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Department of Education and Training

# National Report

National Partnership Agreement on  
Universal Access to Early Childhood  
Education - 2015



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The document must be attributed as the National Report: National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education – 2015.

# National Report

## National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education - 2015

### **Purpose of this report**

Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education – 2015* (2015 National Partnership), there is a requirement for the Commonwealth to compile and publish a National Report summarising national and State achievement against performance benchmarks.

This report presents performance as assessed by the Australian Government under arrangements set out in the 2015 National Partnership. Under this Agreement the Commonwealth made \$404.5 million available to states and territories to support preschool programs in 2015.

Different terminology is used to describe early childhood education programs across Australia, with some states using the term kindergarten, while others use the term preschool. The term preschool will be used throughout this report for ease of reference.

### **Universal Access aims to ensure that all Australian children participate in a quality preschool program in the year before full-time school for 600 hours**

The objective of the universal access initiative is to provide universal access to quality preschool programs for all children in the year before full-time school for 600 hours per year, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher who meets National Quality Framework (NQF) requirements, with a focus on participation by Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Preschool programs are play-based and tailored to meet the learning needs of younger children. They are delivered in accordance with the Early Years Learning Framework, which has been developed by experts and agreed by all Australian governments. Programs must be delivered in a way that meets the needs of children, parents and communities and ensures that cost is not a barrier to participation.

### **The National Partnership measures performance against four key indicators agreed with states and territories**

Under the 2015 National Partnership, performance is assessed against four key indicators, with sub-indicators for cohorts of Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Performance indicator 4 on attendance measures ‘of the children enrolled, the proportion of children that attended for at least one hour during the reference week’. This indicator is based on data of children’s attendance for at least one hour per week in the reference period (August) and does not measure attendance in a program for 15 hours per week. There are issues associated with attendance data for preschool. While progress is reported against this indicator, payments are not tied to it.

**Performance Indicators under the 2015 National Partnership (extract from Table 1: Outcomes, Outputs, Performance Indicators and Performance Benchmarks)**

Performance Indicators		Performance Benchmarks/Targets
1 Teacher Qualifications	The proportion of early childhood education programs delivered by a degree qualified early childhood teacher who meets the NQF requirements.	95 per cent*
2 Access to Quality Program	The proportion of children enrolled in the year before full-time school in quality early childhood education program(s).	95 per cent of children including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95 per cent of Indigenous children; and</li> <li>• 95 per cent of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.</li> </ul>
3 Access to a Quality 600 hour Program	The proportion of enrolled children enrolled in the year before full-time school in quality early childhood education program(s) for 600 hours per year.	95 per cent of enrolled children including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95 percent of Indigenous children; and</li> <li>• 95 per cent of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.</li> </ul>
4 Attendance	The proportion of enrolled children who attend, in the year before full-time school, quality early childhood education program(s) for 600 hours per year.	Annual targets agreed in Implementation Plans taking into account a jurisdiction's starting point and moving to 90 per cent over time.

\*Includes service waivers with respect to early childhood teachers under the NQF

### **The National Collection collects preschool's enrolment and participation information**

The National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (the National Collection) is the mechanism for collecting data to assess performance under the 2015 National Partnership. The National Collection takes a 'snapshot' of data across the country in a reference week/s in August each year and is published as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Preschool Education, Australia publication.

Together with the ABS Estimated Resident Population data, the National Collection enables the Department of Education and Training to assess performance against performance indicators. Under the 2015 National Partnership, states and territories are able to supplement the National Collection with additional information for consideration in the assessment of their performance. The outcome of this process results in a final assessed performance for each state and territory against Performance Indicators 2, 3 and 4, including sub cohorts.

The provision of supplementary data is voluntary and jurisdictions may choose to do this one year and not the next. This can impact on data comparability across years.

### **Data on teacher qualifications remains challenging**

The National Collection contains some information in relation to early childhood education and care workers, however, the data collections that contribute to the National Collection contain different worker data with varying degrees of accuracy. Up to December 2013, it was not possible to consistently assess performance against the teacher qualifications indicator.

Since 1 January 2014, changes to the NQF resulted in a requirement that all long day care and preschool services providing care must have access to an early childhood teacher. From this date, the teacher qualifications indicator has been taken as achieved for the purposes of assessment under the 2015 National Partnership.

## Indigenous population estimates

In its population publications, the ABS highlights volatility in Indigenous person and population counts, and the quality of data on births, deaths and migration of Indigenous persons.

As a result, alternative measures to the ABS' standard approach to population estimation (observed numbers of births, deaths and migration during a specified period, added to the population at the start of the period) are applied for estimating Indigenous population estimates.

Therefore, Indigenous person and population estimates presented in the National Collection should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

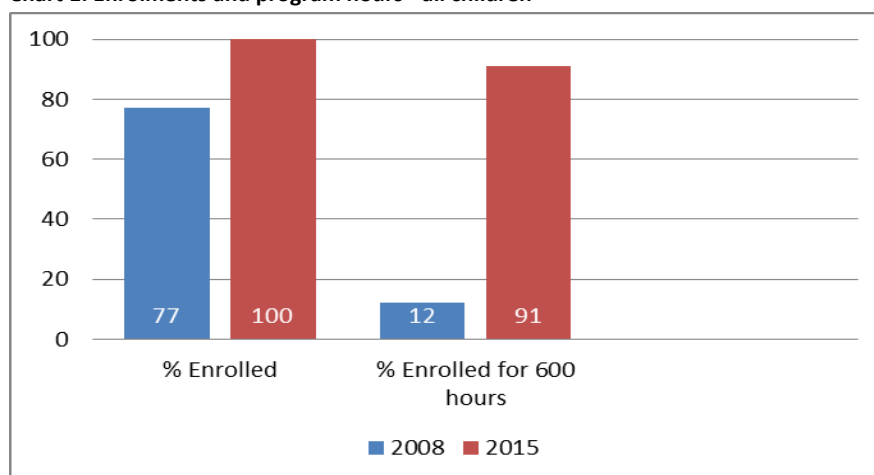
Further details on Indigenous population estimates can be found on the [ABS website](#).

## Significant progress has been made since the first National Partnership was agreed in 2008

Significant progress has been made since the first National Partnership in 2008, with more Australian children attending preschool programs each year. In 2008, it is estimated that 206,000, or 77 per cent of children in the year before full-time school, were enrolled in a preschool program. By 2015, this number had increased to 325,273. This equates to a 2015 national enrolment rate of 100 per cent<sup>1</sup>. While this percentage is encouraging, it most likely overstates actual preschool enrolments. We know that there are still small pockets of Australian children who are not enrolled in preschool.

In 2015, nationally, 91 per cent of the children enrolled in a preschool program were enrolled for 600 hours or more. This is a significant increase from 12 per cent in 2008, but also demonstrates that one in ten enrolled children are still not enrolled in programs for 600 hours per year.

**Chart 1: Enrolments and program hours - all children**



Source: 2008 data from *Bilateral Agreements under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education*. 2015 data from *National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0)* and *ABS Estimated Residential Population (ABS Cat 1367.0)*. Includes supplementary data from some jurisdictions.

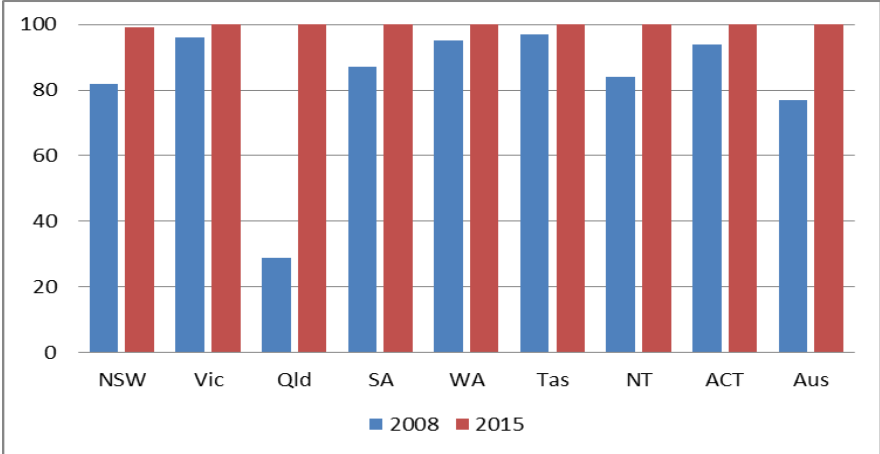
Notes: Different calculation methodologies were used in 2008 and 2015 to measure enrolment in 600 hours.

<sup>1</sup> Where proportions are calculated using two different sources of data, data comparability issues can result in estimates greater than 100 per cent. Where this occurs, results are capped to 100 per cent.

**In 2015, all jurisdictions exceeded the 95 per cent benchmark for children enrolled in a preschool program**

In 2015, all jurisdictions exceeded the 95 per cent benchmark for children enrolled in a preschool program. Compared to 2008, all states and territories have achieved a significant improvement against this indicator.

**Chart 2: Proportion of children enrolled**

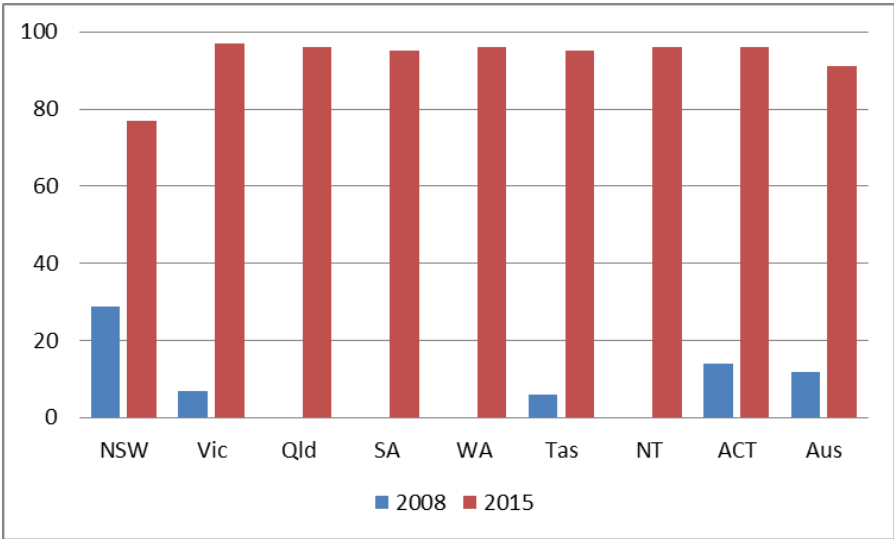


Source: 2008 data from Bilateral Agreements under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. 2015 data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0) and ABS Estimated Residential Population (ABS Cat 1367.0). Includes supplementary data from some jurisdictions.

**In 2015, the majority of jurisdictions met the benchmark for the proportion of children enrolled that are enrolled in a preschool program for 600 hours**

In 2015, the majority of jurisdictions met or exceeded the benchmark for the proportion of enrolled children enrolled in a preschool program for 600 hours. All states and territories with low baseline starting positions have shown a significant increase against this indicator. Queensland and the Northern Territory both improved from zero per cent in 2008 to 96 per cent in 2015; and South Australia improved from zero per cent in 2008 to 95 per cent in 2015.

**Chart 3: Proportion of children enrolled that are enrolled for 600 hours**



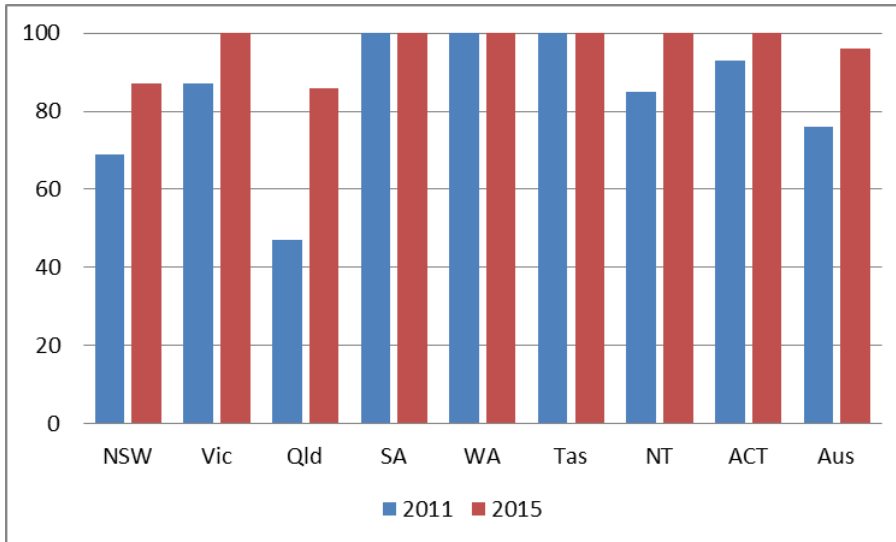
Source: 2008 data from Bilateral Agreements under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. 2015 data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0). Includes supplementary data from some jurisdictions.

Note: Different calculation methodologies were used in 2008, 2013 and 2014 to measure enrolment in 600 hours.

## In 2015, nationally, 96 per cent of Indigenous children were enrolled in a preschool program

In 2015, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory exceeded the 95 per cent benchmark for Indigenous enrolment. All states and territories have maintained their performance above the benchmark or demonstrated improvements against this indicator since 2011.

**Chart 4: Proportion of Indigenous children enrolled**

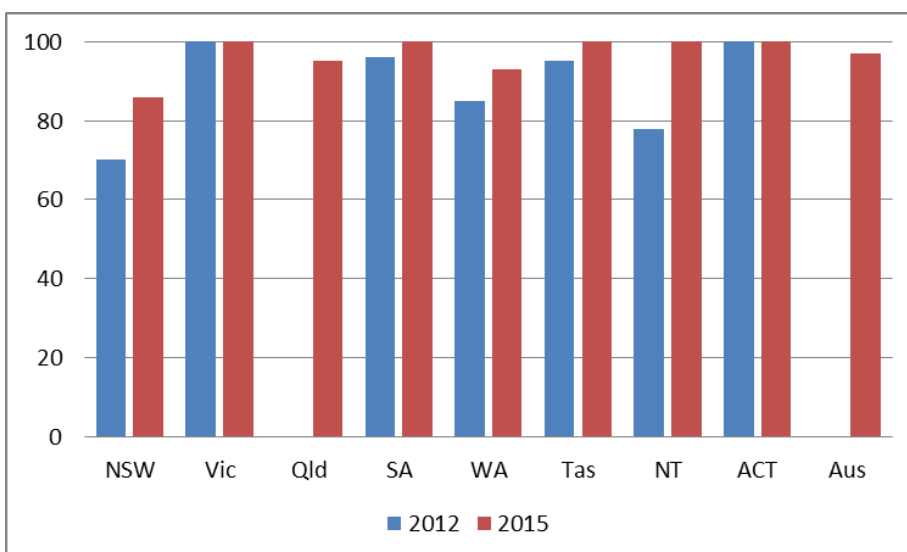


Source: Data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0) and ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026 (ABS Cat. No. 3238.0). Includes Supplementary data from some jurisdictions.

## In 2015, nationally, 97 per cent of vulnerable and disadvantaged children were enrolled in a preschool program

In 2015, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory met or exceeded the 95 per cent benchmarks for vulnerable and disadvantaged enrolment – the strongest performance against this indicator nationally to date.

**Chart 5: Proportion of vulnerable and disadvantaged children enrolled**



Source: Data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0) and ABS Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia (ABS Cat. No. 3235.0). Includes supplementary data from some jurisdictions.



## 2015 summary tables <sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Performance indicator 2 – children enrolled**

	All children		Indigenous		Vulnerable and Disadvantaged	
	2008	2015	2011	2015	2012	2015
<b>NSW</b>	82%	99%	69%	87%	70%	86%
<b>Vic</b>	96%	100%	87%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Qld</b>	29%	100%	47%	86%	na	95%
<b>SA</b>	87%	100%	100%	100%	96%	100%
<b>WA</b>	95%	100%	100%	100%	85%	93%
<b>Tas.</b>	97%	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%
<b>NT</b>	84%	100%	85%	100%	78%	100%
<b>ACT</b>	94%	100%	93%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Aus</b>	77%	100%	76%	96%	na	97%

Source: 2008 data from Bilateral Agreements under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. 2011, 2012 and 2015 data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0) and ABS Estimated Residential Population (ABS Cat 1367.0), ABS Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026 (ABS Cat. No. 3238.0) and ABS Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia (ABS Cat. No. 3235.0). Includes supplementary data from some jurisdiction.

na – not available due to data quality.

Note: Where proportions are calculated using two different sources of data, data comparability issues can result in estimates greater than 100 per cent. Where this occurs, results are capped to 100 per cent.

**Table 2: Performance indicator 3 – children enrolled that are enrolled for 600 hours**

	All children		Indigenous		Vulnerable and Disadvantaged	
	2008	2015	2013	2015	2014	2015
<b>NSW</b>	29%	77%	66%	77%	85%	73%
<b>Vic</b>	7%	97%	86%	99%	98%	97%
<b>Qld</b>	0	96%	96%	97%	95%	96%
<b>SA</b>	0	95%	83%	99%	93%	96%
<b>WA</b>	na	96%	98%	98%	94%	97%
<b>Tas.</b>	6%	95%	98%	98%	99%	96%
<b>NT</b>	0	96%	96%	99%	100%	95%
<b>ACT</b>	14%	96%	98%	94%	100%	95%
<b>Aus</b>	12%	91%	87%	92%	92%	89%

Source: 2008 data from Bilateral Agreements under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. 2013, 2014 and 2015 data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0) and ABS Estimated Residential Population (ABS Cat 1367.0). Includes supplementary data from some jurisdictions.

na – not available as not collected under the National Partnership covering this period

Note: Where proportions are calculated using two different sources of data, data comparability issues can result in estimates greater than 100 per cent. Where this occurs, results are capped to 100 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> For each indicator the baseline year has been selected based on the earliest year that reliable and comparable data is available.

**Table 3: Performance indicator 4 – attendance**

	All children		Indigenous		Vulnerable and Disadvantaged	
	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015
<b>NSW</b>	98%	97%	96%	95%	98%	97%
<b>Vic</b>	96%	94%	92%	92%	94%	93%
<b>Qld</b>	98%	96%	96%	95%	98%	95%
<b>SA</b>	99%	98%	96%	97%	99%	98%
<b>WA</b>	100%	96%	100%	88%	100%	93%
<b>Tas.</b>	98%	98%	97%	98%	98%	98%
<b>NT</b>	88%	86%	77%	72%	76%	70%
<b>ACT</b>	98%	98%	99%	94%	99%	94%
<b>Aus</b>	98%	96%	94%	92%	97%	95%

Source: 2013 and 2015 data from National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection (ABS Cat. No. 4240.0). Includes supplementary data from some jurisdictions.

Note: Where proportions are calculated using two different sources of data, data comparability issues can result in estimates greater than 100 per cent. Where this occurs, results are capped to 100 per cent.