



# Early years

# Our performance outcomes

Queenslanders prepared with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate successfully in the community and the economy.

## Early years

✓ **MORE** children from Indigenous and disadvantaged communities in kindy

Enrolments in an early childhood education program 2015



## Schooling

## Training and skilling

## Our key performance indicators

Service standards	Notes	2015–16 Target/Est.	2015–16 Actual
<i>Effectiveness measures</i>			
Proportion of Queensland children enrolled in an early childhood education program	1,2,3,4,5,6	95%	>100%
Proportion of enrolments in an early childhood education program:			
Indigenous children	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9	95%	85.6%
Children in disadvantaged communities	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,10	95%	94.9%
<i>Efficiency measure</i>			
	11		

### Notes:

1. The National Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) census is conducted in the first week of August each year. The 2015–16 actual reflects the 2015 census results.
2. The nationally agreed benchmark established under the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education* is 95%.
3. Early childhood education program: A quality play-based program in accordance with the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *National Quality Standard* delivered by a degree qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year before full-time school.
4. Under the *National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education*, Queensland is committed to achieving and maintaining access to an early childhood education program for all children in the year before full-time school.
5. Data is published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in the *Preschool Education Australia 2015* publication catalogue 4240.0.
6. Results of over 100% are possible as the nationally agreed measure is Number of Children Enrolled (aged four or five) divided by the Estimated Resident Population of four-year-olds.
7. Variance between the 2015–16 target/estimate and 2015–16 actual may be attributed to the voluntary nature of kindergarten participation and factors affecting participation by more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as affordability, physical access and cultural inclusiveness.
8. The measures represent the proportion of children enrolled from each cohort group as a proportion of the estimated total population of that cohort group in Queensland.
9. Indigenous: a person who identifies at enrolment to be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
10. Disadvantaged: a person that resides in statistical areas classified by the ABS in the bottom quintile using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage.
11. An efficiency measure is being developed and will be included in a future *Service Delivery Statement*.



## Children engaged in quality early years programs and making positive transitions into school

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring every Queensland child has access to quality, affordable early childhood education and care services that support their safe, healthy and successful learning and development.

In 2015, over 284,000 Queensland children accessed at least one of more than 2900 early childhood education and care services regulated by the department. The number of approved kindergarten programs also grew, with almost 1800 services receiving subsidies under the *Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme* to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for Queensland families.

For the third year in a row, Queensland exceeded its 95 per cent kindergarten participation rate target with over 66,500 children enrolled in kindy in 2015. Most notable was the significant increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accessing kindy, up 20.3 percentage points from 2014.

The learning pathways laid down in the early years of a child's life form the foundation for future learning and life outcomes. Strong connections between home, early childhood services and school environments optimise children's transition experiences and give them the best possible start to their journey of lifelong learning.

For more information about our Early Years performance indicators, please refer to Appendix A.

### Strong connections between home, early childhood services and school

Collaborative, networked approaches across schools and early childhood services, in

partnership with families, strongly contribute to a positive start to learning for children.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children to early learning experiences as important first steps between home and early childhood education through the *Families as First Teachers* program
- supporting more than 66,500 children to access and participate in a quality kindergarten program in 2015, exceeding the 95 per cent performance target for the third year in a row
- securing the future of Queensland's Children and Family Centres by providing \$38.8 million over four years to deliver vital early education, child and maternal health and family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- cultivating transition to school activities that promote greater engagement between schools, early childhood education and care services and families through dedicated transition and partnership officers
- developing additional resources for schools, parents and early childhood services to strengthen collaboration and enhance children's continuity of learning
- extending to 115 the number of state schools implementing age-appropriate pedagogies and supporting teachers with a repertoire of teaching practices that underpin active, purposeful, creative learning experiences in the early years of school.

## Engaged parents and carers involved in their child's learning and development

Families play a critical role in children's learning and development. Engaged parents and carers boost children's motivation and confidence as learners and foster positive attitudes towards education.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- funding more than 190 services to deliver early years programs and services, including child and family support hubs, pre-kindergarten activities, playgroups and early childhood development services
- promoting effective strategies for family-led learning, including the release of parent-focused resources to support children's positive transition to school
- building the confidence of parents and families as children's first educators through the *Abecedarian Queensland* pilot program
- providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children from over 20 locations across Queensland to participate in play-based early learning activities, and access take home resources as part of the *Families as First Teachers* program
- partnering with non-government organisations to maintain awareness of the importance of kindergarten at community events
- reaching more than 22,700 followers on the *Kindy counts!* Facebook page by sharing practical ideas and activities for families to engage in their child's early education and support their learning and development
- supporting parents and services through the Kindy Hotline.

## Increasing vulnerable children's participation in early education

More than one in five children starts school with vulnerabilities that can present challenges for their future learning and development. Overcoming participation barriers to provide access to quality early education programs for every child is essential to reducing developmental vulnerability and positively shaping children's long-term outcomes.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- focusing on inclusive programs that reflect and value community diversity to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participating in a quality kindergarten program to 85.6 per cent in 2015, up 20.3 percentage points from 2014
- supporting 11,266 children from disadvantaged communities to participate in a quality kindergarten in 2015, up from 11,152 in 2014
- securing an additional \$14.2 million over four years to support children with disability to actively participate in kindergarten through the new *Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens* funding program
- partnering with the Queensland Department of Health to address the high rate of middle ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through the *Deadly Kids, Deadly Futures — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Hearing Health Framework 2016–26*
- funding *Early Years Connect*, a professional development package designed to support early childhood educators working with children with disability, significant development delay, and complex social, emotional and behavioural needs

- developing Australia's first early learning video services, 'Sally and Possum', for deaf or hearing impaired children who use Auslan as their primary language which aired on ABC Kids in June 2016
- informing the development of new legislation to better protect young and vulnerable Queenslanders from vaccine-preventable diseases and second-hand smoke.



### Supporting children with disability

The Queensland Government's new *Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens* (DISQK) program increases access to quality early learning experiences for children with complex multiple disability. DISQK also strengthens partnerships between government, the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector, and the community to support children with disability to participate in kindergarten.

The new program increases the intensive funding limit to \$8000, and allows services to access assistance above the funding threshold on a case-by-case basis.

The program recently supported a family with two kindergarten-aged children, one with multiple disability, to find a service best placed to meet both children's needs. Liaison between the service and partner organisations allowed the family to better transition and settle their children into kindergarten in 2016.

### Providing innovative options for quality early childhood programs in rural and remote communities

Given Queensland's diversity, many children and young people reside in rural and remote communities. More than 20 per cent of Queensland children aged zero to eight years live, grow and thrive in rural towns and remote locations. Equitable access to quality early childhood programs for every child, regardless of where they live, requires strong partnerships between families, community and government; use of innovative technologies; and creative

and flexible approaches to early learning that respond to local needs.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- commencing the *Remote Kindergarten Pilot* in 11 prescribed state schools where distance presents a barrier to accessing an approved kindergarten program
- delivering quality kindergarten programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living across 35 predominately remote communities accessed through 28 state schools and five non-government organisations
- supporting over 220 children who cannot easily access a centre-based kindergarten program due to isolation, illness or family lifestyle through *eKindy* in 2016
- commencing a \$3.3 million capital works program to reinvigorate learning environments for children attending kindergarten programs servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- funding local early years services including long-day care, playgroups, family support, access to outside school hours care and holiday programs in remote locations across Cape York, Northern Peninsula and the Torres Strait Islands
- delivering professional development to more than 165 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators across Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia in partnership with the Australian Government through the *Remote Indigenous Professional Development Project*.

## Continuous quality improvement through effective regulatory practice and performance reporting

Quality early childhood education and positive early years experiences are vital to giving children the best start in life. Key to providing strong foundations for continuous quality improvement is supporting a highly skilled and qualified workforce, and ensuring regulated early childhood services operate in a way that safeguards children's health, safety and wellbeing.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- launching the *2016–19 Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan* to develop the capacity of Queensland's early childhood workforce
- inspiring the next generation of early childhood educators and teachers through the highly successful *Inspire the future careers* campaign
- increasing the proportion of education and care services with a quality rating under the *National Quality Framework* to 86 per cent, of which 74 per cent were rated as meeting or above the *National Quality Standard*
- broadening access to a diploma subsidy to enable more registered primary teachers to gain an approved early childhood teaching qualification through the successful *Early Childhood Teacher Bridging* program
- regulating over 2700 approved centre-based services and more than 150 family day care schemes
- supporting education and care services to prepare for changes under the National Law including new qualification requirements and educator-to-child ratios from 2016.

## Integrated early childhood services across community and government agencies reporting

Early childhood development is a shared responsibility among families, and education, health and family services through community-based approaches. Families today face unique challenges requiring holistic responses that cannot always be found in one place or through a single organisation. Integrated early years services provide locally-driven strategies to improve outcomes for children and families through better service coordination.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- opening new integrated early years services in the communities of Gordonvale and Lockhart River; and commencing construction of a new service in Inala
- investing \$2.6 million to develop and pilot a cross-agency *Intensive Early Childhood Development* program to support children and families with multiple complex needs in six locations across Queensland
- partnering with state, federal and local government agencies to establish new integrated early years services in the Barcardine and Blackall communities
- supporting programs that build the capacity of families to support their children's early learning and development, and help prepare them for kindergarten and school
- investing over \$20 million to support families in 49 communities to access integrated early years services – including child and family support hubs, early years centres, and children and family centres – to deliver a mix of early childhood education and care, parenting and family support, and child and maternal health
- collaborating with community partners and government agencies to plan and develop integrated programs and services

- delivering workshops to support service providers and families to better plan, develop and deliver integrated responses to local issues.



### Intensive Early Childhood Development program

The *Micah Projects Young Mothers for Young Women* program increases opportunities for children of young women by focusing on early childhood development within Micah's intensive family support work.

Families can use a specially-designed questionnaire to identify developmental milestones in the first five years of their children's lives. Trained educators follow-up survey completion with home visits to support families in exploring parenting skills in a warm and safe environment. Parents can also attend Group Connections to learn about their own and other children through hands-on and fun learning activities.

When families are ready, they are supported to participate in early childhood education and care services, further enhancing positive child growth.

## Investment in evidence-based programs to support early learning and development

Effectively using and applying information, data and evidence underpins strategies and programs to support early learning and development. This practice is contributing to a strategic evidence base and embedding research into practice to drive better outcomes for children and families.

Key achievements in 2015–16:

- partnering with the Queensland University of Technology to deliver the *Sleep health and sleep development* research project and develop resources for early childhood professionals to apply evidence-based sleep practices and principles for children aged three to five years
- supporting schools, communities, early years services and government to develop local strategies to improve early childhood development by delivering data for more than 95 per cent of children in Prep from the Australian Early Development Census
- commissioning Griffith University to undertake a pilot project with 46 state schools across three regions in 2015 (extending to 115 state schools across seven regions in 2016) to design and implement a school-based action research project incorporating active, playful and creative learning experiences in Prep
- working with Queensland University of Technology to evaluate the effectiveness of supported playgroups as a model that builds parent capability and children's early learning and development skills
- developing new approaches to performance accountability and investment which will support community organisations to collect, analyse and use data for targeted action to improve community wellbeing using *Results Based Accountability*
- equipping early childhood education and care services with the resources, skills and confidence to translate knowledge into practice through the *Early Years Connect* project.