may work across different service providers, 850 teaching positions are held by four year early childhood university trained teachers consistent with the bilateral agreement.

6. Victoria average weekly fees are based on 1,232 services where fees data is available; including fees of 29 of the 442 LDC funded services. The average weekly fees exclude impact of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

7. Victoria’s disadvantaged children measure must be treated with some caution as it could be misleading as a result of the following factors: Victoria does not currently collect information on the location of the children’s residence and only the location of the service provider. Parents may and do use kindergarten services outside their local residence. The ABS SEIFA IRSED was developed based on the 2006 Census, which may not capture socioeconomic changes at the local areas between 2006 and 2009, in particular the growth areas of outer metropolitan Melbourne.

8. WA reported that limited quantitative data are available and will be gathered in the new survey. WA anticipated that DEEWR will collect this data and WA will develop cross sector sharing protocols in order to provide state data.

9. WA reported that, to ensure national comparability, they are updating data collection processes to gather number of hours of attendance through a new survey planned for 2010. Note this figure relates only to Government schools, which are required under the School Education Act (1999) to offer a minimum of 11 hours per week of kindergarten to age-eligible children. Catholic and independent schools are not required to meet this minimum provision, but most choose to do so.

10. The lowest quintile of schools contains 20.8% of the Kindergarten students in the state. Lowest quintile means the schools with the lowest ICSEA scores, ordered by ICSEA, with 25% of the Year 1 to 7 students. Kindergarten students mean four-year-old students in WA schools. WA schools means government and non-government schools combined.

11. WA improved Indigenous attendance – estimated at 80%, or five percentage points higher than target.

12. The proportion of children in SA enrolled in an ECE program has dropped since the baseline position was calculated. As at May 2009, an estimated 84.8% (15,551) of SA’s four-year-old population were enrolled in DECS funded preschools, compared to 87.9% (16,020) of the four-year-old population in 2008.

13. The baseline position has been recalculated as a headcount (not FTE) of 225 teachers using data reported in the 2009 Annual Census of Children’s Services. This is a significant drop to the baseline position brought about by introducing a more definitive four year early childhood teacher qualification to the census staff qualification codes.

14. Tasmania has indicated that there are significant issues with such a small number of students using the ABS data. The figure provided is derived from the 2008 national preschool census. The baseline figure was calculated from the same source but using 2007 data. The 2009 data is not yet released. Tasmania does not think that the current calculation is a good measure and is currently working on ways to provide data that more appropriately reflect the intent of the indicator.

15. The numbers of Indigenous children grew from 76 in the ACT February School Census 2009 to 116 in the ACT August School Census 2009. It can be confirmed that 2.8% would be a valid estimate that would reflect...
the increase during the year to 31 December 2009. However as the August 2009 Census does not collect information from non-government schools the numerator and denominator cannot be adjusted equally and the ACT February School Census 2009 data was used.

16. In Northern Territory, the apparent drop in enrolments is due to removal of three-year-olds in the non-government school sector from data collected and counted.
Progress against evaluation outcomes: Immediate outcomes

*Increasing capacity*

All jurisdictions reported expansion of their capacity to provide additional preschool spaces. It should be acknowledged that even in the jurisdictions where all children are already attending preschool, there exist infrastructure issues that inhibit meeting the 15 hours/week target. As existing preschool programs expand their hours, some jurisdictions must determine how to accommodate the space requirements without compromising programs for other children, for example, educational opportunities for three-year-olds. Some States/Territories are making greater use of primary school facilities, modifying them to meet the needs of preschool programs, while others are funding the community sector to expand their infrastructure and still others are utilising long day care facilities to add preschool programs to their current offerings.

Expanding physical infrastructure is challenging for many jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions are using a combination of Commonwealth NP ECE funds and State/Territory funds to establish the required new preschool places.

Most jurisdictions met or exceeded their 2009 targets for enrolment of children in preschools offering 15 hours/week. Some jurisdictions fell slightly below their 2009 enrolment target. Therefore, it would seem that the jurisdictions, in general, are managing to increase capacity broadly within agreed objectives.

*Ensuring affordability*

Affordability is a difficult factor to assess because an effective indicator has not yet been agreed. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is working on an affordability indicator, but it is unclear whether this will result in a usable mechanism (indicators and data) for jurisdictions to assess whether or not their fee structures prohibit some families from accessing preschool programs. In the meantime, States and Territories are using a proxy measure of the proportion of ‘disadvantaged’ children enrolled in and attending preschool; however this too is problematic as definitions and measures of disadvantage differ across jurisdictions.

In 2009, five States/Territories met the affordability targets/indicative trajectories identified in their bilateral agreements. Of the remaining three, there was insufficient information for two jurisdictions, and the third was close to its target/indicative trajectory.

Progress against evaluation outcomes: Intermediate outcomes

Assessment of progress towards intermediate outcomes should be prefaced by an acknowledgement of the NP ECE’s early stage of development. The key evaluation questions relate to teacher qualifications, provision in an appropriate range of settings, removing barriers (including cost), promoting programs (especially to ‘hard to reach’ families) and enrolment and attendance hours.

*Teacher qualifications*

The agreed outcome is a sufficient number of four-year trained ECE qualified teachers available to deliver preschool programs by 2013. Most jurisdictions met their 2009 targets/indicative trajectories for the number and/or percentage of four-year ECE qualified teachers.

*Provision in a range of settings*

There are a number of challenges related to providing preschool in settings that meet families’ needs, including locality (metropolitan, rural, remote) and location (eg collocation with primary school or long day care, standalone). It is too early in the evaluation to assess how well the jurisdictions are responding to these challenges.
Removing barriers and promoting programs.

Cost is usually the most commonly cited barrier to participation in preschool where fees are an issue. Given the issues around measuring affordability, it is not possible at this time to assess whether cost remains a barrier in every State and Territory and what level of out-of-pocket costs, if any, would eliminate this factor as a barrier.

Other barriers frequently cited include location, hours of operation, quality of staff, cultural appropriateness and lack of awareness. Some jurisdictions have implemented special outreach programs to promote the benefits of preschool to disadvantaged and Indigenous families. In some areas, Indigenous families enrol their children in very high numbers but attendance is relatively low; increasing attendance will, therefore, involve identifying other factors that prevent these children coming to preschool on a regular basis.

Enrolment and attendance

From the 2009 Annual Reports, it appears that most jurisdictions met their targets for enrolment, although it is generally still not at the 15 hours/week target level. Attendance data are not yet available in most States/Territories. It is expected that the 2011 National ECEC Data Collection will provide improved comparable data on enrolment and attendance.

Progress against evaluation outcomes: ultimate outcomes

Comprehensive assessment of ultimate outcomes after the first year of implementation would be premature. Nevertheless, it is useful to continue to focus on the key evaluation questions and discuss strategies for measuring progress over the next three years. Ultimate outcomes relate to the extent to which the jurisdictions have implemented universal access as agreed in the bilateral agreements, and the impact of preschool attendance on children's development across a number of domains.

Enablers and inhibitors

Key enablers include:

- The existence of adequate physical infrastructure
- A pool of qualified teachers
- Well-developed curricula in line with the National Early Years Learning Framework
- Strong jurisdictional support in terms of operational and capital works funding
- An affordable fee structure
- Adequate data systems
- A comprehensive State-based, whole-of-government early years policy (that aligns with the national policies described earlier)

Impact of universal access

Ultimately, the evaluation is concerned with more than whether the States and Territories managed to achieve the outcomes specified in the NP ECE. The critical issue is what impact the initiative has on children and families. However, measuring impact will be a highly challenging task. There are several potential sources of data that might be useful to the NP ECE evaluation in terms of impact on cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. However, none of these data sources squarely address the evaluation issues for the NP ECE, and there are also issues relating to the timeframe for release of these results.
Challenges for the evaluation

Data limitations

A major challenge for the evaluation will be conducting analysis and drawing conclusions about the impact of the initiative using limited or misaligned data sets. These limitations have been flagged in the evaluation framework. Critical data constraints are:

- Matching data needs to data sets: while there are a number of highly relevant and useful data sets, there is in some areas a lack of alignment between data needs for the evaluation and available data sets, so existing data sets may not be capable of answering all the key evaluation questions posed in the evaluation framework. In particular, gaps exist in relation to measuring affordability, quality and broader outcomes for children and families.

- Data inconsistency: historically each of the States and Territories have collected data relating to service provision, resulting in different collection methodologies and frames across the jurisdictions. Since each State and Territory is at a different starting point of developing their ECEC collection, the data jurisdictions are able to provide to the ABS for the compilation of the National ECEC Data Collection are not necessarily consistent with the ECEC NMDS.

- Timing of data releases: the release of some key data reports do not align with the NP ECE timeframe. Data collection reference periods have not yet aligned across States and Territories. In other areas, the data items, collection mechanisms and systems are still in a developmental stage.

- Data gaps: from 2011, preschool data will be included in the Child Care Management System (CCMS) data collection, which will form part of the National ECEC Data Collection. However, there are doubts over whether this collection will be capable of achieving full coverage of the preschool sector. There are also considerable data gaps in relation to the broader impact of the initiative on children's learning and social and emotional outcomes.

- There is work underway to address these issues. In particular, the National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care, endorsed by MCEECDYA and all State and Territory governments will facilitate and improve the collection, sharing and reporting of early childhood education and care information. The Agreement is an important step in national efforts to improve the quality and reliability of early childhood education and care data.

Measuring impact

The difficulties associated with measuring the broader cognitive, social, behavioural and other outcomes of ECE for children and their families are well recognised. In the long term, how do we know what impact the ECE experience has had on a child's cognitive and social development? How do we measure outcomes when there are no consistent measures across States and Territories, and across school systems in the first year of schooling? What attribution can be made to ECE of identified outcomes without a randomised control design?

Options for progressing these outcome assessments include (a) drawing on the findings of a number of credible studies, rather than relying on the results of any one study or data set, and (b) identifying and measuring the evidence-based success factors for ECE – the factors that are known to make a difference to child outcomes (including quality of education and care, teacher quality, affordability, duration and hours of attendance).

Measuring quality

Information from the National Quality Standard (NQS) will not be available until late 2012 at the earliest, as implementation will only commence in January of that year. This means that monitoring of changes over time will utilise 2012 as a reference point. Until that time, interim measures of quality will need to be used such as employment of four-year trained teachers.
Unknown impact of the 18 Month Review

In 2011, the Review will report on issues such as the adequacy of funding, appropriateness of timelines and achievement of agreed outcomes, outputs and performance indicators. The outcomes of the Review are currently unknown and may impact on this evaluation.
1 Introduction to the NP ECE

1.1 Background

In November 2008, the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE) was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and referred to the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) to oversee implementation. Bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and States and Territories were announced on 19 September 2009.

The NP ECE contains the universal access commitment that by 2013 every child will have access to a preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling. The preschool program is:

- to be delivered by a four year university qualified early childhood teacher (note that transition arrangements for this requirement apply and that the nature of the transition arrangements will be negotiated with States and Territories)
- in accordance with a national early years learning framework
- for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year
- accessible across a diversity of settings
- in a form that meets the needs of parents and in a manner that ensures cost does not present a barrier to access.

Broadly speaking, the Agreement provides a starting point for joint Commonwealth, State and Territory action to improve the integration and supply of early childhood education and care services. The Agreement gives a high priority to providing universal access to Indigenous and disadvantaged children. Under the NP ECE, the Commonwealth is responsible for leading the development of an Indigenous (including remote communities) Universal Access Strategy. The Strategy supports the NP ECE by identifying specific State and Territory actions and strategies to achieving universal access to preschool for Indigenous children. The Strategy is due to be finalised at the end of 2010.

The NP ECE includes a requirement for a Review to be undertaken after 18 months and an Evaluation of the Agreement to be undertaken throughout the life of the NP ECE. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) contracted Urbis to conduct the Evaluation (described in detail in Section 1.6 of this document).

The NP ECE is one of a number of reform initiatives that are part of the National Early Childhood Development Strategy (the Strategy), Investing in the Early Years, also developed under the auspices of the COAG. The overall strategy aims to ensure that “by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation”2 In addition to the NP ECE, the Strategy includes the following components:

- a National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development to establish 38 new Children and Family Centres and to increase access to antenatal care, childcare, early learning experiences, teenage sexual health and child and family health services for Indigenous children and families
- a six-year National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health with a focus on strategies to prevent chronic diseases that commence in early childhood

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INTRODUCTION TO THE NP ECE

- a national quality agenda for early childhood education and care which includes stronger standards, streamlined regulatory approaches, a rating system and an Early Years Learning Framework
- national workforce initiatives to improve the quality and supply of the early childhood education and care workforce
- the Closing the Gap initiative which includes ambitious targets for Indigenous children related to infant mortality, literacy and numeracy and participation in quality early childhood education, reflected in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIAR)
- a National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children
- the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians
- a National Family Support Program which brings together eight Commonwealth programs for children, families and parenting paid parental leave arrangements
- a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children
- development of an Early Intervention and Prevention Framework under the National Disability Agreement
- a National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, with a focus on intervening early for children and their families at risk of homelessness.

1.2 Assumptions underlying the NP ECE

Papers, speeches and presentations preceding the finalisation of the NP ECE reflected an awareness and understanding of this body of evidence so that issues of quality, equity of access and concrete outcomes are prominent in the Agreement. The assumptions underlying the NP ECE carefully reflect research in Australia and internationally. The four primary assumptions are:

- early education benefits all children, but especially those from disadvantaged circumstances
- equity of access is essential to achieving society-wide benefits
- quality matters so that it is important to ensure that teachers have appropriate training and experience and that appropriate pedagogical strategies are implemented (play-based learning and adopting the Early Learning Framework)
- duration and consistency of attendance are important.

1.3 Contextual issues

It is important to acknowledge that implementation of the NP ECE is not occurring in a vacuum. There are a range of simultaneous and often complementary activities at both national and State/Territory levels that will impact on the initiative. For example, the National Quality Framework will have a significant impact on delivery of early childhood education, particularly in terms of student/teacher ratios and the qualifications of the teaching staff.

While there appears to be widespread support for improvements in quality in early childhood education and care, some jurisdictions are concerned about the possible negative impact on private and community providers, in particular, who may reduce their supply of early childhood education and care places in response to higher staff to child ratio requirements. The Early Years Learning Framework is another example, in this case, one that will positively influence what actually goes on in early childhood education and care in terms of curricula.

The States and Territories are also quite active in terms of developing aspirational visions and frameworks for early learning and care, implementing new and innovative approaches to training early childhood education teachers and integrating education with health and community services.

Of course, there are broader economic and social issues that will have an impact on growth in the preschool/kindergarten sector. Everything from increased unemployment to reduced public expenditure...
due to another economic downturn or the change in government could put pressure on the delivery system.

These contextual issues, including national and jurisdictional policies, will be explored in the literature review, included in Chapter 3 of this report.

The rationale for the investment in early childhood education rests heavily on the research into early neural pathways, which has emerged from North America and the United Kingdom over the last 15 years. The next section provides a brief synopsis of the key findings, and the value to be derived for children and society more broadly.

1.4 The benefits of high quality early childhood education and care

The landmark publication, From Neurons to Neighbourhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development identified five key findings that have most influenced knowledge about the impact of early experiences on children’s wellbeing and educational outcomes:

- early experience affects the development of the brain and lays the foundation for intelligence, emotional health and moral development
- healthy early development depends on nurturing and consistent, dependent relationships
- healthy early development, and particularly school readiness, is dependent on how young children think and feel
- rapid changes in society mean that the needs of many young children are not being met
- early intervention is important, and well-designed, accessible early intervention programs are needed for children at risk.

This research does highlight that the most important period is between birth and 3 years of age when brain development is at its most active and the interactions between a child and his/her environment (including the key caretakers) are the most critical. However, young brains continue to develop well into adolescence, so there is strong support for high quality preschool for all children, especially those at risk, in addition to investments from birth and even before in terms of good prenatal care.

Current knowledge about brain and child development, as well as empirical data from cost-benefit studies, presents a compelling case for early public investments targeted toward children who are at greatest risk for failure in school, in the workplace, and in society at large.

In Alison Elliott’s comprehensive review of the evidence base supporting early childhood education, she makes a compelling Statement: “Years of research can be summed up by saying that the wisest path to school success is investing effort and resources up-front before children start [compulsory] school and that families and the wider community must assume responsibility for children’s early development and learning experiences.”

Evidence from longitudinal studies and comprehensive program evaluations continue to confirm that high quality early education and care produce positive outcomes for all children and the greatest benefits are for children who are disadvantaged by socioeconomic status, family dysfunction, disability and other traumatic and/or difficult life events. Of particular note is that positive outcomes for children

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are evident very quickly, for example, in better adjustment to compulsory schooling and, therefore, noticeable improvements in achievement. Positive outcomes also continue throughout the life course, resulting in better school performance all through primary and secondary school, high rates of school and university completion and, therefore, greater job preparedness, higher lifetime incomes and less involvement in criminal activity.\(^6\)

Findings from the Effective Provision of Preschool Education project in the UK support the notion that early childhood education (ECE) promotes better behaviour as well. Evidence suggests that children who participate in early education develop better social skills, which, in turn, improve their cognitive skills. Social development and cognitive development are inextricably linked. The pro-social behaviour that emerges in preschool also continues to early primary school, and cognitive improvements continue as children progress through secondary school.\(^7\)

Table 1 below summarises the research on the positive outcomes of early childhood programs.

Table 1 – Benefits of Early Childhood Programs\(^8\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Pathways Linking Early Childhood Development to Human Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For children</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>Higher intelligence; improved practical reasoning, eye and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hand coordination, hearing and speech &amp; reading readiness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved school performance &amp; less grade repetition and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fewer dropouts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For adults</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Higher productivity &amp; increased success, (better jobs, high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incomes); improved childcare and family health; greater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>economic wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For society</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater social cohesion; less poverty &amp; crime; increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adoption of new technologies; improved democratic process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>higher economic growth.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Acknowledgement of the importance of the early years to lifelong development has led to considerable policy attention around the world regarding the provision of universal access to quality early childhood education. According to an OECD comparative report of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policy, entitled Starting Strong, the OECD explicitly recommends that countries offer universal and appropriate access to ECEC services. Perhaps, most importantly, universality increases the possibilities of early identification of special needs – for example, social and economic disadvantage, and physical and mental disabilities. As research indicates, if identified sufficiently early, these needs can be addressed more effectively, including the provision of support to families.\(^9\)

Across the world, there are many examples of successful early education programs – from Sweden where preschool is available to all children between the ages of one and six to Sure Start in the UK, which entitles all three- and four-year-olds to 12.5 hours a week of preschool for 33 weeks per year.\(^10\) Reports indicate that these countries are reaping the benefits of universal access to high quality early childhood education, in terms of decreased inequality, fewer social problems and increased productivity and GDP growth.\(^11\)

In the Australian context, the NP ECE provides the opportunity to take a nationally consistent approach to addressing the issues of social disadvantage and exclusion from the early stages of a child’s life. Furthermore, it will help maintain the health and wellbeing of young children by keeping track of their progress against key developmental milestones and making appropriate referrals to health and other service providers.

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2 The evaluation of the NP ECE

2.1 Purpose

The NP ECE Evaluation will be undertaken throughout the life of the Agreement to determine the effectiveness of the NP ECE in achieving its outcomes, including the outputs and performance indicators stipulated in the Agreement. The Evaluation will enable Governments to understand what is achieved and will provide insights to support implementation.

The evaluation has the following areas of focus:

- progress toward achievement of NP ECE outcomes and outputs, while recognising different jurisdiction starting points and characteristics
- the contribution of UA to achieving improved outcomes for children, including the extent of achievement of specific elements of the UA commitment as specified in Clause 17 of the NP ECE
- barriers to effective implementation of NP ECE objectives
- insights to support NP ECE implementation in jurisdictions
- obtaining information on children who do not access early childhood education in the year before full-time schooling, including their characteristics and outcomes

Specific functions and deliverables are in Appendix A.

The evaluation will draw on other related work that considers the outcomes of children who have access to preschool, for example, AEDI, NAPLAN, ARC, Assessing the Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education and Care in Australian Communities project.

National priorities for implementing universal access in the first year of the Agreement include:

- increasing participation rates, particularly for Indigenous and disadvantaged children
- increasing program hours
- ensuring cost is not a barrier to access
- strengthening program quality and consistency
- fostering service integration and coordination across stand-alone preschool and child care.

Importantly, the Evaluation is being conducted in parallel to the review of implementation, referred to as the 18 Month Review of the NP ECE. The Review is focusing on process and implementation issues, including the adequacy of funding and appropriateness of timelines for implementation of the Agreement. It is expected that there will be some synergy between the two projects and findings from the 18 Month Review will become a data source for the Evaluation.

The Evaluation is focusing on outputs and outcomes from the NP ECE over a four-year period. Table 2 below sets out the scope agreed by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. The outcomes, outputs and performance indicators reflected in the table have directly informed the evaluation framework, provided in Chapter 4 of this report.
Table 2 – NP ECE Agreed Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling.</td>
<td>Children have universal access to a preschool program for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year.</td>
<td>The proportion of children who are enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) a preschool program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The number of teachers delivering preschool programs who are four year university trained and early childhood qualified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hours per week of attendance (where possible to measure) at a preschool program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universal access to a preschool program is delivered across a range of settings at a cost which is not a barrier to access</td>
<td>Distribution of children who attend a preschool program by weekly cost per child (after subsidies) as defined by jurisdictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantaged children have universal access to a preschool program.</td>
<td>The proportion of disadvantaged children enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) a preschool program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Indigenous four-year-olds in remote Indigenous communities will have access to a quality early childhood education program</td>
<td>Indigenous children (including those in remote Indigenous communities) enrolled in and attending a preschool program.</td>
<td>The proportion of Indigenous children (by geographic location as identified by the Australian Standard Geographic Classification), who are enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) a preschool program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Stakeholders and primary audience

The primary audiences for the NP ECE Evaluation include DEEWR, the Evaluation Steering Committee and, ultimately, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEEDCDYA). Parallel to the Evaluation is the work of two critical groups, whose progress on key data collection matters will be woven into the evaluation over time. The two key linkages are the NP ECE Implementation Sub-Committee (comprising State and Territory representatives with responsibility for NP ECE implementation in their jurisdictions) and the Early Childhood Data Subgroup of the Early Childhood Development Working Group. The ECEC Implementation Sub-Committee includes in its terms of reference the steering committee function for this evaluation.

In addition to these audiences, there is a range of other stakeholders. State and Territory agencies with responsibility for early childhood education are critical stakeholders. The evaluation plan includes annual contact with jurisdictions to discuss progress, challenges, enablers and obstacles.

Other stakeholders who will be engaged during the life of the evaluation include:

- Peak bodies in early childhood education and care (preschool, kindergarten, child care organisations)
- Workforce organisations such as early childhood teachers’ associations, child care workers associations and union groups
education and training institutions providing early education and care certification, diplomas, degrees, graduate certificates

other State and Territory departments related to the provision of early care and education (eg, economic development, health, community development, social inclusion as appropriate to each specific jurisdiction)

academics conducting research in the areas of early care and education, specifically UA and its impact on children’s development

parent groups and associations.

Annual reports will be provided to the MCEECDYA each year. Annual reports will also be disseminated to the States and Territories as a basis for workshops to discuss what has been learned, to share ideas and innovative programs and to discuss strategies for overcoming obstacles to achievement of outcomes.

2.3 Measuring results of early childhood education

The measurement tasks for the NP ECE evaluation are to determine if the agreed implementation targets are met and to assess the impact on children and families. It is this latter task - linking participation in preschool with particular outcomes - that poses the greatest challenge. Establishing causality is always difficult in the social research sphere: in this context, it is particularly confounded by the plethora of new strategies and initiatives, with more coming online over the life of the evaluation. In addition, data collections vary across jurisdictions, making collation and comparability difficult.

Most of the data collections available include information on enrolment, attendance (in some jurisdictional collections), staff/child ratios, staff qualifications and ethnicity of students. In addition, some jurisdictions conduct assessments on children as they enter primary school, which provide some indication of development, but these are generally limited to numeracy and literacy.

Ideally, the evaluation would draw on data on a range of children’s developmental outcomes (eg, cognition, language, social competence) and detailed information on their experiences with preschool programs (eg, types, duration, quality). Putting these two sets of data together may allow for some causal impact to be determined. In the absence of such data, however, the evaluation will draw on a range of related measures, which are discussed in detail below.

2.3.1 National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care (NIAECEC)

The NIA ECEC was endorsed by MCEECDYA on 6 November 2009, and signed by all State and Territory governments in February 2010. This Agreement will facilitate and improve the collection, sharing and reporting of early childhood education and care information. It was developed in consultation with the Australian Government, States and Territories, as well as key data agencies. The NIA ECEC is an important step in national efforts to improve the quality and reliability of early childhood education and care data. The development of the Agreement is a key element of the COAG monitoring and reporting arrangements, especially for early childhood education for all children in the year before school under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE), and for Indigenous children in that age group, under the Closing the Gap agenda.

The Early Childhood Data Subgroup’s main activities are conducted via a work program under the National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care (NIA ECEC). The NIA ECEC work plan utilises the $3 million set aside annually (from 2009 to 2013) under the NP ECE for national early childhood research, evaluation and data development activities. Progress on the work program of the NIA ECEC to deliver national information capability that will support the COAG early childhood reform agenda covers six main outcomes to be achieved from 2009-2013, which are:

- comprehensive coverage
- child-centred data
- national quality and consistency
- performance reporting and information sharing
- research and evaluation
- governance and infrastructure.

The work program includes the key activities of developing a National ECEC Data Collection (discussed further below) which draws on State and Territory administrative data collections (this work is led principally by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)), and developing the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (discussed further below) to ensure that comparability can be achieved according to national data standards and classifications (this work is led principally by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)).

Development of improved nationally consistent data on ECEC is taking place in tandem with other aspects under the NP ECE. The development of new data capabilities will take time, and different jurisdictions have different starting points in terms of their data and information infrastructure. Therefore, data capability will not have changed substantially by early 2011. However, under the NP ECE all jurisdictions will still be able to measure and report progress within their own jurisdictional boundaries. This is accurate to varying extents, reflecting the different starting points of jurisdictional and provider data capacity. Progress on a National ECEC Data Collection (discussed below) will allow for nationally consistent data to be reported from 2012 onwards.

2.3.2 National data collections

Following are some of the national data collections that have been identified as pertinent to the NP ECE Evaluation.

**National Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Data Collection**

The aim of the National ECEC Data Collection is to collect high quality information from all jurisdictions to provide a nationally comparable picture of the current state of ECEC in Australia. The data will also be used for national performance reporting, specifically to support the performance indicators as specified under the NP ECE.

The National ECEC Data Collection will be an annual collection undertaken by each State and Territory in August (to coincide with the National Schools Statistical Collection Census) with data being collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The ABS will quality assure the collated data and publish results in March the following year. Data from the 2010 collection will be published on the ABS website on 4 March 2011 along with the National Early Childhood Education and Care Data Collection Manual to explain how each jurisdictional data collection has been collated to create a national picture.

The ABS National Centre for Education and Training Statistics (NCETS) has been working closely with each jurisdiction’s education/community service departments to improve the collection and processing of early childhood education data (noting that all jurisdictions are working towards implementing unit record level (URL) data collections for 2011). The ABS has also developed Transition Plans for each jurisdiction to aid the provision of nationally consistent data for the National ECEC Data Collection. The ABS is working collaboratively with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), specifically as the National ECEC Data Collection draws on the standards and classifications outlined in the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (ECEC NMDS - more information on the ECEC NMDS is provided below). The National ECEC Data Collection is in its transitional stage, with a focus on further improving the collection for 2011. The ABS will use the 2010 collection to identify and solve problems for future cycles.

There are some significant limitations with the 2010 collection, which will reduce the ability to analyse and compare data. These are:

- difference in census collection dates and reference periods
different data collection methodologies employed by each jurisdiction (some URL and some aggregate)

- different age reference periods

- data collection methods not always in alignment with the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set (ECEC NMDS) specifications

- one or more data elements missing from some jurisdictional collections.

Table 3 below summarises the differences between each jurisdictions data collection that may limit use of the 2010 National ECEC Data Collection. However, it is anticipated that where possible, and pending agreement from the relevant governance groups, some data from this collection may be utilised in the 2011 Evaluation Annual Report.

### Table 3 – Jurisdiction Collection Dates, Reference Periods and Methodologies, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Census Collection Date</th>
<th>Reference Period</th>
<th>Collection Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>1 August – 10 September</td>
<td>9 August – 20 August</td>
<td>Unit Record Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>26 March</td>
<td>22 March – 26 March</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>3 September</td>
<td>30 August – 3 September</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>2 August – 6 August</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>2 August – 6 August</td>
<td>Aggregate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>26 July – 6 August</td>
<td>Unit Record Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>2 August – 6 August</td>
<td>Unit Record Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>2 August – 6 August</td>
<td>Unit Record Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ECEC National Minimum Data Set (ECEC NMDS)**

The ECEC NMDS has been developed by the AIHW in partnership with all jurisdictions (via the Early Childhood Data Subgroup) to provide a nationally consistent approach to data collection. The 2010 ECEC NMDS was endorsed by the Early Childhood Data Subgroup on 21 May 2010, which was the first year of its existence. It includes data elements and standards that are required for the calculation and presentation of performance indicators under the NP ECE. Each jurisdiction is required to collect data in line with the standards in the ECEC NMDS, which will be on provided to the ABS for the compilation of the National ECEC Data Collection.

The Early Childhood Data Subgroup will annually review the ECEC NMDS to incorporate improvements and to resolve any issues raised through the collection process of the National ECEC Data Collection. For the 2011 National ECEC Data Collection, the Early Childhood Data Sub Group will begin reviewing the standards in October 2010, with the aim of seeking endorsement by May 2011.

**National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census (National Workforce Census)**

The National Workforce Census was conducted by DEEWR in collaboration with the States and Territories. Information from the National Workforce Census will assist policy makers to better understand the challenges of providing quality education and child care and the capacity of the workforce to meet future demand.

The National Workforce Census will fulfil the baseline need of the NP ECE on *the number of teachers delivering preschool programs who are four year university trained and early childhood qualified*. This will inform the 2010 Annual Progress Report of the evaluation. It will also inform the *Early Years Workforce Strategy* that complements and builds upon existing Commonwealth, State and Territory
government measures aimed at improving the supply and quality of the early childhood education and care workforce.

Data was collected in two stages. The first stage was conducted from June-August 2010 and involved collecting provider level information from approved child care services and government and non-government preschool services. Child care services reported information on usage and the number of children with selected characteristics in child care. All services reported information on their workforce, which included selected demographics, main type of work, main role, qualifications (including exemptions), hours worked and employment status, as well as provision of access to preschool programs.

The second stage was conducted from July-October 2010 and involved collecting detailed information from individual ECEC staff on their roles, qualifications, nature of employment, professional development activities, pay and conditions and career intentions.

**National Preschool Census**

The National Preschool Census, conducted annually by Data Analysis Australia on behalf of DEEWR, is a national collection of preschool student enrolments, with a focus on Indigenous students. It is conducted to monitor the effectiveness of one of the aims of the Indigenous Education Targeted Assistance (IETA), which is to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool participation. The collection is also used as the basis for allocation of IETA funds to preschools.

While this Census provides some indicative information on Indigenous enrolments, it does not actually collect data on hours of attendance, which is one of the indicators of interest in the NP ECE.

The collection covers government preschools which are included on each jurisdiction's census list. Non-government establishments involved in the provision of preschool education, preschools and centres offering an educational program are also included. However, this collection omits preschool programs that are located in a child care centre, which is thought to be a substantial number of preschool programs particularly in jurisdictions such as Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. As such there are some concerns around coverage of this collection. The collection counts students as enrolled if they were on the roll during the census week and had attended a preschool education program in the last month. However, there are concerns around the way preschool program is defined and understood by respondents in this collection.

The following data items are included in the 2009 National Preschool Census:

**Preschool details**

- State or Territory
- Statistical district of preschool
- metropolitan, provincial, or remote (MCEECDYA classification – can request for Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) classification)
- government or non-government (but not by care setting as this is not captured in this collection)
- number of Indigenous students enrolled in preschool education programs
- number of all students enrolled in preschool education programs
- number of staff
- number of Indigenous staff

**Indigenous students**

- date of birth
- number of sessions attending
- total hours enrolled
whether expects to enrol in school next year

All Students

- age
- sex
- Indigenous identifier
- government or non-government preschool
- State or Territory
- metropolitan, provincial, or remote
- statistical district of preschool

Staff

- teaching staff, teaching aides, or other
- Indigenous identifier

Historical Data

- The National Indigenous Preschool Census, which was conducted from 1983 onwards, was expanded in 2005 to include all students. Comparable Indigenous data are available from 2001 onwards.

Child Care Management System (CCMS)

On 1 July 2009, the Child Care Management System (CCMS) replaced the Centrelink managed Childcare Operating System following an 18 month transition process.

The CCMS is a national child care system that brings all approved child care services online, and records information about children in each child care service. All Child Care Benefit (CCB) approved child care service providers are required to operate under the CCMS. As of 1 September, 2010, the CCMS will collect information on whether the child is attending a preschool program in a LDC, and the hours per week of attendance.

For current reporting purposes, CCMS data are extracted from a data warehouse known as the Child Care Business Intelligence Data Warehouse (CCBI DW). The CCBI DW was developed by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) prior to the 2007 election, and is still held and maintained by FaHCSIA. To date, the recent enhancements on preschool programs are not able to be extracted through the CCBI DW.

DEEWR is in the process of developing a Child Care Data Warehouse which will allow the decommissioning of the FaHCSIA CCBI DW to better support the current and future information reporting requirements on early childhood education and care. However, this system will not be operational until late 2011.

In the interim, so that the preschool information in CCMS can be made available for the 2011 National ECEC Data Collection and other reporting purposes (i.e. annual reporting), DEEWR is exploring alternative ways to extract the data from FaHCSIA’s Online Financial Management System.

Report on Government Services (ROGS)

ROGS is produced annually by the Productivity Commission and provides information on government funded children’s services (eg, child care and preschool service use, expenditure on child care and preschool services, as well as limited staff information) collated from data submitted by the States and Territories. This report does not include data on services that do not receive government funding. An AIHW mapping excise indicated that there are some problems with this data. For example:
- States and Territories use different ways to collect data from their children's services sector with some jurisdictions relying solely on administrative by-product data collections, whereas others conduct annual service-based surveys.
- There are significant differences across jurisdictions in the data coverage of the children's sector as a whole and also between the child care and preschool subsectors.
- The degree of alignment to the Children's Services National Minimum Data Set (CSNMDS – noting that this set of standards is different, but similar, to the ECEC NMDS aforementioned) varies substantially across the different State and Territory collections.
- Within collections, the degree of alignment to the CSNMDS also varies between the three components of the CSNMDS.
- There is minimal alignment between the National Preschool Census in its current form and the CSNMDS.

While preschool data are characterised by inconsistencies between jurisdictions, coverage and collection differences, ROGS is currently the best available national public source to measure State and Territory progress against aspects of the Universal Access commitment. The key proxy indicator of access to preschool in ROGS relates to children enrolled at State and Territory government funded and/or provided preschool services in the year immediately before the commencement of full-time schooling. However, in the future it is envisaged that the National ECEC Data Collection is over time likely to be far more useful for understanding what is happening in the sector and, particularly, progress against NP ECE targets.

**Australia’s Welfare**

Australia’s Welfare is published by the AIHW every two years since 1993, compiles existing data sources. Topics include children, youth and families; ageing and aged care; disability and disability services; housing for health and welfare; dynamics of homelessness; welfare services resources; and indicators of Australia's welfare. There is a chapter on children, youth and families that includes information on early childhood and school entry. The AIHW can draw on a number of the data sources discussed here in compiling their report. It is likely that the Evaluation will draw on the original sources, but the AIHW report is also likely to be referenced in the Evaluation.

**2.3.3 Specialised data collections**

There are other data collections that cover a range of developmental outcomes that will be considered in measuring the broader cognitive, social, behavioural and other outcomes of ECE for children and for their families.

**Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)**

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)\(^{12}\) presents national and community-based snapshots of young children’s health and development at the time they enter full-time schooling. In 2009, the AEDI was completed nationwide. Information was collected on 261,203 Australian children (97.5% of the estimated five-year-old population) in their first year of full-time school between 1 May and 31 July.

The initial results from the AEDI provide communities around Australia with information about how local children have developed by the time they start school, across five areas of early childhood development: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge. If Australia continues to use the AEDI, it could provide the kind of data that would allow an assessment of changes in child development after the introduction of universal access to preschool. However, there is no guarantee that AEDI will continue so it may provide baseline data only.

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Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)

The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)\(^\text{13}\) is another potential source of useful data. Although it is recognised that LSAC coverage of jurisdictions varies widely and data from smaller ones may not be currently reportable at the jurisdictional level. Multiple facets of children’s development, health and wellbeing are examined, including physical health, social, cognitive and emotional development. The study seeks to understand the risk and protective processes underlying children’s development, looking at the interaction between children’s attributes (such as their temperament) and the contexts in which they are raised, particularly their family, childcare, school, neighbourhood and community experiences. The study also examines dynamics within these settings; for example, the parenting practices and the quality of co-parental relationships to which children are exposed, and the quality of care received in differing types of non-parental care.

A set of 14 key research questions guides the study, clustered around the themes of child and family functioning, health, child care, and education.

- What are the impacts of family relationships, composition and dynamics on child outcomes and how do these change over time?
- What can be detected of the impacts and influences of fathers on their children?
- How are child outcomes affected by the characteristics of their parents’ labour force participation, their educational attainment and family economic status, and how do these change over time?
- Do beliefs and expectations of children (parental, personal and community, in particular parents’ and child’s expectations of the child’s school success, parents’ workforce participation, family formation and parenting) impact on child outcomes, and how do these change over time?
- How important are broad neighbourhood characteristics for child outcomes? Does their importance vary across childhood? How do family circumstances interact with neighbourhood characteristics to affect child outcomes?
- How important are family and child social connections to child outcomes? How do these connections change over time and according to the child’s age? Does their importance vary across childhood?
- What is the impact over time of early experience on health, including conditions affecting the children’s physical development?
- What is the impact on other aspects of health and other child outcomes of poor mental health, including infant mental health and early conduct disorder? How does the picture change over time?
- How do socio-economic and socio-cultural factors contribute over time to child health outcomes?
- What are the patterns of children’s use of their time for activities such as outdoor activities, unstructured play, watching television, and reading; and how do these relate to child outcomes including family attachment, physical fitness level and obesity, social skills, and effectiveness over time?
- What is the impact of non-parental child care on the child’s developmental outcomes over time, particularly those relating to social and cognitive competence, impulse control, control of attention and concentration, and emotional attachment between child and family?
- What early experiences support children’s emerging literacy and numeracy?
- What factors over the span of the early childhood period ensure a positive ‘fit’ between children and school, and promote a good start in learning literacy and numeracy skills in the first years of primary education?

What are the interactions among factors in family functioning, health, non-parental care and education that affect child outcomes?

The greatest value of LSAC may be the new insights about the effects of experiences earlier in life on outcomes later in life. The LSAC study aims to shed light on the development of the current generation of Australian children, and to investigate the contribution of the children’s social, economic and cultural environments to their adjustment and wellbeing. More specifically, it seeks to improve understanding of the complex interplay of factors that foster or impede healthy early childhood development, to identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention in policy areas concerning children, and to inform the policy debate.

However, there may be a cohort of children that are eligible for preschool after full implementation of universal access and they would provide an interesting ‘experimental’ group. If such data becomes available, the Evaluation will seek support of the principal researchers to conduct some analysis so that it can be integrated into an annual report.

**E4Kids**

E4Kids is a longitudinal study that will follow a large cohort (over 2000) of three- and four-year-olds as they participate in childcare, kindergarten and preschool programs, and will continue tracking the children and analysing their progress through the early years of school. The research will examine the contributions of different programs on children’s learning and development outcomes over time. Children in both home-based and centre-based settings are part of the study.

While it is known that quality early education matters, the components of programs that constitute quality are poorly understood. The E4Kids study will identify these components, and the forms of provision that are most effective in supporting children’s learning.

This study is designed to answer fundamental questions about Australian early childhood programs - questions that, to date, have not been studied empirically:

- What are the contributions of different ECEC programs on the learning and development of Australian children, and the wellbeing of families?
- What features of ECEC programs work and which ones do not work in promoting various key aspects of children's learning, development and social inclusion?
- Under what conditions and for which children do ECEC program attributes have positive (or negative) learning effects, as well as effects on family participation and social inclusion?
- What is the magnitude and cost of obtaining these effects?

It is not clear yet when results will be available for public use, including the NP ECE Evaluation. However, when they are, it is clear that there will be valuable new information about the relationships between ECEC programs and specific outcomes for children and families, and the kinds of impacts important to a full understanding of the value of universal access. It should be noted that E4kids does not include all jurisdictions and therefore national conclusions may be more limited.

### 2.4 Conclusion

The section has provided the scope of the evaluation, referenced some of the context and key research driving the ECE reform agenda. The potential data sources have also been discussed, including opportunities for incorporating improved data over the course of the evaluation.

In the next section, the rationale for early years’ investment is explored in more detail through reference to the research in the area. In addition, the experience to date in other OECD countries is considered. The approaches taken to the provision of universal access to early childhood education, and in

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particular the measures utilised internationally, have been considered in the development of the evaluation framework for the NP ECE evaluation. The framework is provided in detail in section 4 of this report.
3 Literature Review: Early Childhood Development

It is now widely recognised that the very early years of life are crucial to an individual’s development. With recent research pointing to the importance of a child’s early environment to later outcomes such as health and education, many OECD countries around the world are increasing expenditure on early childhood development. Although the family is traditionally considered the most important foundation for a child’s development, recent research also focuses on the influence of the wider community – the institutions and services that play a role in supporting children’s development and wellbeing.16

As described in Chapter 1, Australia responded to the growing evidence about the early years by launching Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy in 2009. The Strategy described the joint commitments of the Commonwealth, States and Territories to creating an early childhood development system that ‘aims to engage with and respond to the needs of young children and their families so that Australia’s young children have the best possible start in life.’ The NP ECE is one of a suite of companion strategies, agreements and initiatives to help achieve that aim.

This literature review focuses on five areas of particular relevance to understanding the potential impact of early childhood education:

- the importance of early years development
- a snapshot of Australia’s children
- the impact of early education on children’s development
- the role and impact of universal access to preschool
- issues in the implementation of universal access
- cost effectiveness of ECE investments

3.1 Importance of the early years: what do we know?

Internationally and in Australia, there is growing interest in the ‘early years’; that is, in the development of children from birth to school entry and the impact of these years on the entire life course. There are two factors fuelling this interest: first is the research in neurobiology that clarifies how influential the interaction between genetics and early experience is on brain development; and second is the rich evaluation literature that documents how early interventions have the capacity to boost lifelong cognitive, social and mental health outcomes. It is now understood that these two factors can also contribute significantly to a range of policy objectives: reconciling work and family responsibilities; maintaining and even increasing the labour force participation of women; helping migrants adapt and integrate into the economy and community; addressing demographic changes in the population (eg, ageing); and reducing child poverty and educational disadvantage.18

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The theoretical underpinning for much of the work on the early years is an ecological model (shown in Figure 5 below) of child development in which the child interacts reciprocally with the environment over the life course. Some influences are at the micro level (e.g., parents, early care and education) and some at the macro level (e.g., economic and political systems). The model below reflects this understanding of child development.

Family members are the most significant factors outside child characteristics early in life, but are increasingly added to by other factors such as peers, early education and care and schools. Additionally, children interact with and are influenced by cultural values, the economic climate and political environment in which they live.

Within this ecological framework, there are key factors that determine pathways through life to good and poor outcomes and there are factors that influence changes in these pathways, especially at crucial transition points such as entry into child care or school settings and changes in family composition.

Figure 1 – Ecological Model of Child Development

The Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University identified six core concepts emerging from early childhood research, confirmed by the accumulation of worldwide evidence20:

- **Early child development produces capable children and adults:** “The early development of cognitive skills, emotional wellbeing, social competence and sound physical and mental health builds a strong foundation for success well into the adult years. All aspects of adult human capital, from work force skills to cooperative and lawful behaviour, build on capacities that are developed during childhood, beginning at birth.”

- **Brains are built over time:** The process of brain building begins well before birth and continues through adulthood; however, there are especially sensitive periods and times of furious activity. For example, in the first year of life, synapse development is much faster than at any other period (see Figure 2 below). Brain architecture begins with basic hardwiring and then incorporates distinctive

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22 Phillips, D & Shonkoff, J 2000, Neurons to Neighborhoods, The Science of Early Childhood Development, National Academy Press, Washington, DC. Figure shows the speed of synapse formation from pre-birth to adolescence.
features that reflect individual experiences over time. The brain does have a remarkable capacity to change, with periods of optimal opportunity for growth and periods of extreme sensitivity to negative experiences. A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes across the life course, while a weak one increases the probability of poor outcomes.23

Figure 2 – Human Brain Development

- **Development is cumulative:** Development starts with simple circuits and skills which provide the scaffolding for more advanced circuits and skills over time. For example, higher order thinking requires that lower level circuits are wired properly just as speaking in sentences requires the capacity to differentiate sounds of one’s native language.24 As the brain develops, it is less capable of reorganising and adapting to new or unexpected challenges. Once a circuit is ‘wired,’ it stabilizes with age, making it increasingly difficult to alter. The ability to adapt is maximal in early childhood and decreases with age, although there are ‘windows of opportunity’ for skill development and behavioural adaptation that remain open across the life course. Trying to change behaviour or build new skills on a foundation of brain circuits that were not wired properly when they were first formed requires more work and is more expensive.25

- **The interaction of genes and experience shapes the developing brain:** Children learn and develop through reciprocal exchanges with parents and caregivers and as they grow, they are increasingly able to be meaningfully engaged as partners by those in their lives.26 It follows, then, that parenting practices would be particularly influential in early child development. For example, a positive emotional tone in parent–child interactions and displays of affection confer a sense of security, self worth and trust to infants and affection acts as a positive reinforcement of desirable behaviours, while parental hostility is associated with a sense of rejection, failure and insecurity, and fails to

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provide an infant with guidance in effectively managing strong feelings. Gammage summarises the process in this way: above all, we have evidence that the young brain thrives best in an atmosphere of love and consistency in a reliable socio-emotional environment; one best characterised as exhibiting security and high quality attachment, where others are available emotionally to provide comfort and support when needed. Within this complex mix lie the rich possibilities of language, appropriate risk-taking, exploration, initiative and some degree of choice. Equally importantly, we know that impoverished early experiences are debilitating and, if persistent, can critically limit physical and mental wellbeing.

- **Cognitive, emotional and social capabilities are inextricably intertwined:** As *The Science of Early Childhood Development* States: ‘The brain is a highly integrated organ and its multiple functions operate in a richly coordinated fashion. Emotional wellbeing and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar that comprise the foundation of human development. Thus, oral language acquisition depends not only on adequate hearing, the ability to differentiate sounds, and the capacity to link meaning to specific words, but also on the ability to concentrate, pay attention, and engage in meaningful social interaction. Furthermore, the emotional health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important prerequisites for success in school and later in the workplace and community. Brain architecture and the immune system also interact as they mature, which influences all domains of development and health.’

- **Stress affects development:** Stress in early childhood can be growth-promoting or seriously damaging. *Positive stress* occurs when a child tries to deal with short-term challenges such as frustration, meeting new people, mastering separation and coping with limit setting. These stresses are an important part of normal development and help a child to develop a sense of mastery and control. *Tolerable stress* occurs when a child faces significant threats such as a death in the family, serious injury, natural disaster or acts of terrorism. These stresses are tolerable because they are time-limited and occur in the context of supportive, caring relationships. *Toxic stress* occurs when threats are long-term and persistent such as extreme poverty, family chaos, chronic emotional abuse and neglect, and repeated exposure to violence. The key factor that makes toxic stress so dangerous is the absence of consistent, supportive relationships to help the child cope. Toxic stress early in life is associated with ‘disruptive effects on the nervous system and stress hormone regulatory systems that can damage developing brain architecture and chemistry and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behaviour and both physical and mental health.

- **Risk and protective factors:** Research on risk and protective factors can also help inform our understanding of early childhood development. There is a long history of research on risk and protective factors, especially in relation to offending behaviour in young people and adults. However, the factors that put children and young people at risk for criminal behaviour are virtually the same as those that put them at risk of other negative life outcomes; and, the factors that protect children from offending protect them from poor outcomes stemming from adverse life events such as death of a family member or socioeconomic disadvantage. Tables 5 and 6 below indicate some of the key risk and protective factors that make a difference for children and young people as they navigate through various kinds of transitions and life events.

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Table 4 – Factors that put children and young people at risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child factors</th>
<th>Family factors</th>
<th>Life events</th>
<th>Community factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insecure attachment</td>
<td>Disharmony, marital discord</td>
<td>Family break up, separation and divorce</td>
<td>Lack of support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual/physical disability</td>
<td>Lack of warmth, affection, involvement</td>
<td>Death of family member</td>
<td>Socioeconomic disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low intelligence</td>
<td>Family violence</td>
<td>Natural disasters</td>
<td>Inadequate housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult temperament</td>
<td>Young or single parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inappropriate cultural norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic illness</td>
<td>Mental illness, substance abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social, cultural discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor life skills</td>
<td>Social isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weak norms regarding anti-social and/or violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self esteem</td>
<td>Inadequate parenting skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of empathy, alienation</td>
<td>Hyperactivity, impulsivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These factors not only have independent effects, but are also cumulative; that is, the more risk factors experienced, the greater the likelihood of social and emotional difficulties.

Table 5 – Factors that protect children and young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child factors</th>
<th>Family factors</th>
<th>Life events</th>
<th>Community factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure attachment to family</td>
<td>Supportive, caring parents</td>
<td>Forming significant relationships</td>
<td>Access to support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average intelligence</td>
<td>Family harmony</td>
<td>Opportunities at critical life transitions.</td>
<td>Community networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy temperament</td>
<td>Secure and stable family</td>
<td>Success in school and/or sport</td>
<td>Attach to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good life skills</td>
<td>Supportive relationship with other adult</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in community groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Strong family norms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong cultural identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal locus of control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong social norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good coping style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also the case that protective factors have both independent and cumulative effects so the greater number, the lesser the chance of negative outcomes following parental separation.
3.2 Factors that make early education work

The following section summarises the ‘effectiveness factors’ that have emerged from evaluation studies.

- **Appropriate screening and referral** mechanisms in places where babies, young children and their families are seen regularly (doctors’ offices, child care facilities, preschools) to ensure early recognition of problems or potential difficulties and referral to high quality, appropriate services yields the most benefits. It is also essential that screening, assessment and intervention efforts are matched appropriately to the language and culture of the children and families being served.  

- **Quality staff:** having well-trained staff and ongoing staff development and support is also essential. The involvement of skilled mental health professionals is essential given the rising rates of expulsion of disruptive children from early childhood programs, of drug treatment for young children with behavioural and/or emotional problems and the high levels of depression in mothers of very young children.

- **Responsive and caring adult-child relationships** that are consistent and secure are the bedrock of positive experiences and outcomes, especially for very young children. Smaller group sizes and favourable staff-child ratios allow each child to receive individual attention and foster strong relationships with caregivers.

- **An individualised and developmentally appropriate approach** is used, where staff observes and monitors children’s performance to ensure they are provided with challenging yet achievable experiences. Staff also build upon children’s interests, previous learning experiences and strengths and model appropriate language, values and practices. An individualised approach implies that children who are vulnerable and are experiencing difficulties with the social and emotional demands of early childhood settings should receive extra support to help them participate meaningfully in all activities.

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LITERATURE REVIEW: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- Play-based approaches are used whereby caregivers seek to create exciting places and opportunities for young children to safely explore, experiment and practice new skills. Children are actively engaged at all times and staff structure environments that promote children’s optimum engagement. The physical setting is organised in ways that promote learning and daily routines are used to strengthen bonds and support learning.\textsuperscript{34}

- Child-initiated and teacher-directed approaches are balanced; children are recognised as capable and competent, and learning is achieved through a process of cognitive ‘co-construction’. There is also a balance between a cognitive/academic focus and a social/emotional focus, as long-term academic/school success is dependent as much on social, emotional and self-regulatory capacities as upon academic skills. The way the latter are ‘taught’ is also crucial: children’s learning can be slowed by overly academic preschool experiences that introduce formalised learning experiences too early.\textsuperscript{35}

- Respect for diversity, equity and inclusion are prerequisites for optimal development and learning. Staff need to know how to create different learning environments for children differing in temperament, ability, language, culture and ethnicity. During the preschool years, children become aware of various forms of diversity - cultural and racial, developmental, gender, and socio-economic - and their views of themselves and others are shaped by early childhood service providers’ assumptions and behaviours.\textsuperscript{36}


3.3 Australian children: early education and development

Arguably, the two most useful sources of information about Australia’s young children and their early education experiences are the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) and the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI). Together, they provide a detailed and interesting picture of the current developmental status of young children and the associations with their early educational experiences. One of the strengths of LSAC is that it ‘enables an examination of the impact of early experiences on later development, and the mapping of the diverse pathways followed by children as they develop’. Those early experiences include their participation in preschool and other kinds of out-of-home care and education. AEDI provides data on children’s development across five domains (physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge. LSAC documents the development of individual children over time, thereby contributing to our understanding of causality, while AEDI measures individual children to provide a community profile. Together, they can help understand how children are faring in Australia.

Like other international longitudinal studies, LSAC data indicate that specific aspects of child care and early education have an impact on development:

- the type of care/education setting attended (particularly home versus centre care and regulated versus unregulated care)
- the quality of care, which is closely linked to aspects of regulation
- the amount of care received, which includes weekly hours as well as duration of time or age of entry to care
- the stability of care arrangements, which arises from the number of multiple care arrangements at any one time as well as changes to care over time.

More specifically, a 2009 report based on the LSAC data provides a picture of early education, and the social development and cognitive achievement of children in Australia. Key findings include are provided here.\(^\text{37}\):

**Early education and care services attended by four- to five-year-old children**

- Almost all four- to five-year-olds (96.3%) were attending some type of child care or early education service each week, with the vast majority (95.1%) receiving a formal centre or school-based early childhood program. Most of the children (54.6%) attended preschool, one-half of which were provided in a school and one-half in settings outside the school system. Just under one-quarter (23.9%) attended a long day care centre and 16.5% were in their first year (pre-Year 1) of formal school.
- Children who did not attend formal early childhood programs were more likely to be younger or growing up in families who were more disadvantaged; that is, mothers were less well educated, not employed, and reported higher psychological distress and poorer parenting; families had a lower income, more financial stress and more children in the household; families were lone parent, Indigenous, non–English speaking, or from a more economically-disadvantaged area.
- The type of early childhood service attended by the child was associated with some family demographic, socioeconomic and psychosocial factors. School-based pre-Year 1 and preschool programs were more likely to be attended by children whose mothers were younger (<25 years)

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and less well educated, and whose families had more children, were Indigenous or from families speaking a language other than English at home.

- A substantial proportion (37.2%) of LSAC children attended child care/early education services additional to their main early childhood program. Within this group, most families (24.4%) used informal care arrangements, such as relatives, to supplement their main care/education; 12.8% used additional formal care/education settings. The number of settings attended each week ranged from two (28.7%), to three (6.0%), to four or more (1.1%).

- Most of the parents who used additional child care (81.8%) did so to enable them to meet their employment responsibilities (69.7%) or personal needs (12.1%). Fewer parents (16.3%) gave reasons related to benefits for the child, including social interaction with peers or establishing relationships with grandparents/relatives.

- Weekly hours attended were shortest for children attending preschool only (average of 13 hours a week), followed by long day care centre only (average of 22 hours a week), preschool plus other care (average of 26 hours a week), and longest in pre-Year 1 only or with other care (32 hours a week) and long day care plus other care (34 hours a week).

- Longer hours a week of overall care/education were more common when children were older, mothers were employed and more highly educated, and families had a higher income, fewer children, were lone-parent families or spoke a language other than English in the home.

**Quality of early childhood education**

- Teachers’ ratings of their approach to teaching and learning differed by type of early childhood service: pre-Year 1 classes spent the most time in teacher-directed activities and the least time in child-initiated activities. Only marginal differences were noted between teaching and learning in preschool and long day care programs.

- Teachers differed markedly by type of service. Teachers in long day care centres were younger (average of 36 years) than teachers in preschool and school settings (average of between 40 and 42 years) and were least likely to hold a university qualification (42.7% versus 56.8% for preschool not in a school; 73.9 to 77.8% for school-based programs). On the other hand, teacher-to-child ratios were significantly higher in long day care centres (51.6% had 1 adult to <8 children) than in preschools (56.7 to 60.4% had one adult to eight to 15 children) and pre-Year 1 classrooms (53.8% had one adult to >15 children).

**Child social development**

- Pro-social and problem behaviour outcomes were rated by parents and teachers. Child outcomes were strongly associated with child and family demographic, socioeconomic and psychosocial factors, but only weakly linked to early education/child care factors. Teacher ratings of social development were lower for children who attended more than one child care settings each week.

- Quality indices also contributed to social outcomes. Mother-rated pro-social behaviour was higher and problem behaviours were lower when teachers were university qualified and offered more teacher-supported small group activities. Teacher/carer-rated social development was higher when teachers were more experienced. Lower ratios of qualified staff to children, particularly for pre-Year 1 classrooms, were associated with higher scores for social outcomes.

**Child cognitive achievement**

- Children who did not attend a formal early childhood program had lower scores for receptive vocabulary than children in pre-Year 1 and preschool programs (whether this was in a single setting
or with other additional care), and comparable scores to children in long day care. Children who attended long day care plus other additional care had the lowest scores. The relationship between child care factors and children's receptive vocabulary appeared to be a function of the amount of time in care rather than type of early childhood setting, as shown by a significant drop in test scores as weekly hours of care/education approached 30 or more hours a week.

- For achievement in early literacy and numeracy, child and family demographic, socioeconomic and psychosocial factors were the major predictors as well as attendance at pre-Year 1. Not attending a formal early childhood program had less of an impact on children's achievement in early literacy and numeracy than on receptive vocabulary. Apart from the enhancing effect of being in pre-Year 1, there were only minimal differences in test scores across the six types of early care/education settings children attended and these did not differ from scores for children not attending an education program.

- Quality indices were also associated with literacy/numeracy outcomes, particularly for children in pre-Year 1. Language outcomes were higher when teachers held an early childhood qualification and ratios of qualified staff to children were lower. Literacy and numeracy outcomes were higher when teacher-supported small group activities occurred often and child-initiated activities occurred only occasionally. Quality indices made a minimal contribution to children's cognitive outcomes in preschool and long day care settings, but suggested that literacy and numeracy skills were enhanced in settings with more teacher-directed whole group activities.

The 2009 AEDI Annual Report\(^3^8\) indicates that in the year before entering full-time school, 92.7% of all Australian children were reported to be in some form of non-parental care and/or educational experience. It summarises early childhood development results across Australia in the following way:

- the majority of children are doing well on each of the five AEDI development domains
- overall in Australia, 23.5% of children are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains
- overall in Australia, 11.8% of children are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains
- there are higher proportions of children living in the most socio-economic disadvantaged communities and in very remote areas of Australia who are developmentally vulnerable on each of the AEDI domains
- the majority of Australian Indigenous children are developmentally on track on the AEDI domains, with the exception of the language and cognitive skills domain
- children who are proficient in English and speak another language at home are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable on most of the AEDI domains compared to all other children
- there are children in Australia who only speak English, but are reported as not proficient in English and these children are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on all the AEDI domains.

The conclusions to be drawn from these data are that while most Australian children are participating in early education and doing fairly well in developmental terms by the time they enter full-time schooling, there are groups of children who are not faring so well (eg, almost one quarter are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDI).

### 3.4 The value of ECE: who benefits and how?

While the data on outcomes of early childhood education and care are still a bit patchy and difficult to interpret, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that high quality early education programs are generally beneficial to children in terms of cognitive and social development and this is especially true

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The analysis of these data [from multiple research studies] by child development researchers, education specialists and economists has shown that it is possible to improve a wide range of outcomes for vulnerable children well into the adult years, as well as generate benefits to society far in excess of program costs.

Longitudinal studies in Australia, the U.S., Canada and the U.K. all demonstrate that there appear to be positive results for all children, if programs are of sufficient quality.

### 3.4.1 Benefits to children in general

A group of Australian researchers reviewed a number of international studies to provide a summary of what is currently known about the impact of early childhood education. The studies included the following:

- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), U.S.
- National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY), Canada
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care (NICHD-ECC), U.S.
- Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE), U.K.

Table 6 summarises their findings.

#### Table 6 – Impact of Early Childhood Education (preschool programs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall effects</td>
<td>Preschool experience, compared to none, enhances all-around development in children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the time of entry into primary schooling, preschool experience enhances both intellectual and social development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The longer children attend preschool, the greater the intellectual benefits and social abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool attendance also reduced the rate of risk of special education needs from one in three children to one in five children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children attending preschool programs had better literacy and numeracy skills at ages 5 and 6, with greater effects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance in a preschool program between 3 and 5 years produces higher cognitive scores after age 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are positive effects on children’s literacy and problem-solving development across all income brackets, irrespective of ethnic background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children who start school ahead of others in academic achievement tend to stay ahead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 and 5 year-old children entering the first year of school (kindergarten) with low vocabulary scores were more likely to have poor reading scores at ages 8 and 9 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of quality</td>
<td>High quality preschooling is related to better intellectual and social/behavioural development for children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are associations between dimensions of quality (teacher training, low child–adult ratio, group size of less than 25 children, planned curriculum and adequate physical space) of the preschool program at 3 years of age and a child’s functioning in first grade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Areas | Findings
--- | ---
### Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress.
### Quality indicators include warm interactive relationships with children, having a trained teacher as manager and a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff.
### Good quality can be found across all types of early years settings; however, quality is higher overall in settings integrating care and education and in nursery schools.
### After controlling for family factors, children in programs that met more of the quality dimensions had fewer behaviour problems and better work habits.
### Effective pedagogy includes interaction traditionally associated with the term ‘teaching’, the provision of instructive learning environments and ‘sustained shared thinking’ to extend children's learning.

### Program types
- There are significant differences between individual preschool settings and their impact on children.
- In settings where educational and social development are viewed as complementary and equal in importance, children make better all round progress.
- Outcomes are better when children attend nursery schools and preschool settings that combine care and education.
- Effects of type and quality are difficult to disentangle since these types of preschool education programs also showed higher scores on observed quality.

### Amount of time
- Children attending preschool programs benefit cognitively and socially, irrespective of whether they attended a half-day or full-day program.
- Children who start centre-based child care earlier than age 3 make greater cognitive gains than those who start at an older age.

### Family factors
- Children from more disadvantaged backgrounds benefit most from universally accessible early education (preschool programs) especially when they are with a mixture of children from different social backgrounds.
- Children whose mothers had low levels of education and who participated in pre-school programs before formal schooling rated higher on teacher-reported measures of competence and academic skills than those who did not participate in a pre-school program.
- Parent-reported behaviour problems were lower among the children who had participated in an early childhood education program.
- Children from low-income families achieved greater cognitive gains when attending centres for more than 30 hours a week, whereas this did not apply for children from high-income backgrounds.
- Starting earlier is associated with more ‘worried/antisocial’ behaviour as rated by teachers.
- More than 30 hours in centres per week negatively affected social outcomes among some children.
- Children from some ethnic minority groups made greater progress during preschool than white children or those for whom English was a first language.
- For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income.

### Social impact
- There are important social outcomes of learning, in addition to the more traditional cognitive ones.
- Preschool has the potential to raise the level of an individual’s health, civic participation and trust and to foster collective social cohesion.
- Preschool participation strengthens attitudes to risk as well as resilience and self-efficacy, which last a lifetime.
A particularly interesting finding from a range of studies is noted by the Committee for Economic Development:

'The most promising findings to emerge from these early education programs are that the real benefits of early education come from nurturing children’s non-cognitive skills – giving them social, emotional and behavioural skills that lead to success later in life – rather than developing the cognitive abilities associated with smarter children. Early education programs have proven to raise temporarily the participant’s IQ levels, but those effects tend to dissipate early in elementary school while the effects on children’s behaviour and self-discipline are lasting. Early education is linked to higher educational attainment, but the positive effects are thought to result from non-cognitive skills, such as persistence and motivation, rather than preschool-induced higher IQs. In short, preschool investments are thought to affect broad, long-term human capital development through the enhancement of fundamental non-cognitive skills.’

The OECD affirmed these conclusions in a 2010 publication: ‘Numerous studies suggest that early development of these skills [cognitive, socio-emotional, resilience, self-efficacy] can make further investment in them more efficient. The family plays an important role in initiating these skills while early childhood education and care and schools (along with further family inputs) can enhance and build on them to improve health and civic outcomes. In sum, starting early appears to promote efficiency in raising social outcomes.’

3.4.2 Benefits to vulnerable children

Overall, there is significant evidence that attending high quality early childhood education programs is associated with positive developmental outcomes for ‘disadvantaged’ children. High quality education and care offers a direct strategy for maximising developmental outcomes, especially for young children from vulnerable families.

A number of intensive programs providing early care and education experiences for infants and toddlers ‘at risk’ have successfully boosted cognitive performance, with effects in some cases lasting for years after the termination of services. Recent analyses of high quality child care and preschool reinforce earlier findings: ‘…of all strategic interventions, high quality child care was the most effective in improving child outcomes and providing children with a chance to start school on a more equal footing with their more advantaged peers.’ There is also some evidence that these early interventions lead to longer run reductions in grade retentions, suspensions, and referrals for special education services.

While many of results were derived from small, randomised control trials (eg, High Scope Perry Preschool and the Abecedarian Project), there are also some scaled up, broader research programs


42 Watson, J, White, A, Taplin, S & Huntsman, L 2005, Active engagement of families in early intervention programs, Centre for Parenting & Research, Department of Community Services, Sydney, NSW.

43 Generally, ‘vulnerable’ or ‘high risk’ refers to families with one or more of the following characteristics: single parent household; low-income; low parental educational attainment; large family size; presence of parental mental illness and/or substance abuse family violence; tragic/traumatic life events (eg, death of a family member); and isolation.

that demonstrate the same kinds of promising results.\textsuperscript{45} Reviewing the results of these lead James Heckman, the Nobel Laureate economist and his colleagues to conclude the following\textsuperscript{46}:

- inequality in early childhood experiences and learning produce inequality in ability, achievement, health and adult success
- while important, cognitive abilities alone are not as powerful as the dynamic package of cognitive skills and social skills—defined as attentiveness, perseverance, impulse control and sociability—because it is cognition and character together that drive education and life success, with the character development often times being the most important factor
- the deterministic factors of genetic, parental and environmental resources can be overcome through investments in quality early childhood education that provide children and their parents with the resources they need to properly develop the cognitive and character package that drives productivity
- waiting until age five to begin formal education is too late for disadvantaged children, as we miss the opportunity to build a solid foundation for success
- investment in birth to five early education for disadvantaged children helps prevent the achievement gap, reduce the need for special education, increase the likelihood of healthier lifestyles, lower the crime rate and reduce overall social costs (every dollar invested in early childhood education produces a 10\% per annum return on investment).

3.4.3 School readiness and transition

Data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) longitudinal study in the U.S. shows that high quality education and care is associated with improvements in school readiness, expressive and receptive language and positive social behaviour for all children. Follow up at 4.5 years of age indicated that gains were maintained, especially cognitive outcomes.\textsuperscript{47}

There is ample evidence that children who make a smooth transition to primary school and experience early school success tend to maintain higher levels of academic achievement and social competence. Many studies have found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be less ‘ready’ for school and the cost of beginning school significantly behind one’s peers is substantial and a deficit from which children may never recover. It is generally agreed that it is better to prevent these deficits from occurring, thereby eliminating the need for these children to catch up with their peers.\textsuperscript{48} As indicated above, quality preschool can significantly ‘level the playing field’.


\textsuperscript{46} Heckman, J 2010, Submission to the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Reform.


It is also acknowledged that children need a minimal level of social competence before they start school to ensure that later development is not compromised. Some researchers go so far as to argue that emotional, social and behavioural adjustment is as important for school success as cognitive and academic preparedness. Additionally, it is widely believed that language, particularly the ability to communicate effectively with teachers and peers and physical ability all contribute to a good start in school. There are many ways of assessing school readiness (eg, various language and cognitive tests) and while there is growing interest in more holistic approaches, there is little evidence of what works best.

3.5 Defining universal access to ECE

While the concept of universal access to a program/service such as preschool is simple and straightforward, it gets complicated when translated into policy and practice. In Australia, universal access is a well-established pillar of the health care system. Since 1984, the health care system known as 'Medicare' has provided all Australians with free or subsidised access to public hospitals and health care professionals. Universal access has also been a fundamental principle in provision of primary and secondary education to the Australian population.

Over the past decade, the language of universal access has become increasingly linked to early childhood policy in Australia and beyond. Empirical research and a series of publications by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) appear to have propelled widespread recognition of the social, emotional and educational benefits of participation in early childhood education.

3.5.1 Factors influencing definitions of universal access

The idea of ECEC as an entitlement is attracting ‘growing conviction’. This may be related to interpretations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). For example, Sweden puts forward a ‘highly developed view of the child based on democratic values which gives

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respect for the child as a person in its own right’ and New Zealand has drawn heavily on the UNCROC in formulating its early childhood education policy.\textsuperscript{53}

Family and the workforce is a major theme that emerges in ECEC policy debate. Indeed, provision of childcare arrangements to encourage workforce participation has been central to European Council and Union policy for many years. In 1992, the European Council recommended that Member States ‘take and/or progressively encourage initiatives to enable women and men to reconcile their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children’.\textsuperscript{54} One social researcher characterised the situation in the following way:\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{Within the context of the European Union, there is a growing awareness of the importance of formal care strategies towards children, especially from a work/family point of view. The increasing participation rate of women, the changing family forms and the demographic pressure from an ageing population have made the reconciliation of work and family one of the major topics of the European social agenda.}

The developmental and learning benefits of ECEC for children are the third major factor influencing universal access policies. Arguably, this may be the driving force for Australia’s commitment to universal access to preschool. As then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced in December 2007:\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{quote}
From years of international research, we know that the first five years of a child’s life shapes their future - their health, learning and social development - and we want to make sure that future is bright.
\end{quote}

3.5.2 International perspective on universal access

While there is no internationally accepted definition of universal access, it is generally agreed that universal access to early childhood education implies that programs are available to all children, but not compulsory. Beyond this, each country has crafted its own parameters around the meaning of universal access. In the OECD’s \textit{Starting Strong}, countries were encouraged to ‘engage in a universal approach to access’, with specific attention to be given to children aged 0-3 and children with special or additional learning needs.\textsuperscript{57} According to the OECD’s 2006 report, universal access to early childhood education ought to focus on the following aspects:\textsuperscript{58}

- providing universal and appropriate access for all children between the ages of three and six, including meeting the needs of children with disabilities
- expanding ECEC provision for infants and toddlers and there is a high demand internationally that is not being met sufficiently.
- ensuring equitable access to ECEC, providing all children with equal access, regardless of family income, parental employment status, special education needs and ethnic/language background.


A key aspect of this definition is that universal access programs should not only aim to increase availability of ECEC, but should devote considerable attention to ensuring that young children at risk are reached. This includes children with special needs due to sensory, mental or physical disabilities as well as children with additional learning needs derived from family dysfunction, socio-economic disadvantage, or from cultural, ethnic or linguistic factors. Noting that in many countries the funding provided to support children and families with additional needs is often insufficient and irregular, the report recommends that countries increase resources within universal programs for children with diverse learning needs. This prioritisation would help to fulfil an early screening function in detecting special needs. As research indicates, if identified sufficiently early, these needs can be treated more effectively, including the provision of support to families\textsuperscript{59}.

Another way to understand universal access is by way of comparison or in relation to targeted programs. Targeted programs focus on at-risk children and provide targeted services to that particular group. Certain countries endorse targeted programs and challenge the equality of the universal access system. These countries question whether access for all children, including children from middle-class families, is a fair and efficient way to spend taxpayer money. They argue that it is fairer to direct money towards targeted programs for at-risk children. However, the OECD questions the benefit of targeted programs, suggesting that this option is ‘a selective arrangement for children at-risk rather than a social good for all children’. From this point of view, targeted programs serve to segregate and stigmatise children at risk by pronouncing their differences, whereas universal programs adopt an inclusive approach and are generally considered the most successful in mitigating disadvantage.\textsuperscript{60}

There appear to be distinctions in how European and non-European countries deal with universal access to preschool. Most European countries accept the concept of universal access for three to six-year-olds. Ireland and the Netherlands have extended this to making early education a statutory right from the age of three.\textsuperscript{61}

At this stage, European countries are focusing their policy attention on zero- to three-year-olds, whereas non-European countries are focusing on three- to six-year-olds. The European focus on younger children reflects the 2010 objectives set at the 2002 Barcelona meeting of the European Union. At that meeting, new definitions of universal access were outlined, with the target being to ‘provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age’.\textsuperscript{62}

Individual legislative frameworks present a multitude of variations of universal access in terms of age, appropriateness of access, quality and equity of access (cost for parents and available funding). To provide a sense of this diversity, a few examples are provided here.

- The age at which children usually access childcare is different in each country. In most Nordic countries (except Norway), fee pay centres or family day care is provided for any parents who request it from the end of parental leave. The majority of children access free childcare at 30 months in Belgium, two years in France, three years is Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway (majority) and the UK, four years in Ireland (majority) and the Netherlands and five years (with an increasing number of places for four-year-olds) in such countries as Canada, Korea (majority) and Mexico\textsuperscript{63}.


In relation to quality, child to staff ratios are often considered. This is one area in which definitions vary drastically between countries. At one end of the spectrum, the standard for preschools in Luxembourg is a ratio of 8:1, the Netherlands 10:1 and Sweden 12.2:1. At the other end of the spectrum, the standard for preschools in Ireland is a child to staff ratio of 35:1, Spain 25:1 and no maximum for preschools in Finland.

When it comes to equity of access in terms of costs for preschool, European countries fall broadly into two categories: free access is provided in Germany, Spain, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Finland and Sweden; and parental contributions between 30-40% are required in Czech Republic, Denmark and Poland.

Moving away from Europe, New Zealand is a leading example of a country that has embraced universal access to ECEC. New Zealand was the first country to move childcare from the Department of Social Welfare and to the Department of Education in 1986. The New Zealand government felt that this shift would improve integration of education and care as well as the quality of child care itself. New Zealand delivers a universal access program that targets children from three years old until the time they enrol in school. The 20 Hours ECE program offers up to six hours a day and up to 20 hours a week of teacher-led ECE that cannot be charged to parents. The program is delivered to all children, regardless of their parents’ income, residency status or employment status. The program continues to evolve and the government has recently undertaken to increase the number of registered teachers, increase funding levels and improve accessibility, for example by requiring new schools to include early childhood facilities as well.

3.6 Implementation of universal access in Australia

Australia made an official commitment to universal access in ECEC in the form of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. Endorsed on 29 November 2008, this Council of Australian Governments (COAG) initiative stipulates that by 2013, every child in Australia will have access to a preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling. Implementation of universal access is defined by the following requirements for preschool programs:

- That children be taught by a four year university qualified early childhood teacher (note that transition arrangements for this requirement apply and the nature of the transition arrangements will be negotiated with States and Territories)
- That program be available to children for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year
- That programs are accessible across a range of settings, in a form that meets the needs of parents, and in a manner that ensures cost is not a barrier to access
- That programs are delivered in accordance with the National Early Years Learning Framework.

Another key goal of the National Partnership Agreement is the prioritisation of access for Indigenous and disadvantaged children. COAG recognised the under-representation of Indigenous children in preschool programs and has identified children living in remote Indigenous communities as a specific focus of the Agreement.

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The ambitious nature of this reform brings with it a number of challenges. Three major obstacles to implementation of universal access have emerged in the literature: securing adequate and ongoing funding; ensuring that a quality program is introduced; and providing access to more disadvantaged and geographically remote members of the community. Countries have addressed these issues through a range of strategies, such as: ongoing public funding commitments including financial incentives for early childhood education teachers; regulating and monitoring the quality of ECEC; and administering clinics to strengthen the relationship between providers and parents to encourage participation in universal access programs.  

3.6.1 Funding

The Australian definition of universal access stipulates that programs must be delivered in a manner that ensures cost is not a barrier to access. Attempting to determine what is an appropriate level of funding is a difficult task. One benchmark established by the European Commission Network on Childcare stipulates a minimum public investment in early childhood services of 1% of GDP. Sweden is the only country that achieves this level of investment, in fact contributing 1.9% of gross domestic product. Nevertheless, countries such as the UK, New Zealand and Australia have recently increased their expenditure significantly.  

Funding Universal Access across Australia does not imply that it will become a free service for all families wishing to access preschool. Costs are shared by the Commonwealth, the States and Territories and individual families. The proportion not paid for by the governments will be paid by parents for 15 hours of early childhood education. At the same time, services are currently being rolled out with increased funding annually to manage the financial burden on families. Table 7 below indicates funding commitments.

Table 7 – Commonwealth funding for early childhood education in Australia 2008 - 2013

<table>
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<tr>
<th>$ million</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
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<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
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<td>10.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<td>82.3</td>
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<td>19.3</td>
<td>59.1</td>
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<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is interesting to note that employers in some EU countries also contribute to early childhood education costs. For example, Dutch employers are seen to be the most generous contributors. A small number of Swedish employers also supplement the public childcare system. The Dutch employers who put money towards childcare arrangements cited recruitment and retention of staff as the primary reasons behind this initiative. Perceptions of the company as being family friendly and a good company to work for were also viewed as important motivators. This type of arrangement may be intertwined with the European focus on the benefits of universal access for the workforce, whereas Australian dialogue is more often associated with the cognitive and emotional benefits for children.

Quality

Another challenge will be to create uniformity in the quality of education delivered within Australia. A major study looked in detail at Australia’s ‘mixed economy of childcare provision’ highlighting that close to three-quarters of Australian long day care providers and part of the preschool sector are privately owned. The implications of this are summarised as follows:

The existence of a mixed market introduces some new issues into strategic thinking. For example, international literature and a small number of Australian research studies show a trend for the highest quality care to be associated with non-profit and independent private providers, and the poorest quality care with corporate chains.

This raises the question of how quality services can be delivered. In an attempt to secure ‘quality’ education, the NP ECE requires ECEC to be delivered by four-year university qualified early childhood teachers. Internationally, a number of countries have embraced research revealing the ‘value-added’ benefit of employing teachers with a qualification in early childhood studies. Indeed, these qualifications are increasingly regarded as a measure of quality in ECEC. The Australian Government is addressing this by investing $126.6 million over four years into the training and retention of early childhood workers. This money will be directed towards the following activities: creating additional university places for early childhood teachers; removing regulated course fees for TAFE diplomas and advanced diplomas in early childhood; and reducing HECS-HELP debts (by approximately 50%) for early childhood teachers who work in rural or remote areas, Indigenous communities and areas of high disadvantage.

While these measures can be seen as a positive first step to achieving the required number of staff, a report to COAG by the Boston Consulting Group raises a number of issues for consideration, e.g., what will be required of teachers who are currently employed in these roles but do not have the requisite four year university qualification? The primary concern, however, is the ability to attract an adequate number of teachers to the profession, particularly as several Australian States, including NSW and Victoria, are currently experiencing teaching staff shortages – especially in disadvantaged and rural locations. The Boston Consulting Group has predicted that the full quota of qualified ECEC teachers will

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not be reached until almost 2020. It suggests a number of measures that may need to be considered as part of the implementation strategy:

- higher pay and improved conditions of work
- greater professional development
- resolution of the following issues --
  - current industrial agreements specifying 20-30 hours of contact per week
  - differences in remuneration at government and non-government preschools
  - differences between long day care and stand alone preschools
- up-skilling current teachers by providing them with the opportunity to engage in further study
- intensive and formalised on the job training.

Some argue attracting people to the profession will require an improved image as there is, at present, a marginalisation of early childhood teachers. They argue that in some jurisdictions early childhood education teachers have traditionally been marginalised by lower wages, poorer working conditions and lower professional status than primary and secondary teachers. Pay parity is one way to begin to address this issue and, in New Zealand, it has been achieved between early childhood teachers and primary school teachers.

**Equitable access**

Australia has committed to providing services across a range of settings to ensure accessibility. A significant challenge for all States and Territories will be to implement programs across geographically dispersed regional and remote communities.

In so far as universal access in Australia is inclusive of all children, this incorporates equal access for children with special needs. This can mean smaller class sizes and different curricula, which can also mean greater costs. The OECD suggests a number of strategies to cater for children with special needs:

- hire or allocate specialised staff
- create more flexibility in group sizes
- look at the physical space – specific rooms may be required for special sessions
- provide responsive pedagogical approaches and curricula – e.g., more intensive planning and flexibility with activities will better ensure constant adaptation to the learning needs of children
- in some countries such as Canada, Finland, Hungary and the US, individualised educational plans (IEP) are determined by children, parents and teachers to help children reach their goals
- in parts of Canada and in Finland and Italy, the special education staff in a facility provide on the job training to their mainstream colleagues
- create programs that encourage and celebrate cultural diversity – studies in the UK, Sweden, Germany and Belgium have shown that these programs are more appealing to immigrant communities.

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The challenge of implementing equitable services for children with special needs (whether they stem from a disability or from socio-economic disadvantage) is augmented by the heterogeneous structure of the early education system in Australia. The NP ECE includes a performance indicator in relation to access for disadvantaged children. Research from Canada and the United States suggests that for-profit providers are less likely to serve children from low-income backgrounds and children with special needs. 

The UK approach of targeting the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods for establishment of children’s centres appears to be gaining ground in Australia. One example is the NP ECE bilateral agreement of the ACT which includes a focus on schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged and Indigenous children, and places a priority on these sites for the rollout of preschool.

**Engaging ‘hard to reach’ children**

The NP ECE, is committed to ensuring that disadvantaged children are included and have the same access as other children. Tony Vinson, a respected Australian social researcher, defined disadvantage as: ‘a range of difficulties that block life opportunities and which prevent people from participating fully in society.’ Sometimes, disadvantaged groups are characterised as ‘hard to reach’. While there does not appear to be an agreed definition, the literature indicates that this phrase tends to be used in three ways:

- populations that are underrepresented in service provision
- service users or potential users who may be invisible to or overlooked by service providers
- service users or potential users considered to be resistant to services

Following are some examples of the most difficult to reach children:

- children living in ‘deep poverty’
- homeless children and children in transitional housing or domestic violence shelters
- children who have experienced trauma
- children with developmental disabilities or delays and/or physical disabilities
- children with social/emotional or mental health issues
- children of incarcerated parents
- children of immigrant parents and/or families who speak English as a second language
- children of parents with mental illness or substance abuse problems
- children living in remote communities
- Indigenous children

However it is defined, there are some families that do not access services that would very likely benefit their children. Even though the proportion of Australian children enrolling in and attending preschool is quite high, there are ‘pockets’ of under participation. These ‘pockets’ or population groups are often primary targets of policies such as universal access to preschool. So, while involving most children in preschool may improve child development in the aggregate, not capturing these marginal populations can exacerbate existing inequalities. Therefore, it is important to understand why some groups do not access early childhood services. A study commissioned by FaHCSIA of the Stronger Families and

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79 Vinson, T 2007, Dropping off the edge: The distribution of disadvantage in Australia, Jesuit Social Services, Melbourne.

Communities Strategy found that there are a number of individual, program provider and social factors that affect parents’ attitudes toward accessing preschool programs. Table 8 below includes factors most relevant to participation in preschool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of factors</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual factors</td>
<td>▪ misperceptions about preschool (not understanding the benefits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ view that child is not ready for formal schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ parents had negative educational experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ perceptions of risk and potential costs and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ lack of social confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ communication difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ daily stresses and complexities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ distrust of staff, fear of the unknown and authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program provider factors</td>
<td>▪ preschool promotion strategies do not reach the population group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ under-skilled, inexperienced staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ lack of client-centred practice where building relationships is central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ under-funding, which causes high staff turnover, overworked, stressed teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ discomfort with auspicing organisation, especially government entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ poor transport, problems with schedule, limited interpreter services, slow follow up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social factors</td>
<td>▪ Social norms and expectations regarding preschool participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Social disorganisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Isolation and lack of transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Lack of referrals in areas with lean service system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is not possible for preschools to address all of the factors mentioned in the table above, research from Australia and overseas identifies three types of strategies that most organisations could adopt.

- **Program promotion and outreach.** The key strategies for promotion and outreach include using strong visuals to promote preschool to ‘hard to reach’ families given that many may have difficulties with literacy. It is important for promotional materials to show activities with which target families can identify. Finally, promotional materials need to be highly visible in the places target families go, such as grocery stores, places of worship, playgrounds and primary health care facilities.

  It is also important for preschool providers to ‘get out there’ and meet potential families with young children. Simply having met someone from a program can make it much easier to make contact when the time is right.

- **Networks with early years service providers.** Providers of healthcare and other services for babies, young children and their families can be important referral sources for preschool. Some families are much more likely to follow up on a referral made by someone with whom they have an established relationship. It is important, therefore, for preschools to have close working relationships and networks with services in their catchment areas. These linkages also increase the possibilities of appropriate teacher referrals when they become aware of problems with children and/or their families.

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- **Child- and family-centred practice.** Engaging parents as a regular part of preschool programming can make a significant difference in boosting attendance.

### 3.7 Measuring preschool outcomes

There is still considerable tension over whether or not to undertake diagnostic assessment of preschool children. According to a recent briefing paper, there is a ‘contentious debate’ occurring in Australia about whether preschool outcomes should be measurable. The authors summarised the arguments for and against as shown in Table 9 below.\(^8\)

**Table 9 – Measuring preschool outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Against measuring preschool outcomes</th>
<th>For measuring preschool outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Play is not a measurable, quantifiable outcome</td>
<td>Preschools should be child and family focused and families need a guarantee that their children are meeting intended learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement cannot capture the spontaneity and ‘magic’ of a young child’s play</td>
<td>Measuring outcomes can place children at the centre of the learning processes, allowing for personalised and targeted learning experiences that focus on intended learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very hard to quantify interpersonal interactions between child and educator</td>
<td>It is better to understand individual need through measurable outcomes when the individual is young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing outcomes will narrowly focus early learning programs on what is measurable and devalue non-measurable goals</td>
<td>Nationally consistent measures would improve the ‘feedback loop’ of reporting on children’s learning for families and schools and especially facilitating continuity of learning between preschool and school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Labelling’ children too early is counter-productive</td>
<td>Measuring outcomes will increase teacher investment in and responsibility for intended learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring outcomes will pressurise under-resources staff and place pressures on time in an already busy program</td>
<td>Government funding requires some assessment that government money is well spent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.8 Investing in ECEC: does it pay off?

Research definitely indicates that some investments in the early years are more valuable than others. From an economic perspective, a program constitutes a worthy social ‘investment’ if the total benefits it generates exceed its costs. The available evidence on early childhood interventions is largely restricted to model programs, which have generated benefit-cost ratios ranging from 2:1 to 17:1, depending on the program. As a Nobel Laureate economist put it:

It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy. Early interventions for disadvantaged children promote schooling, raise the quality of the workforce, enhance the productivity of schools and reduce crime, teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. They raise earnings and promote social attachment. Focusing solely on earnings gains, returns to dollars invested are as high as 15-17%.

Figure 3 below demonstrates the cost effectiveness of early investments.

Figure 3 – Cost Effectiveness of Interventions

In summary, it is widely acknowledged that the first three to five years of life are critical to cognitive, social and emotional development over the life course. What happens to babies and young children matters and it matters a very great deal, not just to the individual child and his/her family, but to the whole community and society at large. We are learning more about the biological and social development of children everyday and also about the best ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to reach their full potential.

3.9 Summary and conclusions

Increased understanding of child development and especially the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and brain development have stimulated considerable interest in early childhood education across the globe. It is virtually a given now that the greatest period of brain development occurs before fulltime, compulsory schooling begins. And, it is brain development in the broadest sense in that it includes not just the development of the key cognitive skills of literacy and numeracy, but also motivation, creativity, sociability, emotional intelligence, perseverance, curiosity and other related factors. The foundations built during these crucial years can determine an individual’s entire life trajectory. This is not to imply that change is not possible after a given age, but rather to emphasise

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that it is easier and less expensive to strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors early in life than to ameliorate problems at later stages.

As understanding of brain development has improved, there has been a corresponding interest in learning more about what kinds of interventions might give children the best chance to maximise their potential while they are in the earliest developmental stages. Early childhood education has, therefore, received considerable research attention and the overwhelming body of evidence supports the generalisation that preschool is a positive experience for children and a good investment for society. There are, of course, factors that influence outcomes of early childhood education such as quality, style of pedagogy, training and experience of teachers, ‘dosage’, socio-economic status of children, curriculum and physical environment. It is these factors that are currently the focus of intense research interest.

A comprehensive evaluation framework has been generated to guide the four-year tracking of the impact of the NP ECE. The framework is detailed in Chapter 4 and some of the issues and challenges likely to arise in the evaluation are then addressed in Chapter 6.
4 Evaluation Framework

4.1 Overview

The Evaluation Framework (detailed in Table 10) is derived from an outcomes hierarchy approach based on a program logic model. It is a useful way of conceptualising the way in which a program or initiative is intended to work and achieve its goals, which in turn provides direction for the Evaluation. An outcomes hierarchy sets out the intended outcomes of a program in layers, from the broad, overarching outcomes desired, through intermediate and immediate outcomes, down to short-term outputs. It is structured as follows.

Figure 4 – Hierarchy of outcomes

Ultimate outcomes – impact on overall issue and ultimate goals
Intermediate outcomes – impacts, outcomes and achievements in the medium term
Immediate outcomes – impacts, outcomes and achievements in the short term
Outputs – activities or models of service delivery.

This model positions the hierarchy of outcomes as the central focus of the evaluation, allowing for analysis of a range of factors that may contribute to the outcomes at each level. In other words, it allows for much more complex mapping of the relationship between program strategies and outcomes. The model is particularly useful where an initiative comprises multiple strategies and jurisdictions, as is the case with the NP ECE.

A feature of the framework is that it operates at two levels simultaneously. It provides a structure for evaluating the NP ECE as a whole, and the progress made overall towards the ultimate goal of universal access nationally, while at the same time documenting the different starting points, approaches and progress towards the goals of each of the jurisdictions. Figure 5 below summarises the key outcomes identified in the evaluation framework.

Figure 5 – NP ECE Evaluation Framework in Brief

Ultimate outcomes
- All children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before full time schooling.
- All disadvantaged 4-year-olds have access to a quality early childhood program.

Intermediate outcomes
- Sufficient four-year trained ECE qualified teachers are available to deliver Early Childhood Education Programs.
- Additional places are available in Early Childhood Education programs across a range of settings.
- Increased enrolment/attendance hours of children.
- Costs removed as a barrier to attendance.
- Early Childhood Education programs are effectively promoted to families.
- Other barriers to participation are removed.

Immediate outcomes
- System capacity is sufficient to deliver universal access.
- Affordable fee structure is implemented in Early Childhood Education services.

Outputs
- Range of approaches vary by jurisdiction.
## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Table 10 – Evaluation Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME LEVEL</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ultimate Outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before full time schooling.</td>
<td>To what degree has Universal access been achieved? (i.e. learnings for the future)?</td>
<td>95% of four-year-old children in each jurisdiction are enrolled in, and attending, an Early Childhood Education Program that is available for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year. Average number of hours per week of attendance at an Early Childhood Education Program = 15.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports; DCRs/DCERs; Jurisdiction-specific data collections; National Preschool Census; National Data Collection (from 2010)</td>
<td>Consultation with jurisdictional stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the early childhood education offered affordable to families?</td>
<td>Distribution of children who attend a preschool program by weekly cost per child (after subsidies) as defined by jurisdictions. Parents report that the preschool arrangements meet their families’ needs.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports (may not collect this kind of data); Report on Government Services (ROGS); State and Territory policy and legislation in relation to cost of preschool provision; National Preschool Census</td>
<td>Consultation with jurisdictional stakeholders; Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it meet the needs of families?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the early childhood education offered of high quality?</td>
<td>Number of teachers delivering preschool programs who are four year university trained and early childhood qualified. Proportion of services in each jurisdiction that meet the National Quality Standard, disaggregated by the 7 standards.86 Degree of program compliance with the Early Years Learning Framework.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports; DCRs/DCERs; National Quality Framework reports; E4Kids results, as they become available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## OUTCOME LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What impacts has the initiative had on children? Specifically in relation to: - preparation for school - social, emotional, cognitive and physical (e.g. fine motor skills as well as gross motor) impacts - achievement in the early years of school</td>
<td>Measures in 5 AEDI domains: - Physical health and wellbeing - Social competence - Emotional maturity - Language and cognitive skills (school-based) - Communication skills and general knowledge</td>
<td>AEDI E4kids study</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact has the initiative had on families?</td>
<td>School entry assessments (where available)</td>
<td>Jurisdictional entry assessment reports (where available)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the outcomes for children who have not attended an early childhood education program prior to starting school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| What impacts has the initiative had on children? Specifically in relation to: - preparation for school - social, emotional, cognitive and physical (e.g. fine motor skills as well as gross motor) impacts - achievement in the early years of school | Measures in 5 AEDI domains: - Physical health and wellbeing - Social competence - Emotional maturity - Language and cognitive skills (school-based) - Communication skills and general knowledge | AEDI E4Kids study | Qualitative data collection with children, families and communities. Stakeholder consultation Case studies |
| What impact has the initiative had on families? | | Jurisdictional entry assessment reports (where available) | |
| What are the outcomes for children who have not attended an early childhood education program prior to starting school? | | | |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are there any unintended consequences of the initiative eg for families, early childhood services, schools, communities?</th>
<th>Impact of preschool on accessibility of early education and care for three-year-olds and other early childhood programs.</th>
<th>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</th>
<th>Stakeholder consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree has Universal Access for remote Indigenous children been achieved? What have been the barriers/ enablers?</td>
<td>95% of Indigenous four-year-old children in remote communities are enrolled in, and attending, an Early Childhood Education Program that is available for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports Data Capability Exception Report (DCERs) / National Preschool Census (NPC)</td>
<td>Qualitative data collection with children, families and communities. Stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**All Indigenous four-year-olds in remote Indigenous communities have access to a quality early childhood program.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME LEVEL</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any unintended consequences of the initiative eg for families, early childhood services, schools, communities?</td>
<td>Unintended consequences are documented</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultations Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All disadvantaged four-year-olds have access to quality ECE program</td>
<td>To what degree has UA for disadvantaged children been achieved (as defined by jurisdictions)? What have been the barriers/enablers?</td>
<td>95% of disadvantaged four-year-old children in each jurisdiction are enrolled in, and attending, an Early Childhood Education Program that is available for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports DCRs/ DCERs</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultations Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What impacts has the initiative had on children? Specifically in relation to: ▪ preparation for school ▪ social, emotional, cognitive and physical (e.g. fine motor skills as well as gross motor) impacts ▪ achievement in the early years of school What impact has the initiative had on families? What are the outcomes for children who have not attended an early childhood education program prior to starting school?</td>
<td>Measures in 5 AEDI domains: ▪ Physical health and wellbeing ▪ Social competence ▪ Emotional maturity ▪ Language and cognitive skills (school-based) ▪ Communication skills and general knowledge School entry assessments (where available)</td>
<td>AEDI E4Kids study Jurisdictional entry assessment reports (where available)</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any unintended consequences of the initiative eg for families, early childhood services, schools, communities?</td>
<td>Unintended consequences are documented</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultations Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOME LEVEL</td>
<td>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</td>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
<td>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</td>
<td>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient four-year trained</td>
<td>Has the number of four-year trained ECE qualified teachers working in early childhood</td>
<td>Increase in the number of teachers delivering Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE qualified teachers are</td>
<td>education settings increased?</td>
<td>Programs who are four year university trained and early childhood qualified.</td>
<td>National Workforce Census</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>available to deliver Early</td>
<td>Are sufficient four-year trained teachers available to meet the requirements of services</td>
<td>Targets identified by jurisdiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Education Programs.</td>
<td>under the NP ECE and the National Quality Framework?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional places are</td>
<td>Are there more places available in all settings which deliver early childhood education</td>
<td>Increased number of places available in each service type.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>available in Early Childhood</td>
<td>programs across a range of settings.</td>
<td>Targets identified by jurisdiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education programs,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across a range of settings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased enrolment/</td>
<td>Are four-year-old children attending early childhood education programs for longer</td>
<td>Increased average hours of attendance</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attendance hours of children.</td>
<td>hours?</td>
<td></td>
<td>National Workforce Census</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What have been the barriers/enablers to increased hours of participation?</td>
<td></td>
<td>AIHW report when available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What strategies are in place in jurisdictions for engaging ‘hard to reach’ groups: what</td>
<td></td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have been the outcomes? What has and has not worked?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Outcome Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Secondary Data Sources</th>
<th>Primary Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost is removed as a barrier to attendance.</td>
<td>Has cost been removed as a barrier to children’s participation in early childhood education programs?</td>
<td>Affordability indicator (when available)(^{67}) Out-of-pocket costs Distribution of children who attend a preschool program by weekly cost per child (after subsidies) as defined by jurisdictions</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education programs are effectively promoted to families.</td>
<td>To what extent have the new arrangements been promoted to families? How have the new arrangements been promoted? What further opportunities for promotion exist?</td>
<td>Promotion activities are documented. Attitude change on the part of parents, community and primary teachers/principals.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other barriers to participation are removed.</td>
<td>To what extent have other barriers to the participation of four-year-olds in 15 hours of ECE been removed? How have these barriers been overcome?</td>
<td>Barriers identified and documented.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Immediate Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Secondary Data Sources</th>
<th>Primary Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System capacity is sufficient to deliver UA.</td>
<td>To what extent has early childhood education infrastructure expanded/ altered to increase capacity? What are the capacity barriers to services/ systems achieving their targets?</td>
<td>Increase in early childhood education capacity Targets identified by jurisdiction are met.</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{67}\) AIHW is working on an affordability indicator; if they do find a way to capture affordability in a simple measure, it will be considered by the evaluation governance group before being adopted as part of the Evaluation Framework.
### OUTCOME LEVEL
Affordable fee structure is implemented in Early Childhood Education services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What benchmarks are used to measure affordability? How appropriate and nationally consistent are these?</td>
<td>Average fees per day/session meet jurisdictional targets for general population, Indigenous and disadvantaged groups.(^{56})</td>
<td>Jurisdictional Annual Reports</td>
<td>Stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are the fee structures across service types equitable?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What external factors affect affordability?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the features of affordable fee structures?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Outputs

**NSW**
- New funding model
- Promotion of improved access
- Increase number of qualified ECE teachers
- Early Childhood Teachers Costs Contribution Scheme
- Creation of new 2.5 days/15 hours per week preschool opportunities
- Increase monitoring of fee levels
- Funding and support for aboriginal and disadvantaged children
- Performance Management Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have all actions been implemented? If, so what have been primary enablers? If not, what have been primary obstacles? Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles?</th>
<th>Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^{56}\) A contentious indicator that has not been resolved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME LEVEL</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victoria</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Municipal planning</td>
<td>Have all actions been implemented?</td>
<td>Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Optimising available places</td>
<td>If, so what have been primary enablers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to 15 hours</td>
<td>If not, what have been primary obstacles?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Innovation: trialling new approaches</td>
<td>Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improving access for vulnerable children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workforce</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tasmania</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain participation rates with focus on attendance</td>
<td>Have all actions been implemented?</td>
<td>Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initiatives targeting non-attendees strengthened</td>
<td>If, so what have been primary enablers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Launching into Learning, Home Interaction Program, State Child &amp; Family Centres</td>
<td>If not, what have been primary obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with child care sector re Kindergarten programs for working parents</td>
<td>Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase early childhood (EC) qualified teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Offer 15 hours/week for 40 weeks/year Kindergarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Universal access to govt. school place with parental choice for fee-paying setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Initiatives targeting disadvantaged non-attendees</td>
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<tr>
<td>• (Launching into Learning, Home Interaction Program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Initiatives targeting Indigenous non-attendees (Launching into Learning, Home Interaction Program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Devise &amp; implement annual attendance data collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OUTCOME LEVEL</td>
<td>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</td>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
<td>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</td>
<td>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| South Australia | • Increase access to Preschool to 15 hours per week  
• Fund child care centres to provide ECE for children unable to access government preschools.  
• New strategies to improve access for disadvantaged and hard to reach children.  
• Recruit new four-year trained EC teachers to deliver 15 hours/week in government preschools.  
• Upgrade qualifications of teachers in government preschools with 3-year EC degrees to four-year. DECS in partnership with University of South Australia providing post-grad BA of ECE.  
• Non government providers required to employ four-year trained teachers as condition of funding  
• Increase the number of child care centres offering early childhood education programs  
• Monitor attendance of disadvantaged children and act to ensure attendance equal to wider population  
• Maintain current rate of enrolment for Indigenous children  
• Ensure attendance rates equal to wider population  
• Ensure ECE delivered by government remains affordable  
• Establishment of Stakeholders Advisory Committee  
• New DECS operated administration system, ‘Early Years system’ to provide central electronic reporting of enrolment and attendance data at URL utilising a unique student identifier. | Have all actions been implemented?  
If, so what have been primary enablers?  
If not, what have been primary obstacles?  
Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles? | Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME LEVEL</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Western Australia   | - Achievement of guaranteed local access to kindergarten  
                      - Public consultation and information campaign  
                      - Increase number of teachers and teacher assistants  
                      - Establish Workforce Development policies and support mechanisms  
                      - Introduce 15-hour kindergarten to schools in 14 public school education districts and in non-government schools  
                      - Public schools continue to be free of compulsory charge  
                      - Inquiry to the provision of kindergarten in childcare settings  
                      - Establish outside school hours care (OSHC) in locations with unmet need and disadvantaged communities  
                      - Establish wrap-around programs in high needs communities  
                      - Conduct the Best Start program in selected disadvantaged communities  
                      - Develop teacher resource materials  
                      - Maintain 26 existing Aboriginal kindergartens  
                      - Scholarships to upgrade teacher assistant qualifications  
                      - Establish data harvesting mechanisms for enrolment and attendance.  
                      - Audit of existing ECE teacher qualifications and tailoring workforce development to needs | Have all actions been implemented?  
                                                                                    If, so what have been primary enablers?  
                                                                                    If not, what have been primary obstacles?  
                                                                                    Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles? | Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate. |
## OUTCOME LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Territory</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding of one mobile service in Top End Group Schools, covering five sites with a total of 30-35 children enrolled (2008-09)</td>
<td>Have all actions been implemented? If, so what have been primary enablers? If not, what have been primary obstacles? Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles?</td>
<td>Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where there is unmet demand, support non-government long day care services to ensure preschool programs are delivered by a four-year qualified teacher through either funding support for employment, transport arrangements or out posted teachers from nearby government schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain existing four-year training policy. Progressively increase the proportion of teachers who are four-year trained through workforce replacement and qualification upgrading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop costed system-wide implementation plan to roll out 15 hours kindergarten.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustain non-fee paying basis for remote Catholic and Government preschools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve access to Indigenous children by geo-location and initiatives to improve access to participation and attendance in preschool programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve access by geo-location (described above) will also include disadvantaged children (ie those children living in the bottom 20% of the Socio Economic Index for Area SEIFA).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Evaluation Framework

## Queensland
- Provide extra community kindergarten services across the State in areas of unmet needs
- Progressively implement new kindergarten funding scheme
- Provide up to 200 scholarships to encourage ECEC staff to upgrade to teacher qualifications
- Implement strategies to encourage qualified early childhood teachers to work in ECEC sector
- Develop models/options for delivery of kindergarten programs for a minimum of 15 hours per week
- Provide additional subsidies for services in disadvantaged areas and low income families
- Provide mobile and outreach programs to target children in remote areas
- Provide participation and inclusion support for services targeting Indigenous children
- Trial the collection of Unit Record Level data from funded services through Child Care Service Census (CCSC)
- Biannual core data collection on aggregate numbers of children participating in kindergarten programs
- Improve measures on attendance
- Include a field identifying a staff member’s level of qualification
- Require all kindergartens receiving funds to deliver ECE to complete the CCSC.

## Key Evaluation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Level</th>
<th>Key Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Secondary Data Sources</th>
<th>Primary Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have all actions been implemented?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If so, what have been primary enablers?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If not, what have been primary obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOME LEVEL</td>
<td>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</td>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
<td>SECONDARY DATA SOURCES</td>
<td>PRIMARY DATA SOURCES</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ACT           | - Maintain enrolments to increase the level of attendance  
                - Ensure programs delivered by a four year ECE qualified teacher  
                - Implement 15 hours of free preschool per week and/or 30 hours per fortnight  
                - Partnership with the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office (CEO)  
                - Commence implementation of the delivery of 15 hours of preschool per week and/or 30 hours per fortnight of eligible children in a preschool program in identified ACT Government preschools  
                - Service integration investigation across preschool and child care  
                - Continue to support access to ACT government preschools to ensure cost is not a barrier  
                - Support and assist disadvantaged and Indigenous children  
                - Implementation of the Universal Access initiative across all sectors to target schools and/or communities with a high proportion of disadvantaged children. | Have all actions been implemented?  
If, so what have been primary enablers?  
If not, what have been primary obstacles?  
Are there strategies in place to try to overcome obstacles? | Indicators and targets for each jurisdiction will be added and changed, as appropriate. | |
5 State/Territory Preschool Profiles

5.1 New South Wales (NSW)

5.1.1 Service delivery model

In NSW, there are 100 preschools owned and operated by the State, 752 community preschools and 450 not-for-profit long day care (LDC) services that receive funding from Community Services NSW but are operated by non-government organisations, and about 1,960 commercial long day care services.

In terms of service coverage, in 2009, a total of 71,393 (81.1%) children attended preschools, including 4,291 children in government preschools, 19,656 children in LDC preschool programs, and 47,446 children in community preschools.

In 2009, NSW experienced a surge — an increase of 980 children -- in child enrolments in government schools, which may reflect the economic and budgetary pressures families experienced during the 2009 financial crisis.

Average fees per day in community preschools are $27.93 on average for all families, $10.40 for Indigenous children and $16.62 for children from low income families. Government owned and delivered preschools are provided free of charge.

5.1.2 State funding

In May 2006, the NSW Premier announced the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan, providing $77.2 million over four years to ‘improve preschool access in NSW by making it more affordable and making it easier for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in a preschool program …’ The Plan involves:

- $8.3 million emergency funding in 2005-06 to about 400 preschools under immediate financial pressure
- In 2006-07 to 2007-08, $17.6 million viability funding to 539 community-based preschool services.
- (operational funding, fee-relief funding, one-off capital improvement funding and service analysis and business development support)
- an additional $29.8 million in 2008-09 to expand the number of subsidised preschool places
- total preschool subsidies for 2009/10 was $119.4 million, incorporating the Commonwealth funds of $21.3 million.

5.1.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

Both the Department of Community Services and the Department of Education and Training collect data regarding children’s services on an annual basis.

- NSW Department of Education and Training Census: this census, covering the Department’s 100 preschool programs, is undertaken during a representative week in August of each year. The census collects information regarding child characteristics and preschool attendance, but not family income. Other data sources provide information on staff numbers and characteristics.

- Community Services NSW Annual Data Collection: data from all services funded by Community Services NSW, including 752 not-for-profit community preschools and approximately 450 not-for-profit long day care services is collected during a representative period in August – September each

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Note this figure was reported in the 2009 Annual Report, however is a 2006 figure.
year. (No information is currently collected from NSW’s 1,960 commercial long day care services through this process.)

Data collection issues

There is currently no requirement for privately operated children’s services to supply data to the Department of Education and Training or Community Services NSW. Given the large number of commercial LDCs, this can distort the overall picture regarding the number of children receiving a preschool program. Data about commercial LDCs is, however, collected by the Commonwealth Government, but the most recent Commonwealth data available is from 2006, and is thus out of date.

The NSW collections (DET and Community Services NSW) both collect ‘attendance’ information for the representative week. The collections collect data for numbers of children attending (not ill); and numbers of children enrolled but not attending due to illness or other absence in the representative week.

Issues with double counting may occur due to children attending more than one service during the data collection period. Only limited data is available for children attending prior to school programs in non-government school settings.

The large number of children attending commercial long day care NSW makes the availability of up-to-date data from this sector an important issue in this State. Data about this group of services was previously collected under the Child Care Census, and now through the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census. The timely availability of the National Workforce Census Data is desirable.

Data collection development

- **Community Services NSW online reporting tool:**
  - part of the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan, this online tool was piloted in 2008, fully implemented in 2009 and revised to include data to measure the performance indicators, deliverables and targets in the NP ECE Bilateral.
  - it provides unit record level data on all preschool students.
  - the data collected drives funded service accountability and future allocations, all of which will improve the reliability and timeliness of record keeping and reporting.
  - the 2009 data collection required respondents to distinguish between university trained teachers with a 3-year qualification and university trained teachers with a four-year qualification.

- **NSW Department of Education and Training online census collection tool:**
  - data is provided by schools through the web based format, including information on gender, disability, language background, Aboriginality, attendance patterns, strategies for engaging Aboriginal children and families and staff; information is analysed by State office and provided to regions to assist them in their planning.

5.1.4 Primary outputs to date

The NSW Bilateral Agreement and 2009 NSW Annual Report include the following outputs:

- growth funding of $21 million per year committed to increase access to preschool programs
- new Resource Allocation Model developed
- ten locations for new Commonwealth Early Learning and Care Centres identified, including five on government school sites
- Community Child Care Cooperative and Care West contracted to initiate or support service system planning to increase preschool supply in priority localities.
- funding increased to 657 community preschools and an additional $10.2 million to community preschools
- 723 new growth opportunity 'spots'\(^90\) implemented by December 2009
- in early 2010, an additional 1,423 ‘spots’ funded through the Growth Phase Strategies
- Children’s Services Service Specification and random audits of compliance proposed to ensure accountabilities
- Design of the Teachers Costs Contribution Scheme started
- NSW Stakeholder Roundtable established for consultation and engagement with stakeholders regarding implementation of universal access to preschool
- 166 expedited qualification assessments completed
- online data collection tools implemented.

5.1.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

Table 12 below shows NSW’s progress against 2009 benchmarks in their Bilateral Agreement. Overall, NSW did not reach the 2009 target in terms of the overall participation rate and the enrolment of disadvantaged children. However, the actual enrolment rate for Indigenous children was 5.5% higher than the target. The gap between the actual and the target in the number of teachers with university degrees or equivalent was 148.

Table 11 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, NSW\(^91\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress (2009 Annual Report)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>2.11 days – 12.7 hours</td>
<td>2.11 days – 12.7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost per day in community preschool</td>
<td>$28.3 (baseline position 2008)</td>
<td>$27.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of disadvantaged children enrolled</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of Indigenous children enrolled</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>4,680</td>
<td>4,532 (5,741 if Diplomas are included)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{90}\) A ‘spot’ is a 15 hour per week place available for a child.

\(^{91}\) The reported Long Day Care data used in deriving some of the figures above is from the 2006 Child Care Census. The ‘average of disadvantaged children enrolled’ was calculated by using projections of the number of disadvantaged children in NSW based on 2006 Census data combined with children on Health Care Cards; for LDC, the average was calculated using Census of Child Care Services, 2008, data on weekly family income (low income = less than $800/week); commercial LDCs not included.
5.2 Queensland

5.2.1 Service delivery model

The Queensland Government provides kindergarten programs directly through a limited number of Pre-prep in school programs designed specifically for Indigenous children in remote areas. The main provider of kindergarten is the Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland (C&K), which is funded by the Queensland Department of Education Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme (DECKAS). A small number of non-State schools also offer kindergarten, as do a number of Long Day Care centres, but without State funding.

In terms of service coverage, a total number of 18,313 children enrolled in an Early Childhood Education Program in 2009. This figure includes 499 children in Government schools, 13,243 children in private and community kindergartens, and 4,571 in LDC. 52% of all disadvantaged children are enrolled in a kindergarten program. 33% of Indigenous children are enrolled in a kindergarten program; the denominator for this indicator is Indigenous population data from the 2006 Population Census.

Costs for attending State-funded community kindergarten range from:

- $0 - $19 per week (4%)
- $20 - $39 per week (8%)
- $40 - $59 per week (81%)
- $60 and over per week (7%).

Children do not pay fees for attending Pre-prep in schools programs.

5.2.2 State funding

The Queensland Government has committed to maintaining DECKAS arrangements for all existing funded community kindergartens until December 2010. From that point on kindergarten services will be funded under the new kindergarten funding scheme and all existing community kindergarten services will receive a base level of funding based on their December 2010 amount, plus annual indexation until January 2014. From then, funding will continue to be provided at no less than this level until exceeded by the new scheme.

New Kindergarten Funding Scheme

The new Kindergarten Funding Scheme provides:

- approved kindergarten providers with a standard subsidy per eligible child enrolled, with further subsidies for services in remote and/or lower socioeconomic areas
- a family support subsidy to services for every child from a low income family with a Health Care Card to ensure cost does not prevent children from participating in a kindergarten program
- funding to any services approved to provide a kindergarten program from January 2010
- a standard subsidy (indexed 1 July each year) for each eligible-age child (four years of age by 30 June in the year they participate in a kindergarten program).

Eligibility requirements for an approved kindergarten include:

- delivery of a learning program for 15 hours per week per child over 40 weeks of the year for children who are four years old by 30 June in the year they are enrolled

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93 Percentages quoted are from the 2010 Queensland Data Capability Report
• a learning program delivered by a four-year qualified, registered early childhood education teacher

• an education program aligned with the national Early Years Learning Framework and Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline.

Pre-Prep in schools initiative

In 2006, the Queensland Government committed $23.1 million over four years, with an additional $24.4 million over two years provided in 2008, to fund enhancements to pre-prep in schools programs for children aged 3.5 to 4.5 living across 35 discrete Indigenous communities. This included capital funding to ensure that services were delivered in appropriate facilities. This program is provided free by state schools.

5.2.3 Data collection

Queensland has several data collection mechanisms in place:

• Child Care Services Census: the Annual Child Care Services Census collects data in relation to all services licensed under the Child Care Act 2002 (including C&K and Long Day Care services) and services funded under the various child care funding programs previously administered by Department of Communities (including limited hours care and Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care); the census was originally implemented primarily to meet jurisdictional requirements for the Report on Government Services (ROGS) and is also used to inform planning and program development.

• C&K survey: this collection comprises both performance and administrative data as part of the existing Service Agreement with the Department and includes information on enrolments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, demand and supply, family background and children with special needs. C&K provides an annual strategic and compliance report and a separate annual enrolment report. C&K survey data is also interrogated to supplement Queensland reporting for the ROGS. In 2009 this data was not used for NP ECE reporting as the Child Care Services Census provided all data required for reporting.

• Pre-Prep in schools: the Department of Education and Training compiles a range of administrative data on children enrolled in Pre-prep programs in State Schools. Pre-prep programs were not included in the 2009 Child Care Services Census (CCSC).

Data collection issues

For 2009, early years data in Queensland currently have issues relating to lack of comparability across data sets, double counting of enrolments across and between service types. Some examples include:

• inability to report ‘attendance’ figures for Pre-prep in state schools due to a lack of accurate data

• the number of disadvantaged children was collected on the basis of service location instead of the more common use of children’s home address

• the identification of Indigenous children was based on reports from services rather than parents

• the 2009 CCSC was not designed to capture unit record level (URL) data across all service types

• information on the participation of Indigenous and disadvantaged children is limited to the definitions and reporting periods required by the Reporting for Government Services (ROGS) process.

Data development

In 2009, Queensland trailed the collection of Unit Record Level data from C&K services through the CCSC. This trial collected information on children’s:

• date of birth

• gender

• postcode
- diagnosed disability or long-term medical condition that requires assistance
- Indigenous status
- non-English speaking background
- hours per week of attendance.

The 2009 CCSC also included information on:

- teachers’ qualifications, including full or provisional Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) registration and early childhood qualifications, such as the highest child care/early childhood qualification or equivalent completed and any child care/early childhood qualifications underway including:
  - Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 2
  - Certificate III (1 year) – AQF 3
  - Associate Diploma (2 years) or Diploma of Community Services (Children’s Services) – AQF 5
  - Advanced Diploma of Community Services (Children’s Services) (3 years) – AQF 6
  - Diploma or Bachelor (3 years) specific to early childhood education or child care
  - Bachelor (4 years) specific to early childhood education
  - Post-graduate qualifications related to early childhood education
  - Other qualifications approved by the State Government for my position
  - Other undergraduate qualifications including primary teaching, secondary teaching, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science etc
  - None of the above/ Not yet started (timeframe to commence study has not yet passed).

Services will also identify whether staff are participating in the Australian Traineeship Scheme or undertaking a Children’s Services Apprenticeship, and whether teachers hold full Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) registration or Provisional QCT registration.

Further enhancements under consideration include building a new information management system that improves and integrates information currently collected on licensed child care and kindergarten services, including Pre-prep in schools in the CCSC, and collecting unit record level data from LDCs providing kindergarten programs under the new funding arrangements.

5.2.4 Primary outputs to date

The Queensland Bilateral Agreement and 2009 Queensland Annual Report include the following outputs:

- program to deliver up to 240 extra kindergarten services across State by 2014
- new kindergarten funding scheme, including additional subsidies for services in socio-economically disadvantaged and remote areas and targeted subsidies for low income families
- 141 long day care centres approved as kindergarten program providers to participate in the 2010 Pilot Kindergarten Program
- organisations will be approved as Central Governing Bodies to support the delivery of quality kindergarten programs and manage the provision of funding for services that are not approved to receive Child Care Benefits
- proposed target cohort for the Early Childhood Teacher Scholarship program identified
- proposed study pathways leading to teacher registration identified in collaboration with Queensland universities and the Queensland College of Teachers
- development of Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline commenced, informed by a 2010 trial in a range of early childhood education and care services and community contexts
- innovative service delivery models in a range of service types and disadvantaged locations trialled under the ‘Piloting Pre-Prep Mobile Delivery Strategies’ project, in conjunction with the Australian Government.

2010 Kindergarten Pilot Program

The aim of the Kindergarten Pilot Program, to commence in early 2010, is to better meet the needs of working parents and their children. This approach aims to substantially increase the number of Queensland children who can benefit from kindergarten. Around 29 000 kindergarten-age children in Queensland attended long day care services in 2009. Only approximately 7% of four year old children accessed an education program delivered by a qualified teacher in a long day care setting.

The program’s intention is that by 2014, every Queensland child will have access to a high quality early childhood education program in the year before they start Prep. These programs will be delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher.

240 extra kindergartens

- 20 new kindergarten services were announced in 2009, with 8 planned to open in 2010 and 12 services to open in 2011.
- A total of 86 extra services will open in 2012. This includes the acceleration of 40 extra kindergarten services originally scheduled for 2013 and 2014, to open in 2012.
- About 65 extra services are planned to open at the start of the school year in 2013, with the remaining 67 kindergarten services to open in 2014.

Most kindergarten services in Queensland in 2009 were affiliated with C&K. Kindergartens co-located with a state school will operate autonomously. However, it is planned that the kindergarten program provider and the school will establish a strong partnership to ensure their services best meet the needs of local children and families.

Non-State schools are responsible for building and extending kindergarten services on their land and will receive capital funding to assist in the construction of these facilities. These schools will also decide who provides the kindergarten program. In some cases, it will be the school, and for others, the service may be leased to another kindergarten provider.

Establishment of Central Governing Body

Central Governing Body means an entity, prescribed under a regulation that receives funding from the department for an approved kindergarten program provided by one or more relevant services to which the entity provides all or part of the funding.

Under the new kindergarten funding scheme, one requirement for an approved kindergarten program provider to receive funding is that it must associate with a Central Governing Body recognised by the Office for Early Childhood Education & Care.

5.2.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

Table 12 below shows Queensland’s progress against the 2009 benchmarks in Bilateral Agreement. Overall, Queensland exceeded the 2009 targets in terms of overall participation rate, enrolment in programs offering 15 hours and average hours per week of attendance. The proportion of disadvantaged children enrolled was 10% higher than the 2009 target and the proportion of Indigenous children was about 4% higher. There were 892 teachers who held a qualification in early childhood and/or were registered teachers with a minimum of a 3-year qualification.
Table 12 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, Queensland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>12.8 hours</td>
<td>13.7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average costs</td>
<td>Not provided</td>
<td>$0 to $19 per week - 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$20 to $39 per week - 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$40 to $59 per week - 81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$60 and over per week - 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate - disadvantaged children</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate - Indigenous children</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>630-640</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Western Australia

5.3.1 Service delivery model

Kindergarten is not compulsory in Western Australia; however, kindergartens are an integral part of public education and nearly all are located on school sites. This may explain the very high enrolments - approximately 95% of all age-eligible children were enrolled in public or non-government school-based kindergarten programs in 2009:

- 72% attended a public school (19,774) of whom 1,603 were Indigenous
- the remaining 28% (7,557) attended a non-government preschool of whom 228 were Indigenous.

All public schools and registered non-government schools in Western Australia are required to:

- implement the K-12 Curriculum Framework (legislated through the Curriculum Council Act 2001)
- employ teachers who are members of the Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT), which requires a four year teaching degree (or equivalent).

Western Australian families value their school-based preschools because they believe they provide high quality programs and they are convenient in terms of one stop drop-off/pick-up of all siblings and continuity of relationships and programs.

The State funds and delivers preschool programs through public schools and they are considered part of whole-school planning for literacy, numeracy and other learning outcomes. Over 95% of public primary schools offer kindergarten within an integrated K-7 school program. There are 33 regional and metropolitan community kindergartens that are operated by a community-based management.

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94 The estimates of disadvantaged children were based on the cohort population that reside in statistical local areas classified by the ABS in the bottom 2 deciles using the Index of Socio-Economic Disadvantage For Areas (SEIFA) using 2006 census data.

95 The denominator for this indicator is the number of four-year-old Indigenous children from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. Alternative indicators were provided by Queensland using an alternative denominator taken from ABS Experimental Estimates and Projections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, which also showed and increase in this proportion.
committee and receive an annual operating grant and staff (teacher and education assistant) from the Department of Education. Quality assurance of the program and performance management of the teacher in Community Kindergartens is undertaken by the principal of the public school to which the Community Kindergarten is linked.

Non-government schools are registered by the Minister and their programs are quality assured either by the Catholic education system or the Department of Education Services. The State provides a per capita grant for children enrolled in non-government kindergartens at 75% of the pre-primary Average Government School Recurrent Cost (AGSRC). The balance of funding comes from tuition fees and/or other sources. All kindergarten programs at registered non-government schools are subject to quality assurance requirements including that teachers are appropriately qualified and registered with the Western Australian College of Teaching.

An indeterminate number of licensed Long Day Care (LDC) centres employ early childhood teachers to conduct kindergarten-like programs within a child care setting. Under current legislation, LDC centres are not able to claim they provide a recognised kindergarten program unless they register as a school (in addition to being licensed as a child care provider). The State does not fund LDCs.

In addition, there are 11 specialist Early Intervention Programs for Kindergarten-aged children with identified disabilities or learning difficulties.

There are no compulsory fees for children to attend a preschool in public school, but schools may request a voluntary school amenities contribution of up to $60 per year per child. Most non-government schools also offer kindergarten programs and they charge fees ranging from $0 to $4500 per child per year (in a small number of cases where other sources of government or private funding support the operation of the school).

Kindergarten is free of charge in public schools with a maximum $60 per child per year payable as a voluntary contribution; however, data is not yet collected about the actual level of voluntary contributions.

5.3.2 State funding

In 2009-2010, the Western Australian Government contributed $18 million to kindergarten provision in non-government schools and approximately $85 million to kindergarten provision in public schools.

The additional cost of expanding universal access from 11 hours to 15 hours per week in Western Australian schools is estimated to be $98.4m over the period 2009-2013. This includes workforce expansion, the cost of additional infrastructure, project management, and establishment of wrap around programs, evaluation and district support.

5.3.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

- **School Student Census:** the census is conducted by the Department of Education (DoE) on behalf of all three WA school sectors: public, independent and Catholic. The purposes are to provide the basis for per capital grants from the State and to meet mandatory national reporting requirements that determine school operating grant allocations and planning.

- The census is administered by the Department which is the data custodian. Data items collected through the census are commensurate with several performance indicators for Universal Access and have been modified in 2009 to collect enrolment data by age as well as sessions per week to achieve an even better fit with NP ECE performance indicators.

- **School Attendance Management (SAM) database:** this system was developed by the public school system to meet reporting requirements for the MCEETYA Closing the Gap initiative. Full-time schooling does not include kindergarten, but approximately 75% of public schools choose to include kindergarten records in their SAM data. It enables the public school system to monitor progress towards improved school attendance across different socio-economic bands and across
different education districts, particularly among Indigenous students. SAM data do not currently include the non-government sector. The national preschool centre census collected once a year for DEEWR includes a measure of attendance for non-government schools.

- **Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS):** HRMIS is the data-base into which details about all teaching and non-teaching personnel employed by the Department of Education (DoE). It is used for payroll, teacher transfer, leave accrual records, etc. (public and community kindergartens are covered by this collection).

### Data collection issues

In Western Australia, kindergarten (the target preschool year) and pre-primary (the first year of full-time schooling) are both non-compulsory. This permits non-government schools significant flexibility regarding age of enrolment and scheduling. Differentiation in census data between pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, pre-primary and Year One enrolments is achieved by the age of children combined with the number of sessions attended each week. The target cohort comprises children aged four years as of 1 July and attending four half-day sessions per week. These proxy indicators are largely accurate, but there may be some cases of kindergarten children being counted as pre-primary and vice-versa.

Double counting appears to be a problem in Western Australia as in many jurisdictions. Some parents simultaneously enrol children in two schools on different days, making it difficult to sort out total numbers.

Western Australia is unable to report data on whether teachers are four-year trained and ECE qualified. Teachers are appointed to public schools based on their qualifications profile. (The qualifications profile indicates whether a teacher has a three- or a four-year degree and whether early childhood is specified in the degree title. All teachers must be members of the Western Australian College of Teachers, which requires four-year university qualifications, but there is a transitional arrangement still in existence for teachers with 3-year university degrees and some experience.) They are then deployed by principals according to local needs, class compositions and individual teachers’ skill sets, interests and work fraction preferences. In some cases due to local decisions/needs, teachers who do not have formal early childhood qualifications end up teaching kindergarten.

Disadvantaged children are defined differently in public and non-government schools. For public schools, data is from the Department of Education and Training’s Socio-Economic Index (proved to be a better predictor), but for non-government schools, the Socio-economic Status (SES) Index from SEIFA is used.

Aboriginal kindergartens and kindergarten programs at Remote Community Schools within the public sector permit enrolment from the age of three. In 2008, 2,002 Aboriginal children were enrolled in public and non-government kindergarten programs. Based on the Experimental Estimate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, it is estimated that there were 1,744 Aboriginal four-year-olds in Western Australia in 2008. This implies that more than 100 percent of Aboriginal children were enrolled in kindergarten in 2008. It is known, however, that due to early-entry rules which apply in Remote Community Schools and Aboriginal Kindergartens within the public sector, kindergarten enrolments for Aboriginal children may include some three-year-old children. The baseline estimate of enrolments is therefore 95 percent.

### Data collection development

Western Australia is conducting data development in the following areas:

- collaborating with non-government sector to collect and report teacher qualification data
- increasing public school participation rates beyond 75% in SAM data collection
- exploring ways to harvest kindergarten attendance rates in non-government schools with the Catholic and independent
- investigating options to collect more accurate data about qualifications/experience of teachers in all public school kindergarten.
5.3.4 Primary outputs to date

The Western Australia Bilateral Agreement and 2009 Western Australia Annual Report include the following outputs:

**Program activities commenced**
- cross-sectoral COAG Governance Group established
- Universal Access Steering Group established
- basis for cost-sharing across sectors
- *Best Start* implementation/expansion
- Universal Access roll-out schedule
- Universal Access models of delivery
- scoping of buildings and facilities
- additional teaching and non-teaching allocations
- consultation with Aboriginal communities
- early childhood workforce analysis
- legislative analysis
- qualitative research – feasibility studies 1 and 2
- Kindergarten, preparatory, Year 1 Review
- data capability staff employment.

**Program activities completed**
- Universal Access Round Table, brought together about 80 stakeholders from early childhood and education sectors, drawn from professional association, parent organisations, Indigenous groups, state government agencies, non-government agencies and universities to discuss the COAG early childhood initiatives and details of the NP ECE
- finalisation of UA Strategy and 2 year Action Plan
- appointment of project personnel
- appointment of data capability personnel
- administrative data bases for 3 sectors
- preparation and negotiation of the Data Capability Report
- review of the Provisional Expenditure Table
- communications strategy – public and non-government schools
- communications strategy – family and communities.

**Activities in relation to Indigenous children**
- Aboriginal kindergartens operate in 28 schools around the State, providing early learning programs for three- and four-year-old Indigenous children. Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers help teachers implement culturally appropriate early childhood programs. Transport is provided in some schools to help families access the program.

- Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Workforce Development project, which aims to facilitate opportunities for Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and Education Assistants to obtain a four year university qualification in early childhood education. The project has resulted in 12 people enrolled in Murdoch University’s scholarship program, with additional scholarship places available. The Department encourages Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and Pilbara to apply for the
scholarship to ensure early childhood education and care in these areas reflects the social and cultural values of these communities.

- Children and Family Centres (5) will be developed across WA over the next five years ($42.35 million), as part of the commitment to close the gap for Aboriginal families and to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal children. They will be in areas with a high Aboriginal population and where there is a demonstrated need for additional or better services. Four centres will be in remote and rural locations and one will be in a metropolitan location.

The centres will integrate early childhood services to provide greater access to child, maternal and health services for Aboriginal families.

### 5.3.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

Western Australia met or exceeded all of its 2009 targets. Since its current enrolment rates are so high, the biggest challenge will be to increase the number of hours from 11/week to 15/week, which could put some strain on purpose built facilities.

Table 13 provides a picture of WA ECE performance in 2009.

#### Table 13 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, Western Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>95% enrolled in 11 hour programs</td>
<td>Over 95% enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>Maintain</td>
<td>Not provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>11 hours</td>
<td>11 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average costs</td>
<td>Public schools maintain baseline position. Recalculate when non-government provider data is available.</td>
<td>No compulsory fees in public schools, a voluntary parent/carer contribution of up to $60 per annum per child is payable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of disadvantaged children enrolled</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of Indigenous children enrolled</td>
<td>95% enrolled in kindergartens, 75% in public schools</td>
<td>Maintained baseline rates (95%) of Indigenous kindergarten enrolment in 2009; Indigenous kindergarten attendance rate of 2009 is 86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>470 in public schools</td>
<td>584 (including the non-government sector)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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96 Teacher’s qualification: kindergarten teachers must be members of Western Australian College of Teachers (WACOT), which requires a four-year degree, except for a transitional arrangement for existing teachers with 3-year degrees with experience. A range of qualification-types apply for early childhood. The data reported here do not include actual data from non-government schools. Non-government data here are based on projections calculated on the basis of public school teacher numbers and non-government school market share.
5.4 ACT

5.4.1 Service delivery model

The ACT has already implemented universal access to preschool services (for 12 hours per week) in government schools. According to the February 2009 ACT schools census, 90.8% (3,600) participated in government preschools and the rest in private schools.

Table 14 – Early childhood services: types and characteristics in ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Public preschools are services delivered and funded by the ACT Government.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Non-Government         | These include:  
  - Community based, not for profit Preschools (and Long Day Care). Providers include churches, community groups  
  - Non-Government School Preschools. Providers are registered non-government schools  
  - Commercial Preschools (and Long Day Care). Providers are for-profit corporations, sole traders, individuals or entities  
  - These services do not receive ACT Government preschool (or Long Day Care) funding. |
| Preschool in LDC       | Long Day Care centres, offering a program delivered by a four year degree qualified early childhood teacher.                                 |
| Other                  | Community managed services are currently defined to include ‘not-for-profit services provided or managed by parents, churches or co-operatives’.  
  Private services are defined as ‘for profit services, provided or managed by a company, private individual, or non-government school’. |

The ACT Government provides 12 hours of preschool education for children in the year before they attend school. Children must turn four on or before 30 April to be eligible to attend. Sessions are either in a long day configuration (2 x 6 hour days) or a short day configuration (3 x 4 hour days). Not all preschool sites offer both types of programs.

Each public school gives priority to the enrolment of children living in its Priority Enrolment Area (PEA). This may be one suburb, part of a suburb, or a group of suburbs. In some instances, certain suburbs may be included within the PEA of two public schools.

There are no fees levied for preschool programs in ACT government schools. Fee information from non-government and long day care preschools is not currently collected. Data collection in these sectors may be considered under the Data and Information Capability Improvement Project.

5.4.2 State funding

The ACT Government invested to amalgamate existing preschools into public primary schools in 2007 and has provided funding of $15.48 million to transform four existing school sites into early childhood-appropriate facilities.

The ACT government contributed $22 million to public school preschool education in 2009. This is on top of the Commonwealth funding of $13.2 million over the period of 2009/10 to 2012/13. ACT also agreed to allocate $400,000 to the Catholic Education Office to support the introduction of 15 hours/week of preschool in some locations.
5.4.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

- **ACT February School Census**: In February each year, the ACT Department of Education (DET) collects URL data from both public and non-government schools. Preschool students are identified four-year-olds in the year before full time schooling. The Census is used extensively for monitoring growth, operation of services and assisting in policy formulation and planning.

Data collection issues

- **Cross border enrolments**: ACT preschools have significant cross border enrolments from NSW. In February 2010 the actual count of NSW residents enrolled in ACT preschools in both numerator and denominator will be added to the system. Multiple enrolments in public and non-government preschool settings will also be resolved at this time.

- **Double counting**: Children can be enrolled at more than one preschool due to the sessional nature of the preschool services. ACT maintains an identifier system for all school enrolments, including preschool. However, it is possible that students may be double counted due to two schools assigning different identifiers, particularly as preschool is the first contact the child has with the education system. ACT carries out validation checks involving sweeps for duplicate numbers and sweeps for duplicate names and dates of birth and resolves duplications as they are identified. Sweeps occur at least once every two months and especially before major reporting dates, e.g. the Schools census.

- **Counting Indigenous**: It is not possible to determine with sufficient precision the total number of Indigenous children resident in the ACT to have full confidence in the denominator. Hence the total Year Before Fulltime Time School (YBFTS) has been used instead. This data does not include information concerning Indigenous preschool enrolments in settings other than public and non-government preschools. This point in time analysis does not give a clear picture of the fluid nature of the enrolments of Indigenous children or the general improvement in ACT Government preschool enrolments that occurs between the February Census and August Census. Additional data may be provided to reflect these changes.

- **Missing data**: No teacher qualification data or fee information is collected from non-government preschools. As part of the ACT teacher recruitment process, DET collects staff qualification data for ACT Public school teachers. This information is held by the department’s Human Resource directorate. However, at present it is not possible to link this information to the actual teachers delivering preschool classes.

Data collection development

- Establishment of Data and Information Working Party (DIWP) and child care Sector Consultation Forum (SCF)
- Identification of overlaps and gaps in current data sets
- Development of data collection implementation plan, including:
  - Identification of any data or legislative requirements and a timeline for action
  - Alignment of data reports and bilateral agreement
  - Identification of ACT/NSW cross border issues
- Development of child care sector reporting mechanism
- Collection of teacher qualification and fee information in non-government preschools
- Further investigation into collecting public preschool attendance data centrally using the same methodology and coding as used for school attendance through the ACT Data and Information Capability Improvement Project.
5.4.4 Primary outputs to date

The ACT Bilateral Agreement and 2009 ACT Annual Report include the following outputs:

- In 2009, four new and one existing preschool were able to implement 15 hour preschool programs and there were 195 children participating with capacity for 281
- In 2010, children will be able to access 15 hours of preschool in another eight schools in suburbs with a high Indigenous or disadvantaged population.
- the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office established a preschool at Holy Family Preschool where 15 hours preschool per week is offered
- the ACT Department of Education and Training offered an Early Childhood Graduate Certificate scholarship program – 15 teachers graduated in 2009 and a further 30 opportunities were offered in 2010
- training for 124 preschool assistants to obtain a minimum qualification of a Certificate III in Children’s Services in 2010
- establishment of the ACT Universal Access Governance Committee
- development of the partnership between CEO and the Australian Catholic University ECE facility, with CEO financial support offered to students in an attempt to address workforce issues.

Koori Preschool Programs

Indigenous children in ACT are able to access Koori preschool programs for two years before fulltime schooling. This practice is supported by the ACT government in mainstream preschools and Koori preschool programs to enable a child to attend for up to 21 hours per week (12 – 15 hours of regular preschool plus 9 hours of Koori preschool).

5.4.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

As indicated, ACT has already achieved effective universal access to preschool services for 12 hours per week in government preschools, but 13.7% of eligible students are enrolled in an ECE program that is available for 15 hours per week.

Table 15 provides a picture of ACT ECE performance in 2009.

Table 15 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>13 hours</td>
<td>13 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average costs</td>
<td>Free, maintain</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

97 ACT only employs four year degree qualified early childhood teachers in government schools; however, the proportion of preschool teachers with early childhood qualifications is not known. The qualification of teachers in non-government schools is also no known at this time. Preschool in Long Day Care requires staff to have one of the following: a Diploma in Community Services (Children’s Services) or equivalent; a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education; or an equivalent 3 year full time tertiary qualification specialising in early childhood from a university; a recognised overseas equivalent of any of the above qualifications; the proportion of disadvantaged and Indigenous children enrolled an Early Childhood Education Program was reported as a share of all ACT preschool students enrolled, instead of as a proportion of all eligible disadvantaged and Indigenous children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average of disadvantaged children enrolled</td>
<td>Maintain at or above benchmark (1.3%)</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of Indigenous children enrolled</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.9%‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5  Victoria

5.5.1 Delivery model

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for leading implementation of universal access in Victoria. Kindergarten in Victoria is partly funded by the State for four-year-old children in the year prior to commencing primary school (two years before grade one). Children attending kindergarten receive a developmentally appropriate program, planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for 10 hours per week.

Kindergarten programs are delivered in a range of settings including long day care centres, community facilities, children's hubs and schools. A range of organisations manage these programs, including local government, parent committees, schools, churches and private operators.

The State makes a contribution towards the costs of kindergarten programs, with the balance coming from the parent or guardian. At baseline, the median weekly fee for preschool was $17.05 and the average was $30.08.

It should be noted that Victoria has measures in place to improve universal access to kindergarten for disadvantaged children. The State currently offers free three-year-old kindergarten for children known to child protection. Health Care Card holders, along with some other families experiencing disadvantage, are entitled to the Victorian Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, which covers the cost of fees incurred within the non-long day care setting.

5.5.2 State funding

The Victorian Government provides per capita funding that meets part of the cost of program delivery in both stand alone and integrated settings. Some services operate in government run schools, but most are run by local governments and businesses.

On 6 August 2009, the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development announced $3.1 million in planning grants of $50,000 to 31 metropolitan councils and 31 rural/regional council clusters, to support municipal planning in 2009/10. The Minister also allocated $450,000 over three years to the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to support and coordinate the work.

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‡ The number of Indigenous children grew from 76 in the ACT February Schools Census 2009 to 116 in the ACT August School Census 2009. It can be confirmed that 2.8% would be a valid estimate that would reflect the increase during the year to 31 December 2009. However as the August 2009 Census does not collect information from non-government schools, the numerator and denominator cannot be adjusted equally and the ACT February School Census 2009 data was used.
5.5.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

- **State Preschool Census**: this data is used to calculate the level of funding for kindergarten enrolments (per capita funding) and the number of children eligible to receive the kindergarten fee subsidy. Also includes information on teachers, program users, user satisfaction and service characteristics. There are two data collections each year – one covering confirmed enrolments, actual attendance and subsidies and the second, anticipated number of children eligible for kindergarten and for fee subsidies.

Data collection issues

Victorian data is currently collected at the service provider level and only includes already aggregated child-level data. An attendance indicator is not currently reported, but attendance data is collected through a snapshot week in April and is included in the confirmed enrolments data collection. This data is being considered for its suitability as an attendance indicator.

A limitation in reporting against the Indigenous indicator is the lack of a reliable annual estimate of the number of Indigenous children in the population in the year before school. The population is estimated using the Australian Bureau of Statistics Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Another limitation is with the data on hours per week of attendance as it is not clear that LDC services can disaggregate kindergarten specific hours from the other activities occurring within their service.

During the negotiation of the bilateral agreement Victoria stressed that the SEIFA IRSD is a poor source of data for an annual measure of child/family disadvantage and that, as a matter of priority, a more appropriate measure should be developed.

Data collection development

- the Department is currently examining options for improved mechanisms for collection of data from kindergartens, including via online web tools
- the Department implemented a corporate data warehouse in 2009 and kindergarten data is a priority data set for that
- there are plans to begin collecting data from long day care centres.

5.5.4 Primary outputs to date

Seven priority action areas

- **Action 1** - municipal planning: each Council develops a plan to implement universal access in their community and submits a Capacity Assessment Report
- **Action 2** - optimising available places: optimise service and infrastructure use for four-year-old kindergarten, three-year-old activity groups and playgroups
- **Action 3** - access to 15 hours: work with organisations and service providers to develop possible models for delivering a 15 hour kindergarten program; pilot 15 hour program implementation at 6 locations to determine effective and efficient strategies in a range of settings; raise the per-capita grant to support an increase in the average weekly teaching time by early childhood education teachers to support the move from a 10 hour to a 15 hour kindergarten program
- **Action 4** - trialling new approaches: trial innovative models of 15 hour kindergarten program delivery, including wrap-around care through access to the approved Child Care Benefit in stand-alone kindergarten; these Commonwealth/Victoria joint trials will provide a national evidence base, available for application in all jurisdictions, for the implementation of universal access in subsequent years of reform
• Action 5 - improving access for vulnerable children: identify barriers and strategies to assist vulnerable children in coordination with home learning and parent support programs; develop the Indigenous Universal Access Strategy

• Action 6 – infrastructure: grants issued to create new and modernise existing infrastructure, with priority allocation for vulnerable children

• Action 7 – workforce: develop the Victorian Early Childhood Workforce Strategy, addressing recruitment and retention, qualifications and skills, and workforce integration; this will increase availability by ensuring that an ECE teacher is delivering an ECE program in all long day care centres.

**Victorian Early Childhood Workforce Strategy**

Released in November 2009, this strategy outlines a vision for the early childhood workforce: a highly skilled, professional early childhood workforce that supports the health, learning and development of all Victorian children. The strategy includes both short- and long-term actions to develop a workforce that can respond to current challenges in early childhood including universal access. To attract an adequate supply of qualified early childhood educators, employment incentives will be available to encourage early childhood teachers to work in hard-to-staff locations.

A Qualifications Fund will also be made available to support existing staff in children’s services to upgrade their qualifications, including Diploma qualified staff to undertake an early childhood teaching qualification. A targeted promotional campaign will be undertaken to promote early childhood as a career of choice.

**Development of an online survey**

An on-line survey of licensed children’s services delivering a funded kindergarten program or a long day care service without a funded kindergarten program was conducted in November/December 2009. Results from the survey are currently being analysed to assist in the development of municipal plans for the implementation of Universal Access in each local government area in Victoria.

**The Victorian Early Childhood Development Advisory Group**

The Victorian Early Childhood Development Advisory Group provides a mechanism for consultation with and input form, the sector to support achievement of universal access.

**Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework**

Launched in January 2010, this Framework aims to enhance children’s learning and development from birth to eight years through collaboration between early childhood professionals and families. Shared professional learning opportunities for all early childhood professionals will be provided to support the implementation of the Framework.

**Children’s Capital Program 2009/10**

This program promotes integrated models of early childhood education and care. A key feature of integrated services is that a range of early childhood services are bought together, usually under one roof where practitioners work across agencies to deliver integrated support to children and families.

During 2009-10, 23 grants totalling $4.6m were awarded to funded kindergarten programs to increase infrastructure capacity in order for children to have access to 15 hours of kindergarten in the year prior to school.

**Supporting Indigenous children**

Victoria will establish two Aboriginal Children and Family Centres to provide a dynamic mix of early childhood and family support services, including long day care, kindergarten for three and four-year-old Aboriginal children, visiting professionals such as maternal and child health nurses, counsellors, midwives and other programs including In Home Support, Koori Early Childhood Field Officers and Early Childhood Intervention Services.
5.5.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

In its Bilateral Agreement, the Victorian Government has noted the unique challenges they face in meeting the goal of universal access:

The recent devastating bushfires in Victoria, the global financial crisis, the ABC Learning collapse and delayed decisions around further investment in Early Learning and Care Centres (ELCCs) mean that original assumptions underpinning planning for the implementation of universal access will be tested.

The implementation plan prepared in September 2008 assumed Commonwealth investment in 65 Victorian ELCCs, continuing private sector growth at 8.31% per annum (as per the past seven years), and pre-school utilisation of long day care places at 1.6 children per licensed place. The impact of testing these assumptions is significant.

At 95.8%, Victoria has already exceeded the target performance indicator of eligible children enrolled in a preschool program, albeit at an average level of 11.8 hours per week. The challenge acknowledged by Victoria is to maintain these high rates of participation during a period of considerable population growth.

The aim is to lift the average number of hours per week of attendance from the baseline position of 10 hours to the universal access goal of 15 hours. At baseline, the proportion of children participating in an early childhood education program that is available for at least 15 hours was 6.5%.

The combined impacts of the move from 10 to 15 hours per week attendance by 2013, maintaining strong three-year-old programs and considerable increases in population, means Victoria may experience capacity issues in its early childhood education labour force. Concurrently, Victoria must also increase the numbers of four-year trained teachers with early childhood education qualifications. Approximately 39% of teachers (806 teachers out of a total of around 2066) in State funded programs have at least a four year early childhood education qualification. This figure may be subject to change in light of the findings of the national workforce survey. The identified challenge is in recruiting or developing between 600-800 teachers to the four year equivalent.

The participation of Indigenous children in early childhood education in the year before school is low relative to the total population: 64% enrolment rate for Indigenous children compared with 95.8% rate for all children.

Table 16 shows Victoria’s progress against an indicative trajectory for 2009.

Table 16 – Progress against indicative trajectory for 2009, Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>Maintain participation at 95% or higher</td>
<td>96.2% (enrolled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>12 hours</td>
<td>11.8 hours (avg. excluding LDC) 14.6 hours (avg. including LDC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victoria data calculated using 2009 enrolment data, 2008 ABS ERP data and 2006 ABS SEIFA IRSED; Victoria reported as at April 2009, a total of 829 four year early childhood university trained individual teachers were employed across all State funded kindergarten services. As a teacher may work across different service providers, a breakdown of the number of individual teachers by service type was not possible. The Victorian Annual Report indicates that in 2009, 850 teaching positions existed; Victoria reported as at April 2009, a total of 829 four year early childhood university trained individual teachers were employed across all State funded kindergarten services. As a teacher may work across different service providers, a breakdown of the number of individual teachers by service type was not possible. The Victorian Annual Report indicates that in 2009, 850 teaching positions existed.
Performance benchmark | 2009 Target in Bilateral | Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report
--- | --- | ---
Average costs | Maintain the relative proportion of government (65%) and parent (35%) contributions for Victorian funded kindergarten programs in the year before school, recognising the effect of consumer price adjustments and other unavoidable impacts on service costs. | Average weekly fee: $32.17
Average of disadvantaged children enrolled | 91% | 95.1%
Average of Indigenous children enrolled | 64% | 69.3%
Early childhood qualified teachers | 850 | 829

5.6 South Australia (SA)

5.6.1 Service delivery model

In South Australia, the Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS) is responsible for providing, licensing and sponsoring early childhood education and care services. Three hundred and eighty-eight government preschools are operated and staffed by DECS employees.

There are 20 government funded preschool programs that are delivered in a non-government setting. They are provided through independent schools and independently incorporated providers. In 2009, 15,864 children attended government or government funded early childhood education (approximately 6% delivered by private or community providers).

Table 17 provides an overview of the number of early childhood services by type.

Table 17 – Number of Early Childhood Services by Type, June 2008–09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschools</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Centres</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Centres</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play centres</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Centres</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Day Care</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Care</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional Care</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation Care</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of School Hours Care</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Together @ Home</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The average out-of-pocket cost to families using government and government funded preschools in South Australia in 2009 was $50 per term or $5 per week for 40 weeks of the year. The out-of-pocket cost for families using community preschools was $60. For families using private preschools the cost was $180.

5.6.2 State funding

The South Australian Department of Treasury and Finance estimate in their fourth Budget Paper that expenditure for preschool services in 2009-2010 was $96.6m.\(^{100}\) This amount includes expenditure on the provision of early childhood education through preschools, and the grant funding of preschools through independent community organisations.

5.6.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

- Term 2 Preschool Staffing Data Collection: collect enrolment and attendance summary data over a two week reference period every term for staffing entitlement calculation purposes. This is done for all ages including early entry and children of school age between 3 and 5 years. Term two data is used for Commonwealth reporting.

- Annual Census of Children’s Services: this is a paper-based collection to gather information on the services and participation in the sector. It covers the total number of staff working in government or government funded preschools and their qualifications. An estimate of four year qualified staff with an early childhood qualification is made based on the name of the certificate and historical records of the length of training required to complete a particular qualification based on the South Australian experience.

Data collection issues

The Annual Census of Children’s Services may include double counting on the number of staff as staff may work in more than one location during the reference week.

The current measure of disadvantage is a category ranking of preschools calculated annually to give an indication of the degree of social disadvantage and geographical isolation a centre might have. There is currently no child-based measure or indicator of disadvantage, as additional resourcing for disadvantage is provided to the preschool service, rather than at the child level. It has been suggested that a SEIFA-based measure of disadvantage could replace the preschool category ranking because it would provide a more accurate picture of the proportion of disadvantaged children enrolled in particular preschools.

Currently South Australia employs a measure of enrolments combined with sessional attendance per week converted to hours, rather than actual hours of attendance to measure progress against NP ECE target, which could be misleading.

Data collection development

- The new Early Years System will be implemented as an operational information system, to be utilised by all government and government funded preschools. It will handle central electronic reporting of enrolment and attendance data at the unit record level utilising a unique student identifier. This will eliminate the potential for double counting of children and will comply with the Childhood Education Unit Record Collection National Minimum Data Set. The Early Years System will allow actual hours of enrolment and attendance will be collected at the child level.

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The new ‘Early Years System’ may be available to non-government providers in time. However, they cannot be compelled to use the system and it is not possible to predict uptake. The availability of data for non-government preschool providers cannot be guaranteed by the department.

It should be noted that there has also been a move to one set of data collection for future reporting. Currently, DECS uses a combination of the Term 2 Preschool Staffing Data Collection with the Annual Census in August for reporting purposes. From 2011 when all government funded preschools are using the Early Years System, it is proposed that all reporting to meet Commonwealth and State requirements will be from the Annual Census of Children’s Services.

5.6.4 Primary outputs to date

The South Australia Bilateral Agreement and 2009 South Australia Annual Report include the following outputs.

- planning is underway to begin delivering 15 hours of preschool education in the existing system of government funded preschools in areas of high disadvantage and Indigenous populations (roll out to 136 DECS funded preschools – 30% – for 2010)
- work in partnership with the University of South Australia to provide a customised post graduate Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (In-service) program to increase the number of preschool teachers employed in government funded preschools who are four year university qualified; thirty nine early childhood teachers from government funded preschools have been awarded scholarships and will commence the program in March 2010
- a Stakeholders Advisory Committee has been established to provide advice on key policy issues in relation to achieving the deliverables
- the new ‘Early Years System’ will be implemented as an operational information system to provide central electronic reporting of enrolment and attendance data at the unit record level utilising a unique student identifier
- the Childhood Education Unit Record Collection National Minimum Data Set is currently in development with full scale implementation expected in 2011
- public information sessions about Universal Access to Early Childhood Education were held in 18 locations across South Australia during a five week period from 27 October 2009 to 1 December 2009
- two models of service delivery are being used in the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education Trial; one model will increase the current service provision from 11 to 15 hours per week in existing preschools while the second model will support the needs of children in child care centres and the non-government school preschool sites who are unable to access a preschool program.

5.6.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

South Australia was not able to meet all of its 2009 targets, but did hit or exceed those relating to enrolment of disadvantaged and Indigenous children. The unmet performance benchmark of 300 FTE teachers is because of the introduction of a more definitive four year early childhood teacher qualification to the census staff qualification codes. Previously, the annual census only provided for Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) and Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) as qualifications that could be selected, without specification of the length of the qualification. The slightly lower proportion of four- year- old children enrolled and receiving 15 hours per week of early childhood education is attributed to the delay of sign off of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. It is likely that SA would have significantly exceeded the performance indicator if implementation was in Term 2 2009 instead of Term 1 2010.

Table 18 provides a picture of SA ECE performance in 2009.
Table 18 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, SA\textsuperscript{101}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>11 hours</td>
<td>11.1 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average costs</td>
<td>Current average weekly $5 per week for forty weeks</td>
<td>Remains to be $5 per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of disadvantaged children enrolled</td>
<td>23.3% (proportion of all children enrolled)</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of Indigenous children enrolled</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>300 FTE teachers</td>
<td>225 teachers (head counts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7 Tasmania

5.7.1 Service delivery model

The compulsory age for starting school in Tasmania is five years at which time children are enrolled in preparatory. Children can be enrolled in kindergarten if they turn four years old by 1 January of the year of enrolment (which is non-compulsory). Provision is made for early entry enrolment of children into kindergarten on the basis of mobility and giftedness.

Early childhood education is provided in the following settings:

- government kindergartens are programs delivered and funded through the Tasmanian Department of Education and are part of government schooling and governed by the Education Act.
- non-government school kindergartens are programs delivered by non-government schools registered with the Schools Registration Board under the Education Act.
- Kindergartens in child centres are registered with the Schools Registration Board under the Education Act. Currently one centre is registered.

In Tasmania, a kindergarten can only operate in a registered school and whilst all registered schools are currently not-for-profit, for-profit services can be registered (although they cannot receive the government subsidy).

Currently, 75% of children attend preschool programs in government schools. Levies in government schools can be up to $190 per annum, but where a family qualifies for the Student Assistance Scheme (STAS), no levy is charged.

About 25% of children are enrolled in non-government preschools where fees vary from $0 to approximately $7,500 per year. Fees at individual schools vary also for individual children because of the Child Care Benefit, family discounts and other subsidies.

\textsuperscript{101} Figures do not include non government-funded preschools.
5.7.2 State funding

Tasmania funds government schools to provide 10 hours of kindergarten and provides a subsidy to all current non-government kindergartens (including those registered in child care settings) on a per capita basis.

5.7.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

- Tasmania conducts a school census twice each year in government schools: the third Friday after school begins each year (usually the last Friday in February) and the first Friday in August each year (the census used for all official reporting).
- The only government conducted collection period for non-government schools is in August, for State resourcing purposes and the only relevant information collected is enrolment numbers.

In addition, Tasmania measures performance of kindergarten and prep students against a series of indicators:

- **Readiness for school** - this measure is the percentage of kindergarten students achieving all 21 markers of the Kindergarten Development Check (KDC) by the end of the year (the KDC is an assessment administered by Kindergarten teachers during first and third term for the early identification of Kindergarten students at risk of not achieving expected developmental outcomes in three areas—physical, social and cognitive)
- **Early literacy and numeracy** - this measure is the percentage of prep students achieving a set score by the end of the year (the score is determined using the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) test, which is an assessment of early literacy and numeracy).

Data collection issues

- The enrolment figure only relates to eligible children, i.e. those who turn four by 1 January and who do not delay entry by one year; this is not a true reflection of enrolment as there are always some younger and older enrolments with very few repeat students.
- As outlined in the Data Capability Report, the source for the proportion of Indigenous children is the national preschool census, which counts government and non-government enrolments. There are significant issues with such a small number of students using the ABS estimates. The figure provided is derived from the 2008 national preschool census. The baseline figure was calculated from the same source but using 2007 data. The 2009 data is not yet released.

Data collection development

- Implementation of a data administration system to collect data on individual students to report against the Bilateral Agreement performance measures
- Provide annual attendance data disaggregated by disadvantage and Indigenous children
- Develop databases and business processes within DoE, non-government schools and LDC to collect and report accurate data as part of DEEWR-funded Data Capabilities Project; as part of this project it would be possible to conduct Tasmania’s own Workforce Survey for 2010 and to include a section on early childhood qualifications
- Implement a new School Administration System in all government schools to record sessional time and hours in government kindergartens with availability from 2011 (current government SACS system procedures were upgraded to collect attendance in 2010).

5.7.4 Primary outputs to date

The Tasmania Bilateral Agreement and 2009 Tasmania Annual Report include the following outputs:
• during 2009, 31 government schools, 11 Catholic schools and 1 Independent school were funded to provide the additional 5 hours/week of kindergarten

• work has begun on developing a database to record attendance of kindergarten children in government schools, which will enable accurate reporting of this information (in time for ECEC 2010 data reporting)

• government school resourcing is currently being reviewed and a model for funding kindergarten will be proposed where the additional 5 hours/week can be funded from the Commonwealth’s commitment and the program will meet the National Quality Standards

• continue to have Ministerial Child Care Advisory Council and departmental Early Years Reference Group meetings where early childhood education matters can be discussed as necessary

• given Tasmania’s high participation rate, the focus will be on improving educational outcomes for children, which will be measured through the Kindergarten Development Check and the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools assessment

• initiatives to increase the enrolment and attendance, especially for children experiencing disadvantages and Indigenous children:
  – Five State child and family centres are anticipated to be under construction before the end of 2010, with the first to be opened in January 2011\(^\text{102}\)
  – Launching into Learning (LiL) continues in 104 government schools
  – set up Aboriginal Early Years Liaison Officers (AEYLOs)
  – link government programs with other non-government organisations such as Good Beginnings, Play Group Tasmania, local child care providers and Neighbourhood Houses as well as in Launceston with the Home Interaction Program

• ongoing infrastructure assessment and potential solutions are being investigated to ensure that all schools will be able to offer the additional hours

• the University of Tasmania is preparing course options for those four-year qualified early childhood teachers without an early childhood qualification who wish to (continue to) teach in kindergartens.

5.7.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

While Tasmania currently has a 96.5% enrolment rate in an early childhood program, it faces the challenge of increasing the hours per week from an average of 10 to the required 15; the March annual report however shows that 23% of the eligible population is accessing 15 hours per week (as highlighted in Table 19). In addition, it appears that the rate of Indigenous enrolment is slightly less than the desired proportion of 6.7%\(^\text{103}\).

Other challenges are primarily in terms of data collection; that is, Tasmania currently cannot report ‘attendance’ figures, the number/proportion of ‘early childhood qualified’ teachers or fees for non-government schools. It is also the case that the data on the Indigenous population and kindergarten enrolment may be shaky, compounded by the issue of small numbers making trend analysis difficult.

Table 19 provides a picture of Tasmania ECE performance in 2009.

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\(^\text{102}\) For ‘Indigenous children enrolled’, the baseline denominator used the 2007 ABS estimation, but the denominator used the 2008 data. There was a big difference so the proportion went down. Note also that the intent was to measure what proportion on the four-year-old Aboriginal population is enrolled in kindergarten, therefore 6.7% is not a rate, but rather a share of the four-year-olds Tasmanian cohort (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) that identified as Aboriginal.
## Table 19 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, Tasmania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>11.1 hours</td>
<td>11.78 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average costs</td>
<td>A small levy (currently up to $210 pa) with reduced or no costs for low income families</td>
<td>A small levy (currently up to $210 pa) with reduced or no costs for low income families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of disadvantaged children enrolled</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Indigenous children enrolled</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.8 Northern Territory (NT)

#### 5.8.1 Service delivery model

A significant proportion of children in the Northern Territory are Indigenous and living in remote communities. The number of preschool-age children will grow considerably over the next ten years. The increase in the number of children may impose pressure on the existing physical facilities and their capacities.

Schooling prior to a child turning six is not compulsory. The Northern Territory age of entry requirements for enrolment in pre-compulsory schooling are:

- **Preschool** – Children turning four on or before 30 June are eligible to enrol in a regular preschool program at the commencement of the school year. Children turning four after 30 June are eligible to enrol after their birthday in a preschool program if places are available and with the understanding that the child will access more than 12 months of preschool.

- **Transition** – Children turning five on or before 30 June are eligible to enrol in a transition program at the commencement of the school year. Children who turn five after 30 June are eligible to enrol in a transition program from the commencement of the following school year.

- **Remote schools** – In remote schools, children may be enrolled as they turn three years of age, however they need to be accompanied by an appropriate community member who will remain with them for the preschool session. They need to be accompanied until they reach 3 years, 6 months of age.

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104 Lack of clarification of the measure ‘15 hours per week’, could be 15 hours of provision on site including breaks or 15 hours instruction; while the baseline position in the Bilateral was 97.5%, when the DCR was prepared Tas was required by DEEWR to update the denominator which meant that the baseline became 96.5%, but the Bilateral could not then be altered; in Tasmania, all teachers are at least four year university trained; however, this does not distinguish whether they are early childhood qualified.

105 This baseline figure was revised as part of the DCR process and therefore theoretically should be 96.5%. The 2009 target (and following targets) were to maintain the baseline, therefore using the DCR figure we have maintained the baseline, but using the original and incorrect figure in the Bilateral we have not.

106 NT, Early Childhood Services Audit, May 2009
The NT Department of Education and Training (DET) is responsible for providing policy advice, standard setting, monitoring and financial assistance to promote children’s early learning and development.

The following provides an overview of the service delivery model in Northern Territory:

- The Northern Territory Government delivers and funds preschool services, which are incorporated within registered Government schools
- non-government preschool programs are delivered by Northern Territory registered non-government schools, which consist of Catholic remote schools and other registered Christian and Independent schools
- the Northern Territory Government does not provide long day care services, but DET monitors and supports 80 licensed long day care and three-year-old kindergarten services with both operational ($3.5 million) and capital works ($160,000) funding.
- there are currently no community-run organisations providing preschool services
- government preschools are free of charge
- currently 95.5% of enrolments are in non-fee paying government and Catholic remote preschools
- data is not collected for other non-government providers.

5.8.2 State funding

No State funding information provided in all available data sources.

5.8.3 Data collection

Data collection mechanisms

- **Age/Grade Census**: annual collection of data on all children enrolled in preschool programs including data disaggregated by age, individual year level and gender for Government and Non-government schools.
- **Enrolment and Attendance Collections**: number of preschool student attendance days over a four week period of each collection. Data is collected in Week 4 and Week 8 of each term (four terms per year); although data are not captured at individual year or age level, they can be disaggregated by preschool/primary/secondary enrolments and by Indigenous status; both government and non-government schools participate in the collection.
- **Early Childhood Workforce Survey**: covers teachers delivering dedicated preschool programs in NT government and non-government schools, who are four year university trained and EC qualified.
  
  While the Age Grade Census is a snapshot of the school on a particular day, the Enrolment and Attendance Collections provide a picture over a period of time.

Data collection issues

There are multiple challenges in terms of data collection:

- no classification of ‘disadvantaged’ in annual Age/Grade Census
- no data available on preschool programs being delivered through the non-government/private long day care services
- lack of accurate counting of highly mobile populations such as students in remote and very remote locations, especially Indigenous children
- considerable undercounting and over counting of preschool enrolment and attendance; double counting of children enrolled in more than one preschools
- no distinction in attendance to show whether children only present part of the session.
Data collection development

It is envisaged that data about students attending approved preschool programs in long day care centres and staff information will be collected through an online system yet to be developed as part of the Data and Information Capability Improvement Project.

Data has been disaggregated to report the proportion of disadvantaged and Indigenous children enrolled in and attending early childhood education programs.

5.8.4 Primary outputs to date

The NT Bilateral Agreement and 2009 NT Annual Report include the following outputs:

- funding of one mobile service in Top End Group Schools, covering five sites with a total of 30-35 children enrolled - one additional mobile service funded and operating by 2009
- support non-government long day care services to ensure preschool programs are delivered by a four-year qualified teacher through either funding support for employment, transport arrangements or out posted teachers from nearby government schools
- maintain existing four-year university training policy and progressively increase the proportion of teachers who are four-year trained through workforce replacement and qualification upgrading
- develop costed system-wide implementation plan to roll out 15 hours kindergarten, testing different models with 4-5 schools and 200-250 students
- sustain non-fee paying basis for remote Catholic and government preschools
- improve access to Indigenous and disadvantaged children by geo-location and initiatives to improve access to participation and attendance in preschool programs - a Territory-wide plan with costed models of delivery in remote communities and town camps in July 2010.

5.8.5 Progress against Bilateral targets

The Northern Territory was able to meet virtually all of its 2009 targets with the exception of overall participation rates. The explanation of the drop in enrolments is due to the removal of three-year-olds in the non-government school sector from data collection. On the positive side, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of children enrolled in an ECE program that is available for at least 15 hours per week.

Table 20 provides a picture of NT ECE performance in 2009.

Table 20 – Progress against 2009 benchmarks, NT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall participation rates</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in program offering 15 hours/week</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours/week attendance</td>
<td>12 hours</td>
<td>12.9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average costs</td>
<td>Maintain non-fee paying basis for remote Catholic and government</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ABS estimated resident population data at the level of smaller geographies (postcodes, SLAs, LGAs) can not be taken at face value with the potential for undercounting of rural and remote persons, particularly Indigenous; measure of disadvantage highly questionable in terms of accuracy; some preschools may not be captured because they are not registered with NT government.
From 2009 NT Annual Report, the following challenges and barriers have been identified to implementation of Universal Access, especially for the remote and Indigenous communities:

- housing infrastructure for teachers is a significant barrier to establishing programs in remote and very remote locations
- an ‘overload’ effect resulting from multiple initiatives aimed at schools and local Indigenous communities
- insufficient funding for the project, particularly in the initial years but also recognising the much greater cost of providing programs to remote areas
- concerns of stakeholder organisations with regard to the impact of increased hours on staff conditions
- meeting the expectations of the non-government sector regarding increased funding for preschool provision
- the transient nature of sections of the Indigenous population, particularly in homelands and outstation communities, makes regular delivery of preschool programs difficult
- recruitment of sufficient four-year trained early childhood qualified early childhood teachers to meet demand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance benchmark</th>
<th>2009 Target in Bilateral</th>
<th>Progress Stated in 2009 Annual Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average of disadvantaged children enrolled</td>
<td>37.5 %</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of Indigenous children enrolled</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood qualified teachers</td>
<td>36% of teachers are four-year university trained and EC qualified</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Summary and conclusions

6.1 Overview

Early childhood education in Australia is undergoing a major transformation as a result of the 2008 agreement through COAG to ensure ‘all children in the year before formal schooling will have access to high quality early childhood education programs delivered by degree-qualified early childhood teachers, for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks of the year, in public, private and community-based preschools and child care.’ Until the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education came into effect, Australia’s investment in ECE has been ‘abysmally low,’\textsuperscript{108} 30\textsuperscript{th} out of 32 countries on the OECD ranked expenditure on ECE as a percentage of GDP in 2005.\textsuperscript{108}

In part, this substantial policy shift grows out of the wealth of research indicating that children’s brains undergo the most rapid development during the first five years, reaching the peak of learning potential at about 8 years of age. This research also confirms what many early childhood teachers have believed for a long time: that the development of non-cognitive skills are as, if not more, important than literacy and numeracy in the early years. Holistic child development involves social competence, the ability to communicate and understand feelings (yours and others), curiosity, creativity, imagination, perseverance and meaningful relationships with adults, all in dynamic interaction.

The positive results emerging from evaluation of intervention studies might be the critical driver behind the current interest in ECE. Programs developed and delivered primarily in Western developed countries (eg, US, New Zealand, Canada, UK) have demonstrated time and time again that early intervention with high quality ECE can improve overall child development, the transition for formal schooling and achievement throughout school and over the entire life course. These studies have shown that not only do individual children benefit from ECE, but so does society in the huge cost benefits of reduced welfare and criminal justice spending and increased productivity, workforce participation and tax revenues.

What we know for certain is that, in general, early childhood education is associated with positive development across the full range of social, cognitive, physical and emotional domains. What we are still trying to better understand is the kinds of pedagogy, quality of relationships, content of curricula and other factors that are the most important in producing the best outcomes for children.

The results of this accumulated research and the resulting policy decisions are a plethora of early childhood education and care programs from traditional to quite innovative, varying from one jurisdiction to another and within individual jurisdictions. There is a great deal of experimentation going on to test the best ways to help all children maximise their potential throughout the life course.

All of this activity produces an exciting, if changeable, context in which to evaluate the outcomes of the NP ECE. Not surprisingly, there are a number of challenges to be addressed is discussed next.

6.2 Evaluation challenges

Arguably, the chief challenges have to do with the limitations of the data, an issue that Commonwealth agencies and other stakeholders continue to wrestle with as the data inputs of eight jurisdictions, each with its own historically and system determined approach, are drawn together. It is these and other challenges described in this section that have been considered in developing the evaluation framework and planning for evaluation activity over the initial stage of the NP ECE.


6.2.1 Limitations of the data

There is broad acknowledgement that there are significant limitations to the current data: its coverage, the way it is collected and when it is collected. Some of these issues were touched upon in Section 1.6.3. However, the Commonwealth, States and Territories are working closely with the ABS and AIHW to bring national consistency and coherence to the ECEC data, in general, and with regard to assessing progress in achieving the agreed outcomes in the NP ECE, in particular. One description of the early childhood education sector captures the situation in these terms:\textsuperscript{110} ‘The sector is inherently complex due to the fact that attendance is non-compulsory and children can be enrolled in more than one setting. ECE data as a whole in Australia have been described as confusing, with the sector containing a serious lack of national comparability and having ‘orders of magnitude’ more complex than schooling.’

The primary difficulties are described below.

\textit{Matching data needs}

While there are a number of highly relevant and useful data sets, there is in some areas a lack of alignment between data needs for the evaluation and available data sets. In other words, existing data sets may not be capable of answering all the key evaluation questions posed in the evaluation framework. In particular, gaps exist in relation to measuring affordability, quality and broader outcomes for children and families.

This is because the original purpose of most of the States and Territories’ administrative collections was to fund and manage preschool service delivery. The focus was not on the child as a statistical entity but rather on levels of service that needed to be funded, monitored, assessed and controlled for quality. Counts of children were made (often at an aggregate level) to determine levels of funding, or staffing, or resourcing. The National ECEC Data Collection that is being implemented in 2010 aims to shift the focus to the child. As such it is expected that more useful data for evaluation purposes will become available as the National ECEC Data Collection evolves and develops.

\textit{Data set inconsistency}

Historically, each of the States and Territories have collected data relating to service provision, resulting in different collection methodologies and frames across the jurisdictions. Since each State and Territory is at a different starting point of developing their ECEC collection, the data jurisdictions are able to provide to ABS for the compilation of the National ECEC Data Collection are not necessarily consistent with the ECEC NMDS.

Also to ensure the compilation of nationally consistent and comparable data for the purpose of the National ECEC Data Collection, a unit record level (URL) methodology has been foreshadowed. Under the National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care jurisdictions have agreed to developing the capability for collection and reporting ECEC information at the unit record level (discussed under section 2.3). URL data allows greater reliability in the data, and scope for matching data across datasets to eliminate double counting within and across sectors. However, in 2010, half of the jurisdictions used an aggregate methodology (which collects teacher and organisational information only). As indicated earlier, all jurisdictions are working towards implementing a URL methodology in the future, hopefully for the 2011 collection.

Varying definitions also affect data consistency. One of the most striking examples is the way ‘disadvantaged’ children are identified, which varies greatly across jurisdictions. Another example is the age reference points used across jurisdictions, which range from age at 30 April (Victoria), age at last birthday (SA) and age at 1 July (all other States/Territories).

In summary, at this point there are multiple areas of inconsistency between the jurisdictional data collections which make comparison difficult. However with the ABS’ work in developing the National

ECEC Data Collection, the gaps and inconsistencies have been identified and a number of States and Territories are beginning to address these in their data collection methodologies.

**Timing of data collection and data releases**

Another limitation is the timing of data collection and the release of results. For the National ECEC Data Collection to be truly comparable across jurisdictions, it is necessary for all jurisdictions to have a consistent and comparable census date and reference period. For the first year of the collection (2010), this has not been achieved. Therefore the ECEC data for 2010 is not comparable across all jurisdictions. This is a key data collection issue that is expected to be resolved for the 2011 National ECEC Data Collection.

As data becomes available it will be considered in the evaluation, for example the National Preschool Census (NPC) is likely to be available in mid 2011, and will be utilised in reporting at that time.

In other areas, the data items, collection mechanisms and systems are still in a developmental stage. For example, there may be relevant data that relate to quality of ECE services generated from the implementation of the National Quality Framework (through the National Quality Agenda Information Technology System – NQA ITS), but the processes for collecting and reporting data are not yet finalised. Due to the very tight delivery timeframe and funding for the NQA ITS, scope is being closely managed to support only legislative and regulatory requirements in the initial delivery. However, during the design phase of the project, due care is being taken to ensure that the NQA ITS is flexible enough in its design to facilitate expansion in future years.

The evaluation framework is structured in such a way as to accommodate changes as they occur and it is envisaged that the framework will need to be updated as the NP ECE progresses and developments and improvements are made to the National ECEC Data Collection.

**Coverage of preschool in child care**

From 2011, preschool data will be included in Child Care Management System (CCMS) data collection and will form part of the National ECEC Data Collection. The CCMS has full coverage of all approved child care services within Australia. It is the mechanism by which the Commonwealth’s Child Care Benefit (CCB) is managed and also provides information on child care supply and usage. However, the ABS recognises that, ‘even with the inclusion of CCMS, the 2011 collection still may not achieve a full coverage. This is because there is currently no collection coverage for centre-based child care services which are not approved for the purposes of receiving CCB payments or in receipt of State or Territory funding for providing preschool programs. Preschool services being conducted in a registered non-government school may also fall out the ECEC collection in some jurisdictions depending on the legislative requirements and funding arrangements.’

**Evidence of broader outcomes**

There are considerable data gaps in relation to the broader impact of the initiative on children’s learning and social and emotional outcomes. For example, AEDI data (which cover physical health and wellbeing, emotional maturity, social competence, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge) are available for one year only and it is unclear whether data collection will continue. Even if it does continue, the reliability of the data is questionable given the fact that the data are derived from small community-level samples.

NAPLAN data, another potential source of information about outcomes, are highly limited, not collected until Year 3 and not particularly useful to causal analyses given the intensive investment in literacy and numeracy initiatives from other sources.

School entry assessments are undertaken inconsistently, with varying methodologies, approaches, timing and levels of formality in the collection both across the jurisdictions, and within jurisdictions, as well as variations in the way results are reported.

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**ABS 2010, unpublished, NCEC National Data Collection Workshop Background Information, p.4.**
The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) may provide some interesting insights as it follows cohorts of babies and young children for many years. As described in Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children is now walking and talking112:

*The LSAC study aims to shed light on the development of the current generation of Australian children, and to investigate the contribution of the children’s social, economic and cultural environments to their adjustment and wellbeing. More specifically, it seeks to improve understanding of the complex interplay of factors that foster or impede health early childhood development, to identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention in policy areas concerning children, and to inform the policy debate in general. The study enables an examination of the impact of early experiences on later development, and the mapping of the diverse pathways followed by children as they develop. It also helps to determine the opportune times for the provision of services and welfare support and to identify the long-term consequences of policy changes.*

Further investigation will reveal how useful LSAC results might be to the evaluation. However, at present there are limited data sets that might be capable of providing evidence for impacts that go beyond the direct achievement of stated NP ECE outcomes.

6.2.2 Measuring outcomes - how far can we go?

The difficulties associated with measuring the broader cognitive, social, behavioural and other outcomes of ECE for children and for their families are well recognised. In the long term, how do we know what impact the ECE experience has had on a child’s cognitive and social development? How do we measure outcomes when there are no consistent measures across States and Territories, and across school systems in the first year of schooling? What attribution can be made to ECE of identified outcomes without a randomised control design? In their literature review of outcomes in ECE, Mitchell, Wylie and Carr (2008) conclude113:

… like other aspects of education, it is difficult to isolate the impact of ECE, or to be conclusive that ECE alone has ‘caused’ outcomes for learners and parents. The factors that contribute to children’s development over time are manifold, making it impossible to include all of them in any one study.

For example, longer term, a population-wide, independent measure such as NAPLAN can be used to determine literacy and numeracy levels. However, results that are relevant to the NP ECE would not be available within the lifespan of the NP ECE evaluation (the first relevant results would be for the 2015 Year 3 cohort). Moreover, isolating the impact of ECE on the literacy and numeracy achievement of children four years into compulsory schooling would be impossible because of the multitude of other factors (eg, curricula, programs, interventions) that influence these outcomes once children start school.

So what can we measure in terms of the outcomes of universal access to ECE?

One approach is to draw on the findings of number of credible studies, and not rely on the results of any one study or data set. As Mitchell, Wylie and Carr (2008) conclude:

*In short, there is no perfect study in this area (nor is there ever likely to be one). Thus it is important to consider a range of studies together, and build connections between the findings of different studies with different designs, focus, and groups involved.*114

Studies such as E4Kids and LSAC may provide some useful inputs in this area. So might the longitudinal studies from the U.S. and the U.K. as they identify relationships between preschool factors

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112 Gray M and Smart, D 2008, Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children is now walking and talking, Family Matters, No 79.


and children’s developmental outcomes. Given that some of these studies are using control groups, relatively rigorous causal analyses may result, which would inform the work of the NP ECE Evaluation.

The other approach that will be utilised is to seek measures of the research-identified success factors for ECE – the factors that are known to make a difference to child outcomes. These are identified in the evaluation framework and include the quality of education and care, teacher quality, affordability, duration and hours of attendance. The rationale for this approach is that if positive outcomes can be identified in relation to these factors, then de-facto positive outcomes of ECE can be deduced.

6.2.3 Measuring quality

The quality measures within the NP ECE are the most pertinent to this evaluation, including for example, the requirement for four-year trained teachers.

The new National Quality Standard (NQS) for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care will be applied to all long day care, family day care, outside school hours care services and preschools from 1 January 2012.

Following an initial trial of the new rating process, approximately 200 services (including long day care, family day care, outside school hours care and preschools) will undergo voluntary assessment using the NQS by November 2010. This is to assist with the further refinement of the assessment and ratings processes to support implementation by January 2012.

Under the NQS, services will be assessed against seven quality areas, within which sit a number of elements. The seven quality areas are:

- educational program and practice
- children’s health and safety
- physical environment
- staffing arrangements, including staff-to-child ratios and qualifications
- relationships with children
- collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- leadership and service management.

The assessment and rating process is still being developed, but is likely to include a Quality Improvement Plan submitted by each service, observations of the service through a visit, consideration of information held by the regulator regarding compliance history and discussion with the Director/Supervisor and/or the provider of the service. Following the assessment, a service will be advised of its rating in each of the seven quality areas and its overall rating.

The NQS is underpinned by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) – Australia’s first national framework to guide educators of children aged 0-5 years. As such, the NQS process appears to have great potential for quantifying ECEC quality in the future. For example, indicators might include the number/proportion of services that meet, exceed and fall below the NQS. However, this information would not be available until late 2012 at the earliest, as implementation will only commence in January of that year. This means that monitoring of changes over time will only be able to use 2012 as a reference point.

6.2.4 Impact of the 18 Month Review

Another challenge in this highly dynamic context is the potential findings and impact of the 18 Month Review. The Review will report on issues such as the adequacy of funding and reasonableness of timelines and may result in renegotiation of some elements of the bilateral agreements, thereby influencing the whole NP ECE. The scope of the Review’s recommendations is unknown at this stage and it may emerge that the initiative is modified as a result.
The implication of this challenge is the need to remain flexible with the evaluation approach and consider the need to modify the evaluation framework in twelve months’ time.

6.3 Australia’s preschool delivery system

Prior to the NP ECE, preschool education was the sole responsibility of the States and Territories with the exception of Indigenous preschool services, which received supplementary funding from the Commonwealth. The development of preschool or kindergarten has taken very different paths across the country so that current provision is quite varied:

- preschool services may be offered by government, community and/or private providers
- programs may be stand alone, attached to schools or provided in child care centres
- starting ages vary
- quality varies considerably in terms of child/teacher ratios, teacher qualifications and physical facilities
- funding mechanisms, fees and costs to parents also vary.

Table 21 below captures some of this variation.

Table 21 – Jurisdictional preschool characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Year before formal schooling</th>
<th>First year of formal schooling</th>
<th>Second year of formal schooling</th>
<th>Government agency responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Name Preschool</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept. of Education &amp; Training Dept of Community Services NSW (funder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4 by 31 July</td>
<td>5 by 31 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Name Kindergarten</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept of Education &amp; Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4 by 30 April</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Name Kindergarten</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Creche &amp; Kindergarten Assn of QLD (funded by Dept of Education, Training, &amp; the Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4 by 30 June</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Name Kindergarten</td>
<td>Pre-Primary</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept of Education &amp; Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4 by 30 June</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Name Kindergarten</td>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept of Education &amp; Children’s Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4th birthday</td>
<td>5th birthday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Name Kindergarten</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4 by 1 January</td>
<td>5 by 1 January</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Name Preschool</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept of Education &amp; Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4 by 30 April</td>
<td>5 by 30 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Name Preschool</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Dept of Employment, Education &amp; Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4th birthday</td>
<td>5 by 30 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2009 policy brief explained the structure of preschool in Australia as a continuum between two models of program delivery as picture in Figure 6 below:\(^{115}\).

While no jurisdiction precisely fits one model or the other, it helps to understand the basic characteristics defining the two ends of the continuum. Table 22 summarises the key differences in the government and non-government approaches.

### Table 22 – Preschool Delivery Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL 1: GOVERNMENT MODEL</th>
<th>MODEL 2: NON-GOVERNMENT MODEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA, SA, TAS, ACT and NT</td>
<td>NSW, VIC &amp; QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ the State/Territory government owns, funds and delivers the majority of preschool services</td>
<td>▪ the State subsidises preschool services that are provided by non-government organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ preschools are treated in much the same way as primary and secondary schools</td>
<td>▪ preschools in long day care centres charge some fees and attract Commonwealth funding through the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ the jurisdiction may provide supplementary funding to community preschools, but generally not to preschool programs in long day care centres because they attract Commonwealth funding through the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate</td>
<td>▪ under this model, government own less than 20 percent of preschools and these are generally targeted at disadvantaged communities, in contrast to government schools, which are comprehensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ under this model, the government owns between 70 and 90 percent of preschools.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few more comparisons confirm the diversity:\(^{116}\):

- a number of preschools are staffed and funded by education departments and integrated with or linked to schools in the ACT, the Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia
- in Queensland and Victoria, preschool education is principally delivered by community providers and regulated and funded in part by education departments
- in NSW, there is a mixed system with most programs provided by long day care services and community preschools and regulated by the Department of Community Services, but with 100 preschools attached to primary schools and administered by the Department of Education and Training
- all preschool systems require qualified early childhood teachers; Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and the ACT require teachers with early childhood education qualifications in addition to tertiary degrees; there are also differences in relation to teacher registration requirements and four year qualifications compared with three or two year qualifications being accepted
- in NSW, for preschools and child care centres regulated by the Department of Community Services, qualified early childhood teachers are mandated for centres with more than 29 children
- in Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, the ACT, the Northern Territory and NSW (Department of Education & Training preschools only), government provided preschool education is free with the option of a voluntary levy

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the reported average fee for community preschools in NSW is $27.93 per day on average for all families, $10.40 for Indigenous children and $16.62 for children from low income families as reported in NSW’s NP ECE Annual Report for 2009; in Queensland daily fees range from $13 to $20 and in Victoria, the average fees are about $140 per term.

some form of fee relief for eligible families is provided in most jurisdictions.

6.3.1 Policy Context

Universal Access

To achieve universal access to early childhood education, the Commonwealth committed $955 million to the States and Territories over the period 2009 to 2013. In addition, $15 million was allocated for the development of better data and performance information. The distribution of Commonwealth funding of early childhood education by jurisdiction is shown in Table 7 in section 3.6.1.

This investment is to assist the States and Territories to reach a set of targets set out in the National Agreement on Early Childhood Education. As stated earlier, the Agreement states: ‘All children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling.’ The NP ECE and the associated Bilaterals specified the collective agreements and the individual strategies and timetables of each jurisdiction in achieving the overall outcomes.

While the intent of the NP ECE is clear, there are still some definitional and measurement issues to be sorted out as discussed earlier in this document.

Costs and subsidies

The funding context for ECE in Australia is complex. In most States and Territories, direct funding is provided to many state-operated and community based preschools. Other arrangements include the provision of a flat subsidy for each four-year-old child attending preschool.

In the child care setting (ie Long Day Care and Family Day Care), there are two primary sources of subsidy: the Child Care Benefit (CCB) and the Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR). Access to these subsidies rests on whether a service is ‘approved’ or ‘registered’; for the most part, child care services tend to be ‘approved’ whereas preschools tend to be ‘registered’ (or not registered for CCB purposes). The CCB is available for ‘registered’ preschool services, but is paid at a considerably lower rate on provision of centre receipts (rather than as lower fees). The CCTR is not paid for care provided in approved, but not registered services.

Given the eligibility requirements associated with these subsidies, stand alone preschools and those run by not-for-profit organisations, such as non-State schools, may not be as financially feasible for many families where these subsidies are not available. In contrast, there are reasonably generous subsidies for enrolling children in pre-schools run by long day care centres.

National Quality Framework (NQF)

Presently, quality standards across early education and care programs vary considerably across Australia. Outside the child care sector where universal quality standards have been applied for several years, it is difficult, if not impossible, for parents to make choices for their children based on an assessment of the quality and yet it is widely acknowledged that quality matters, especially in the early years of children’s development. Therefore, the NQF, agreed in partnership with the State and Territory governments, is important as it promises a higher standard of care and comprehensive information for families.

Early Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is a key component of the NQF. It underpins universal access to early childhood education and will be incorporated in the National Quality Standard in order to ensure delivery of nationally consistent and quality early childhood education across sectors and jurisdictions. The Framework draws on conclusive international evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children’s learning and development. It has been developed with considerable input from the
early childhood sector, early childhood academics and the Australian and State and Territory Governments.

The EYLF communicates these expectations through the following five Learning Outcomes:

- children have a strong sense of identity
- children are connected with and contribute to their world
- children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- children are confident and involved learners
- children are effective communicators.

The EYLF describes the principles, practices and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children’s learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as this provides the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. The Framework recognises the importance of development across a range of domains including communication, language, numeracy, social competence, physical and emotional wellbeing.

6.4 Summary of progress against key evaluation questions

6.4.1 Immediate outcomes

The key questions relating to immediate outcomes have to do with increasing capacity and ensuring affordability. While the 2009 annual reports and discussions with program managers and others during site visits provide some indications of how well the States and Territories are doing in terms of physical capacity, there is not much yet that is pertinent to assessing affordability.

**Increasing capacity**

All jurisdictions are expanding their capacity to provide additional preschool spaces. Even in the States where all children are already attending preschool, there are still infrastructure issues related to meeting the 15 hours/week target. As existing preschool programs expand their hours, jurisdictions are determining how to accommodate the space requirements without compromising programs for other children, for example, in jurisdictions where three-year-olds currently access pre-school programs. Some States are making greater use of primary school facilities, while others are funding the community sector to expand their infrastructure and still others are relying on long day care facilities to add preschool programs to their current offerings.

Increasing capacity and the required expansion of physical infrastructure, is challenging for many jurisdictions. Most are using a combination of Commonwealth funds through the NP ECE and State funds to establish enough new preschool places.

Most jurisdictions met or exceeded their 2009 targets for enrolment of children in preschools offering 15 hours/week; however, a few fell marginally short. Therefore, it would seem that the jurisdictions, in general, are managing to increase capacity so far according to the agreed targets.

**Ensuring affordability**

Affordability is a difficult factor to assess because clear, practical indicators have not yet been agreed. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is working on affordability indicators, but it is unclear at this point, whether that work will result in a usable mechanism (indicators and data) for jurisdictions to assess whether their fee structures prohibit some families from access to preschool programs.

6.4.2 Intermediate outcomes

Obviously, it is more difficult to summarise progress on achieving intermediate outcomes, given how early it is in the life of the NP ECE. The key questions relating to intermediate outcomes have to do
with: teacher qualifications, provision in an appropriate range of settings, removing barriers (including cost), promoting programs (especially to ‘hard to reach’ families) and enrolment and attendance hours.

**Teacher qualifications**

The agreed outcome is a sufficient number of four-year trained ECE qualified teachers available to deliver preschool programs. It is acknowledged that a transitional period will be required to accommodate teachers currently in the system who do not have the required credentials and to build up a sufficient pool of new teachers with the appropriate education and training. Some jurisdictions are negotiating new programs with tertiary institutions while others are providing subsidies to current and future early childhood teachers to gain acceptable credentials and some have implemented procedures to expedite qualification assessments.

Virtually all met their 2009 targets for the number and/or percentage of four-year ECE qualified teachers. However, a COAG-commissioned report (2008) indicated that there will not be an adequate supply of early childhood teachers until 2020. If that is the case, then achieving this outcome and related quality indicators may continue to be a problem throughout the life of the NP ECE and beyond.

**Provision in a range of settings**

There are several challenges related to providing preschool in settings that meet families’ needs. For example, families that have a primary school child may find accessing preschool on the grounds of a government primary school far more convenient while a family with two parents working long hours who have a baby and a five-year-old may find that a long day care setting works best. Then, of course, there is provision in regional and remote communities, where factors such as small numbers, high costs and limited or no qualified staff make sustainability very difficult.

It is too early in the evaluation period to assess how well the jurisdictions are responding to this challenge; however, it will be a continuing area of investigation for the evaluation.

**Removing barriers and promoting programs.**

Cost is usually the most commonly cited barrier to participation in preschool where fees are an issue. Of course, many preschools are free, but others charge fees that may be prohibitive for many families. There are Commonwealth and jurisdictional subsidies, but they still leave some families with out-of-pocket expenses. Given the conundrums described in the section above on ‘ensuring affordability’, it is not possible at this time to assess whether cost remains a barrier in every State and Territory and what level of out-of-pocket costs, if any, would eliminate this factor as a barrier.

Other barriers frequently cited include location, hours of operation, quality of staff, cultural appropriateness and lack of awareness. Some jurisdictions have implemented special outreach programs to promote the benefits of preschool to disadvantaged and Indigenous families. In some areas, Indigenous families enrol their children in very high numbers but attendance is relatively low; increasing attendance will, therefore, involve identifying of the other factors that prevent these children coming to preschool on a regular basis.

**Enrolment and attendance**

Enrolment and attendance data in 2009 are variable in quality and reliability, but will be improving for 2010 along with the raft of other data developments being made for the National ECEC Data Collection. From the 2009 Annual Reports, it appears that most jurisdictions met both their targets for enrolments, however, it is generally still not at the 15 hours/week target level. The 2010 National ECEC Data Collection will provide improved nationally comparable data on enrolment and attendance to input into future Annual Reports.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.4.3 Ultimate outcomes

In a four-year agreement, only preliminary progress is likely to be made toward the ‘ultimate’ outcomes. It is, however, still possible to look at the key evaluation questions and discuss strategies for measuring progress over the next three years. There are really two sets of ultimate outcomes: one set is about whether the jurisdictions were, in fact, able to implement universal access as agreed in the bilaterals; the second set has to do with the impact of preschool attendance on children’s development across a number of domains. This annual report has focused on identifying the factors that enable and inhibit implementation of universal access to help improve the process. It has also clarified how the evaluation will address the impact issues using existing and future data sets.

Enablers and inhibitors

In some ways, the most important enabler is the foundation on which universal access will be built. That is, some jurisdictions already have robust early education infrastructures and preschool programs taught by appropriately qualified early childhood teachers, while others are starting from a lower base of preschool provision. Key enablers, then, are the existence of adequate physical infrastructure, a pool of qualified early childhood teachers and/or cooperative tertiary institutions, a well-developed curriculum in line with the National Early Years Learning Framework, strong jurisdictional support in terms of operational and capital works funding, an affordable structure of fees (if preschool is not free for all children) and good data systems. A comprehensive State-based, whole-of-government early years policy (that aligns with the national policies described earlier) also makes it more likely that the universal access targets will be met.

Jurisdictions that must build new infrastructure, develop whole new education and training pathways for early education teachers and lack a history of early childhood education will find achieving the ultimate outcomes far more difficult.

6.4.4 Focus for the evaluation

It is important to keep in mind that some 95% of four- to five-year-old children in Australia already participate in a formal centre or school-based early childhood program. Granted, this includes children who use a variety of care and education facilities and does not take into consideration the frequency or extent of use. Nevertheless, given the high degree of participation, it is not difficult to envisage universal access being achieved and high quality early childhood education being available to all children. States and Territories are continuing to work to achieve universal access across all population groups and geographical locations. The evaluation will continue to monitor progress against the specific outcomes within the NP ECE.

The evaluators will also continue to engage with jurisdictions and the Commonwealth to ensure the use of all appropriate data sources by the evaluation as data become available, and to continue to investigate ways in which the impact for children and families can most effectively be measured. Understanding what works will be a major focus of evaluation activity with the jurisdictions during 2011.

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Appendix A   Functions and Deliverables
Priority functions

The following priority functions are specified in the Work Order for the Evaluation:

- proposing an appropriate Evaluation methodology and undertaking the Evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the NP ECE in achieving its outcomes, including the following areas of focus:
  - progress toward achievement of NP ECE outcomes and outputs (refer table 1 in Part 2 of the NP ECE), while recognising different jurisdiction starting points and characteristics
  - the contribution of the NP ECE to achieving improved outcomes for children, including the extent of achievement of specific elements of the Universal Access commitment as specified in clause 17 of the NP ECE
  - the achievement of the objectives of the NP ECE as outlined in clause 15 of the NP ECE
  - barriers to effective implementation of NP ECE objectives
  - insights to inform NP ECE implementation in jurisdictions
  - obtaining information on children who do not access early childhood education in the year before full-time schooling, including their characteristics and outcomes
  - other related work that considers the outcomes of children who have access to preschool (i.e. Australian Early Development Index, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, Australian Research Council Assessing the Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education and Care in Australian Communities project)
  - any unintended outcomes of the NP ECE.

- consultation and information gathering:
  - consult with key stakeholders, including Commonwealth and State and Territory government officials, non-government stakeholders and service providers
  - comply with data and confidentiality protocols when accessing and reporting on material held by key stakeholders
  - engage with, inform and report to the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee throughout the Evaluation
  - use information collected to make findings within the scope of the Evaluation (including the areas of focus of the Evaluation).

- In conducting the Evaluation, draw upon evidence from multiple sources including but not limited to:
  - State level evaluations
  - research evidence
  - the 18 month review
  - relevant data linkage initiatives when data is available
  - evaluations and inputs from other NPs and national initiatives such as the National Quality Agenda and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement
  - the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set, when data is available
  - the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census, when data is available.

Deliverables

- Develop Evaluation Methodology
  - provide a high standard project plan, consistent with the Department’s timeframes detailing the final methodology to conduct the Evaluation for endorsement by the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee and the Department.

- Develop Evaluation Framework
undertake a knowledge review including:
  - an overview of recent and relevant literature
  - a review of key documents
  - preliminary consultation with key stakeholders (following draft of a communication and stakeholder engagement plan)

- scope potential sources of quantitative and qualitative data and develop an evaluation framework that links outcomes with NP ECE performance indicators and data sources
- develop data and confidentiality protocols to guide accessing and reporting on stakeholder material
- formalise a program logic approach by conducting a program logic workshop with the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee
- document the evaluation framework, structured around the core components of the NP ECE, namely the outcomes, outputs and performance indicators
- outline proposed structure and approach to reporting for the Annual Reports.

Consultation and Engagement
- complete a communication and stakeholder engagement plan for endorsement by the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee
- engage with the consultant conducting the 18 month review and consider coordinated stakeholder engagement where appropriate to minimise impact on stakeholder groups
- conduct a minimum of one face to face meeting with each jurisdiction per year with a view to conducting a balance of consultations across all jurisdictions. If You consider that more consultations are necessary with one jurisdiction than another, the reasons must be transparent and reported to the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee
- conduct at least one face to face meeting with non-government stakeholders and service providers in all State and Territories consistent with the needs of the Evaluation
- be available to discuss issues as they arise with the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee and the Department
- engage in project monitoring teleconferences with the Department, up to once a month.

Data and information
- undertake ongoing monitoring of data as identified in the evaluation framework
- work within the objectives and the scope of the Evaluation in data collection and monitoring
- develop and analyse qualitative data sets
- work with existing data sets including:
  - the Report on Government Services
  - Data Capability Reports
  - NP ECE Progress Reports;
  - NP ECE Annual Reports
  - data collected through other relevant initiatives, such as National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census and the Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set when data is available.

Annual Reports
- provide the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee and the Department with detailed, high standard annual reports that identify findings and recommendations and provide current assessments regarding the key questions the Evaluation is answering.
Annual Reports will:

- include the methodology and findings arising from the research. The reports will summarise the analysis of data, submissions and discussions relating to issues specified by the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee and the Department and any additional issues which arise as a result of the research.

- be provided in draft format for comment by the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee and Departmental staff, and amendments carried out by the consultant, as required. The reports will be provided as hard copies (2 copies of each report) and electronically in a format specified by the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee and the Department. The reports may be published by the Department, at the Department's discretion. Any published report will acknowledge the consultant's role.

Presentations

- present the Project Plan detailing the final Project Plan to the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee

- be available to present the Evaluation Annual report once each year to government bodies that may include the NP ECE Evaluation Steering Committee, the MCEECDYA Early Childhood Development Working Group, AYEESOC and MCEECDYA.