Early childhood education and care

**Outcome:** Queensland children engaged in quality early years programs and making successful transitions to school

More children prepared for success at school

Kindergarten participation in Queensland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>106.4%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Queensland has exceeded 100 per cent participation rate as 5-year-olds are included in the count of children enrolled in a kindergarten, but excluded from the Estimated Resident Population (denominator) count, also data on kindergarten enrolment draws on both State and National collected data, which may result in some duplication.

91.8% disadvantaged children participation

65.3% Indigenous children participation

Bringing kindy to rural remote families

More support for Indigenous communities

10 Children and Family Centres

571 enrolments in pre-Prep across 35 communities

Kindergarten program in the year before school

More qualified teachers delivering Early Childhood and Education Care programs

98.8% of services with a Kindergarten program delivered by a qualified teacher

Ensuring high quality in early years services

72% of assessed services MET OR EXCEEDED the National Quality Standard
Our performance indicators

- Participation in early childhood education programs
- Services and programs meet the National Quality Standards
- Access to integrated services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and vulnerable children and families

Service standards

Table 3: Service standards – Early childhood education and care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service standards</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>2014–15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Queensland children enrolled in an early childhood education program</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>106.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of enrolments in an early childhood education program:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indigenous children</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children in disadvantaged communities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>91.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Queensland State Budget 2014–15 Service Delivery Statements Department of Education and Training

Notes:
1. The 2014–15 target estimate is a nationally agreed benchmark established under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.
2. Early childhood education program: a play-based program provided by a degree-qualified teacher recognised under the National Quality Framework, delivered to children in the year before full-time school.
3. 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.
4. Data is published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in the Preschool Education Australia 2014 publication catalogue 4240.0.
5. Queensland has exceeded 100 per cent participation rate as five-year-olds are included in the count of children enrolled in a Kindergarten, but excluded from the Estimated Resident Population (denominator) count also data on Kindergarten enrolment draws on both state and national collected data, which may result in some duplication.
6. Variance between the 2014–15 target estimate and actual can 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.
7. 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.
8. Indigenous: a person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin who identifies at enrolment to be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
9. 2014 Indigenous Estimated Resident Population (ERP) has been rebased from 2006 ABS Census to the 2011 ABS Census. As a result, the number of four-year-old Indigenous children increased from 4260 to 5108.
10. Disadvantaged: a person that resides in statistical areas classified by the ABS in the bottom quintile using the Index of Relative Socio Economic Disadvantage.

Our achievements

Targeted strategies

Support Queensland families to participate and engage their children in early childhood programs, with a focus on those families most in need

Enhance the focus on children’s development, continuity and connection of services across early childhood settings and the early years of school

Develop strategies to support our most vulnerable children to access and participate in early education
In 2014, for the second year, Queensland’s Kindergarten participation rates exceeded the 95 per cent target under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

To maximise children’s continuity of learning and build positively on this start to lifelong learning, the department has commenced implementation of a statewide approach to successful transition to school. The approach is based on strong relationships and communication between children, their families, early education and care services, the school and the community.

Valuing diversity

During 2014–15, the department continued to support inclusive, culturally rich early childhood education and care programs that reflect the community’s diverse needs:

- The Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS) plus Kindy Support subsidy reduced out-of-pocket expenses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, families with multiple births of three or more kindy-aged children, and Health Care Card holders.
- The Specialised Equipment and Resources program enabled eligible services to access specialised equipment and professional resources to support children with disabilities to participate in a Kindergarten program.
- The Disability Support Funding program provided between $2000 and $6000 to support children with a suspected or diagnosed disability to participate in a Kindergarten program.
- The Kindergarten transport initiative increased access to Kindergarten for children in 11 locations where attendance is impeded by the lack of available transport.
- The Transition to Kindergarten program supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and families from non-English speaking backgrounds to engage in their child’s early education and make connections to Kindergarten.
- Pre-Kindergarten Grants built the capacity of early years and family-centred services to address challenges to Kindergarten access and participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Grants provided to eligible Kindergarten program providers supported cultural inclusion activities and promotion of collaborative partnerships with local families and communities.

Universal access to Kindergarten programs

The introduction of national Kindergarten reforms led to a significant increase in the proportion of Queensland children enrolled in early childhood education (Kindergarten). In 2008, 29 per cent of children in Queensland were enrolled in an early childhood education program. This increased to 106.4 per cent in 2014. Queensland’s participation rate has exceeded 100 per cent as five-year-olds are included in the count of children enrolled in a Kindergarten, but excluded from the Estimated Resident Population (denominator) count. Data on Kindergarten enrolment also draws on both state and national data, which may result in some duplication.

During 2014–15, the department delivered an integrated marketing and communications campaign, Kindy counts! to promote the importance of Kindergarten. The multifaceted campaign included the successful Say g'day to Jay Kindy Concert series with kindy ambassador Jay Laga’aia and the concert team visiting kindergartens across Queensland and performing to a combined audience of almost 28,500 Kindy fans.

During 2014–15, the department continued to address access as a barrier to Kindergarten participation establishing five extra kindergartens in areas of need. The Brisbane School of Distance Education provided Kindergarten to children who cannot easily access a centre-based program due to isolation, illness or family lifestyle. In 2015, a total of 239 children were enrolled in eKindy, up from 188 in 2014.

The number of long day-care services delivering an approved Kindergarten program continued to grow with over 1300 centres receiving funding to deliver an approved Kindergarten program in 2014–15. The number of community-based kindergartens delivering an approved program has remained relatively stable over the same period.

Bilateral agreement targets

Queensland exceeded the overall Kindergarten participation target for 2014. However, achieving the targets set for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, including Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander children remains challenging.
In 2014, 65.3 per cent of Indigenous children and 91.8 per cent of children living in disadvantaged communities were enrolled in an approved Kindergarten program.

The number of service providers offering a Kindergarten program delivered by a qualified teacher was 1862 or 98.8 per cent of all services with a Kindergarten program in 2014.

Queensland will continue to focus on improving participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

**Targeted strategies**

*Support a highly qualified and sustainable early childhood education and care workforce through up-skilling programs, and targeted training*

*Work with the early childhood sector to ensure early years initiatives are effectively targeted and inclusive*

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**Early childhood workforce**

Quality early childhood education and positive early years experiences are vital to giving children the best start in life and the skills and experience of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce are key determinants of improved outcomes for children. The department’s *Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2011–2014* supported:

- 756 people to enrol in the tuition-free TAFE Early Childhood Teacher Bridging Program for primary-qualified teachers
- 363 scholarships for existing ECEC educators with three-year degree or Advanced Diploma qualifications to become qualified early childhood teachers
- 17 early childhood teachers to relocate to rural and remote locations to deliver an approved Kindergarten program
- training to existing and prospective educators in rural and remote areas
- training for Indigenous educators in the Cape, Gulf and Torres Strait to complete an approved ECEC qualification
- leadership and professional development programs for educators across the sector.

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**Focus on teaching and learning practice in the Preparatory Year**

To ensure teaching and learning practice and curriculum expectations work together to provide challenging and engaging learning opportunities, the department is exploring the benefits of teaching and learning through active, purposeful, and creative experiences in the Preparatory Year.

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**Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline**

The *Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline* (QKLG) provides advice and guidance to teachers in delivering approved Kindergarten programs and monitoring children’s progress. In 2014–15, the department funded free, statewide, face-to-face workshops. These were supported by online professional development materials delivered by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) to support Kindergarten teachers implementing the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG) and enhance collaboration with teachers and school leaders to strengthen children’s transition to school.

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**Targeted strategies**

*Support parents and carers to be actively engaged in their child’s learning and development*

*Improve the integration of early childhood services across community and government agencies with responsibilities for early childhood development*

*Work with the early years and schooling sector to improve children’s outcomes, including transitions to school*
The department maintained its focus on developing strong partnerships to support children and their families, funding more than 200 services to deliver early years programs and services, including child and family support hubs and playgroups, and early childhood development services, such as family support and parenting programs. In 2014–15, the department continued to promote the importance of Kindergarten through:

- a statewide awareness campaign targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- support to parents and services through the Kindy Hotline
- access to accredited interpreters and posters, brochures and fact sheets available in 30 languages
- Kindy counts! roadshow and Facebook page.

Integration of early years services

Integrated early years services provide early childhood education and care, family support and child and maternal health services to families with children aged from birth to eight years. The department’s framework for integrated early childhood development supports and enhances integration of early years services. During 2014–15, the department:

- provided funding and support to 49 integrated services, including early years centres, child and family support hubs, and children and family centres
- supported programs that build the capacity of families to support their children’s early learning and development, and help prepare them for Kindergarten and school
- rolled out workshops to support service providers and families to better plan, develop and deliver integrated responses to local issues
- worked collaboratively with other government agencies to plan and develop integrated programs and services.

Children and family centres

Queensland’s 10 children and family centres provide essential health, early education and support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children from pre-birth to eight years. In 2014–15, the department continued to support these vital services, providing operational funding to ensure families continued to access support in a culturally safe environment. Services are located in Cairns, Doomadgee, Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Mareeba, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island and Rockhampton.

Targeted strategies

Monitor and promote quality outcomes through effective regulatory practice, enhanced performance reporting and the promotion of continuous improvement

Promote stronger partnerships between early years providers and schools to ensure children make successful transitions into schooling

The department approves and regulates education and care services in Queensland as part of a national regulatory regime known as the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Under the NQF, services are assessed against the National Quality Standard and provided with a quality rating. The standard sets a national benchmark for service quality and supports families to make informed decisions about their children’s early education and care.

Over 2750 Queensland services are captured under the NQF. During the past 12 months the number of services with a quality rating increased from 37 per cent to 65 per cent.

As at 30 June 2015, the proportion of assessed services meeting or exceeding the standard in Queensland was 72 per cent.
Australian Early Development Census

The department is a partner in the third national collection of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) taking place between May and July 2015. The census provides important information at a community level about the development of Australia’s children as they start school. To support Queensland schools to prepare for the census, 24 workshops were held across Queensland between February and May 2015, attracting over 600 participants.

To support the use of the AEDC by educators in centre-based services, the department has worked with Early Childhood Australia to develop case studies and practical resources. The resources pack was mailed to all Kindergarten and long-day care services in June 2015 and is available on the department’s website.

Solid partners Solid futures

Solid partners Solid futures was the former Queensland Government’s commitment to supporting all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to enjoy and achieve success throughout their educational journey from early childhood through to employment.

Solid partners Solid futures supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from birth to eight years of age to learn, thrive and make successful transitions from home to early childhood education and care, and into school.

In 2014–15, the department continued to deliver and expand on the Solid partners Solid futures initiatives that benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Building on this work, the Queensland Government will develop and launch a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategy and action plan in 2016.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that early childhood education and care services provide inclusive programs that reflect and value their community’s diversity. Building cultural competency and providing support and guidance is a key component of our work to strengthen the capacity of Kindergarten providers to effectively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and deliver inclusive early childhood education programs that meet the learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Significant achievements during 2014–15 include:

- the appointment of seven community engagement and participation officers to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents understand the value of Kindergarten and link with early childhood education service providers
- expansion of the Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood (EATSIPEC) program from 10 to 17 priority locations
- providing in-situ advice, support and guidance to more than 400 educators across Queensland
Pre-Prep – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Pre-Prep provides a Kindergarten program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living across 35 discrete communities. The program is supported by the *Foundations for Success guideline for extending and enriching learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Kindergarten year*, which educators use to build on children’s culture, language and strengths. The program is provided 15-hours-a-week for 40-weeks-a-year and is delivered in a range of settings, including schools, community kindergartens and a child care centre (28 state schools and five non-government settings). In 2014, 571 children were enrolled in the pre-Prep program.