

NATIONAL INFORMATION AGREEMENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

An agreement between

- the **Authorities of the Australian Government** and
- the **States and Territories of Australia**, being:
 - ◆ the State of New South Wales;
 - ◆ the State of Victoria;
 - ◆ the State of Queensland;
 - ◆ the State of Western Australia;
 - ◆ the State of South Australia;
 - ◆ the State of Tasmania;
 - ◆ the Australian Capital Territory; and
 - ◆ the Northern Territory of Australia.

For the purposes of ensuring the availability of a nationally consistent, quality information base for Early Childhood Education and Care, to support policy and program developments, and reporting and accountability requirements.

2009 - 2013

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEEYSOC	Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDS	Early Childhood Development Strategy
ECDSG	Early Childhood Data Subgroup
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations
MCEECDYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
METeOR	Metadata Online Registry
NP	National Partnership
NP ECE	National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education
PDDG	Productivity Data Development Group

National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care

1. PREAMBLE

This Agreement provides a framework for cooperation between the Commonwealth, state and territory jurisdictions and information agencies to develop the early childhood education and care (ECEC) information base required for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) early childhood reform agenda. The Agreement is formed in the context of broader work taking place under the Early Childhood Development Strategy (ECDS), which will be informed through the development of an Information Strategy. At this stage, however, the scope of this Agreement is limited to ECEC, taking into account that information and data sources for these areas are interrelated, and that education and care can occur across multiple settings.

The early years of children's lives are very important to their future health, development and wellbeing. Governments at all levels have a responsibility for creating conditions in which children can thrive. This responsibility is underpinned by evidence to establish the importance of a child's early growth and development and to lay the foundations of learning and development outcomes into the future.

The desired outcome of this Agreement is:

the achievement of better outcomes for children by providing governments, policy makers, providers and the community with nationally consistent quality data on early childhood education and care leading to policy and program development, and improved quality, efficiency and effectiveness of ECEC services.

The Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (IGA) which came into effect in January 2009 commits all governments to providing a clear picture of their achievements in delivering services across key areas, using performance indicators and providing performance information that 'must be comparable across jurisdictions and over time' (IGA Schedule C *Public Accountability and Performance Reporting*, p. 2). This commitment is particularly challenging for ECEC as data in this sector have historically been fragmented and underdeveloped.

The Parties to this Agreement recognise that comprehensive and high quality information is required to inform the ECEC evidence base and to support planning and policy development by governments and providers in ECEC at a number of levels. There is a need for development of data and information infrastructure. There is also a recognition that the development of new capabilities will take time, and that different starting points of jurisdictional and provider capacity need to be taken into account.

2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Agreement, 'ECEC information' is defined as data or derived information, indices, computer software or publications in any medium, concerned with:

- the educational and developmental status and risks of individuals and populations
- the provision and quality of ECEC services
- the uses, costs and outcomes of ECEC services and programs, and/or
- the resources required to provide ECEC services and programs.

A 'provider' is defined as an agency which collects ECEC data from another agency or individual and provides such data to another agency or individual.

A 'Party' is defined as an agency which is a signatory to this Agreement.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR AGREEMENT

This Agreement seeks to provide an overarching framework while recognising that each jurisdiction has its own objectives, service standards, data, performance indicators and reporting goals. The Agreement focuses on the following aspects of ECEC information:

- collection
- information sharing and access
- reporting.

To ensure the effective collection, sharing and reporting of ECEC information, jurisdictions and providers will adopt a cooperative approach so that essential, accurate, reliable, timely and nationally consistent information is available nationwide for and about ECEC. This approach will be facilitated through agreed rules regarding collection, compilation, interpretation, reporting and sharing of national ECEC information.

4. SCOPE AND ACTIVITIES

4.1 Scope of the Agreement

Data and information in scope of this Agreement include:

- activity under the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (NP ECE)
- ECEC information required to support the information needs of other National Agreements and National Partnerships, including the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement
- ECEC information required for purposes of measuring and evaluating outcomes relating to the COAG Participation & Productivity Agenda

- ECEC information to be used for national reporting purposes, including but not limited to the *Report on Government Services, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Report to COAG Reform Council, and National Headline Indicators on Children's Health, Development and Wellbeing*
- ECEC information required to develop national consistency for monitoring, research and evaluation related to children, families and early childhood development services under the ECDS.

It is the intention of the Parties that this work will, in due course, be expanded to encompass a wider set of issues to inform policy and transparency relating to the ECDS.

4.2 Activities covered by the Agreement

The activities covered by this Agreement are intended to build a common, shared infrastructure to ensure nationally consistent ECEC data across the ECEC sector. These activities include:

- compilation of nationally comparable data in all ECEC data collections to provide evidence of achievement against the six performance indicators in the NP ECE
- development and implementation of agreed data standards, definitions, classifications and protocols through a National Minimum Data Set for ECEC
- contribution to research and evaluation to inform the ECEC evidence base
- development and implementation of a nationally coordinated ECEC dataset underpinned by a National Minimum Data Set for ECEC
- development of the capability for collecting and reporting ECEC information at the unit record level, to support research and evaluation, and to provide longitudinal evidence and analysis of outcomes
- collection and reporting of timely, high quality national ECEC information, having regard to collection constraints
- access to ECEC information for statistical and research purposes, as agreed by the Parties under the Agreement, and
- development of strategies to raise awareness of available data and ensure that governments, policy makers, providers and the community know how to access, analyse and use data appropriately.

5. INFORMATION RIGHTS AND ACCESS

This section describes the information management principles and practices under which the Agreement will operate.

5.1 Parties' Roles and Responsibilities

5.1.1 The Parties' roles in relation to data quality assurance, collection, maintenance, analysis and reporting are outlined in this section and further detailed in Schedule C. Specific national data agency roles and responsibilities are also outlined at Schedule C.

5.2 Collection and maintenance of ECEC information

5.2.1 The development of ECEC information must be responsive to the needs of governments, policy makers, providers and the community.

5.2.2 ECEC information will be collected and maintained under the authority of this Agreement on the basis of a national Work Plan endorsed by the Early Childhood Data Subgroup (ECDSG).

5.2.3 ECEC information for national data collections will be collected in a way that is consistent with agreed national standards, definitions, classifications and protocols agreed to under this Agreement.

5.2.4 The Parties will aim to ensure that the data collected are necessary to support policy and program development, service improvement and accountability requirements, and to minimise respondent burden.

5.2.5 Data will be collected using agreed standard guidelines, processes and formats, in order to be timely and of appropriate quality.

5.2.6 Data will be collected according to ethical standards and guidelines, and where relevant, with ethics committee approval.

5.2.7 The arrangements for collection and maintenance of ECEC information reflect current policy and performance monitoring settings. The ECDSG may review and make recommendations to amend arrangements for the collection and maintenance of ECEC information in the light of requirements to collect and/or provide data for new systems such as those set in place under the ECEC Quality Agenda.

5.3 Standards for ECEC information

5.3.1 All Parties will cooperate in the development and implementation of a National Minimum Data Set for ECEC that sets out agreed data standards, definitions, classifications and protocols, and which will be the authoritative source of national ECEC data definitions.

5.3.2 All Parties will comply with and use the agreed standards, definitions, classifications and protocols for data collected for the purpose of national information collections, including validity, format, completeness and timeliness standards.

5.4 Privacy and legislation

5.4.1 All Parties will respect the rights to privacy of any person or organisation named or otherwise identified in any information source.

5.4.2 Information will be collected, disseminated, used and secured in such a way as to protect the privacy and confidentiality of any individual and/or organisation to which it may refer. In particular, all state/territory and Commonwealth privacy and confidentiality legislation and established ethical guidelines and practices will be complied with under this Agreement.

5.4.3 The Parties acknowledge that data holders will comply with the provision of the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* as amended, and any other Commonwealth, state or territory legislation relevant to the confidentiality or privacy of the data. The Australian Bureau of Statistics will collect, compile and disseminate statistical information in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare will collect, compile and disseminate statistical information in accordance with the provisions of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*.

5.5 Access to and availability of ECEC information

5.5.1 National ECEC information will be made available according to legislative requirements, and privacy and ethical considerations.

5.5.2 Subject to appropriate approval, ECEC information will be made available for statistical and research purposes, including data linkage. Requests for access to ECEC information will be assessed by the ECDSG.

5.5.3 The Parties will promote access to and appropriate use of national ECEC information.

5.6 Ownership and release of information

5.6.1 The owner of the information is the collecting authority. Owners also may have custodial roles in respect of information they receive from, fund and/or manage for other parties.

5.6.2 Unless in the public domain, data provided by a Party remain the property of that individual Party.

5.6.3 All information contributed by Parties to this Agreement will be provided in good faith as to its accuracy and any legal or other liability arising from the use of any information supplied to national collections shall be the responsibility of the publishing Party.

5.7 Reporting of ECEC information

- 5.7.1 ECEC information will be reported in such form and at such times as are consistent with this Agreement.
- 5.7.2 Users of ECEC information released into the public domain will be required to reference the original source of data and any caveats relating to the data and/or the source.

5.8 Transparency of ECEC information

- 5.8.1 Procedures associated with this Agreement will be transparent and well-documented for all Parties and providers.

6. OPERATION OF THE AGREEMENT

This section sets out how the agreement operates and under what auspices.

6.1 Governance

- 6.1.1 The Agreement is a multilateral agreement between the Parties and operates under the auspices of the ECDSG.
- 6.1.2 The ECDSG will be the authority for resolving issues relating to the Agreement, including advising the Productivity Data Development Group (PDDG) of national priorities and the national Work Plan, under the auspices of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) through the Australian Education, Early Childhood and Youth Affairs Systems Officials Committee (AEEYSOC).
- 6.1.3 The Agreement shall be managed by the ECDSG.
- 6.1.4 Where appropriate the ECDSG, through the PDDG, will liaise with other Ministerial Advisory Councils, and provide feedback on their activities under the Agreement to AEEYSOC and MCEECDYA.

6.2 Consultation

- 6.2.1 There will be consultation with other sectors providing, collecting and using ECEC information under this Agreement.
- 6.2.2 The ECDSG will consult with, and participate in consultation with, representative service providers from government and non-government organisations, on the work program and information priorities for ECEC.
- 6.2.3 Consultation will also be undertaken with other relevant parties as required.

6.3 Work Plan

- 6.3.1 The Work Plan at Schedule B sets out the main outcomes to be achieved over a five year period in relation to the Agreement.
- 6.3.2 The ECDSG will review and revise the Work Plan, after a period of two years of signing the Agreement.
- 6.3.3 The ECDSG will develop and review, on an annual basis, a work program of activities based on agreed short-term national priorities.
- 6.3.4 The ECDSG will report the annual work program and budget to PDDG.

6.4 Funding for national ECEC information

- 6.4.1 The costs of implementing decisions pursuant to this Agreement will generally be met by the Parties as a component of their own work programs. However, reciprocal arrangements may be made between the Parties to meet the cost of specific needs for additional collections, specific analyses or provision of additional expertise.
- 6.4.2 Proposals for additional resourcing will be developed where national benefit can be identified. Thus, funding will be sought under the Agreement where work on specific ECEC information issues imposes additional costs on a Party, where there are economies of scale to be gained, or where joint action of the Parties contributes to meeting the objectives of the Agreement.

6.5 Duration of the Agreement

- 6.5.1 The Agreement will operate for a period of five years and, after review (to commence 12 months prior to the expiry of the Agreement), for a further period as agreed by all the Parties.

6.6 Variation to the Agreement

- 6.6.1 The Agreement may be amended at any time by consensus between all the Parties.
- 6.6.2 Additional parties may become Parties to the agreement if all existing Parties agree.
- 6.6.3 A Party proposing to withdraw should give six months notice. If a Party withdraws, the Agreement will continue to operate in respect of all other Parties.

6.7 Termination of the Agreement

- 6.7.1 The Agreement may be terminated at any time by the agreement in writing of the remaining Parties.

7. MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT

This section sets out the structure and processes by which the Agreement will be managed by the Parties.

7.1 Early Childhood Data Subgroup

7.1.1 The development and management of the Agreement and related structures and processes will be the responsibility of the ECDSG under the auspices of MCEECDYA.

7.1.2 The functions of the ECDSG, in relation to the activities in the Agreement, are to:

- oversee the development, implementation and review of the national ECEC Information Agreement and Work Plan
- make recommendations to PDDG on national ECEC information priorities, work programs, evaluation, funding implications and other information policy issues
- develop cooperative structures and working arrangements within existing processes and structures
- contribute to strategic monitoring of data development activity within the ECEC field and other relevant sectors
- develop and endorse, as appropriate, a National Minimum Data Set for ECEC, make arrangements for its implementation, and promote development of related standards, definitions, classifications and protocols across the scope of the Agreement
- develop and foster a cooperative working relationship with associated Committees, with particular emphasis on integrating and harmonising standards, definitions and classifications wherever possible, and integrating activities and joint work program activities
- make contributions where appropriate to the conceptual basis and coordination of data linkage activities, and
- consult with relevant non-committee groups and individuals across ECEC sectors, including providers and consumers, on national ECEC information issues, and represent them as required to the ECDSG.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT

Each Party will:

- provide representation on the ECDSG to oversee the Agreement. Jurisdictions may at their discretion have one or more signatories to the Agreement and each signatory will nominate a representative on the ECDSG. It is the responsibility of members to represent adequately the interests of their jurisdiction consistent with the objectives of this Agreement
- act as the agency responsible for specific projects as agreed
- maintain and provide information in accordance with agreed purposes

- ensure that national standards, definitions, classifications and protocols as endorsed under this Agreement are used in the collection, maintenance, analysis and reporting of data, wherever reasonably possible
- collect, maintain and release the information under the Agreement in such a manner that it can be made available readily to approved individuals, groups and authorities for purposes which require access to national ECEC information and timely publication under the Agreement, and
- ensure that the information they hold is maintained in such a way as to ensure that the privacy provisions of the Agreement are observed.

9. SCHEDULES TO THE AGREEMENT

This Agreement provides for the addition of Schedules which are consistent with the scope and purpose of the Agreement. Schedules will deal with more specific matters, such as the details of the committees responsible for specific aspects of management and operation of the Agreement or programs or activities agreed by the Parties as relevant to the Agreement. Any Schedules to the Agreement will specify the relationship between the matters in the Schedule and the relevant sections of the Agreement.

It is acknowledged that program based information infrastructure and activities exist or will be developed for some areas covered by the Agreement. While these may be established and supported by the Parties to this Agreement, it is important to show their relationship to national ECEC information infrastructure and processes. The relationship of the Parties to each other under this Agreement, and the acknowledgment of respective roles and responsibilities, is reflected in Schedule A to this Agreement. It is agreed that additions and/or amendments can be made to Schedule A.

10. DATE OF COMMENCEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT

The date of commencement of this Agreement is the date on which the last Party signs.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA by



Michael Manthorpe
Director Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care
Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations

Date: 10 . 2 . 10

In the Presence of:

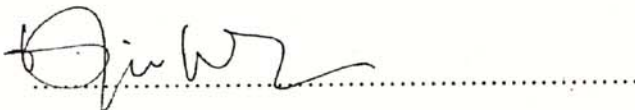


Name: Raclene Pluck

Position: Executive Assistant

NEW SOUTH WALES

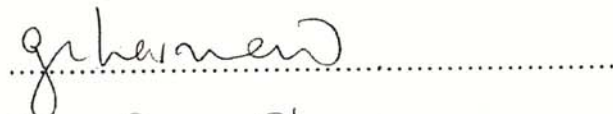
SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE NEW SOUTH WALES STATE GOVERNMENT by



Leslie Loble
Deputy Director-General,
Strategic Planning and Regulation
Department of Education and Training

Date: 10th February 2010

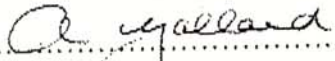
In the Presence of:



Name: Greg Charman

Position: Office Manager
Strategic Planning & Regulation
Department of Education & Training


SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE NEW SOUTH WALES STATE GOVERNMENT by


.....

Annette Gallard
Chief Executive
Community Services
Department of Human Services

Date: 10/2/10

In the Presence of:



.....

Name: LINDA WALLEFF

Position: DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR POLICY +
PLANNING

VICTORIA

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE VICTORIAN STATE GOVERNMENT by


.....

Peter Dawkins
Secretary
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Date:

In the Presence of:

.....

Name:

Position:

QUEENSLAND

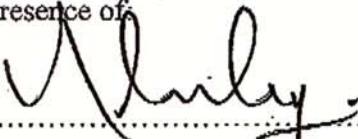
SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT by


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Julie Grantham
Director-General
Department of Education and Training

Date: 19/2/10

In the Presence of:

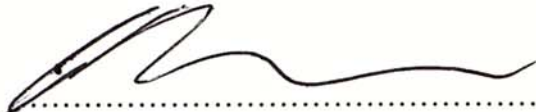

.....

Name: NICK SEEVEY

Position: DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STATE GOVERNMENT by


.....

Chris Robinson
Chief Executive
Department of Education and Children's Services

Date: 15 FEB 2010

In the Presence of:

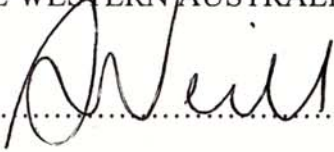

.....

Name: Stacey Lewis

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STATE GOVERNMENT by


.....

Sharyn O'Neill
Director General
Department of Education

Date: 18 FEB 2010

In the Presence of:


.....

Name: KAREN EVERETT
Position: EXECUTIVE OFFICER

TASMANIA


SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE TASMANIAN STATE GOVERNMENT by


.....


John Smyth
Secretary
Department of Education

Date: 11 - FEBRUARY - 2010

In the Presence of:


.....

Name: BEATA SMIETANSKI
Position: EXECUTIVE SUPPORT OFFICER
OFFICE of the SECRETARY

Received on 15, 2, 10	
SEEN BY	
Secretary	
Assistant Secretary	
Office Manager	
Administrative Assistant	
Project Manager	
File Reference	

NORTHERN TERRITORY

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT by

Garn

.....
Gary Barnes
Chief Executive
Department of Education and Training

Date: 15/02/10

In the Presence of:

AMANDA SAINTSBURY

.....
Name: *A. Sainsbury*

Position: Executive Assistant

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY GOVERNMENT by

Dr Jim Watterston

.....
Dr Jim Watterston
Chief Executive
Department of Education and Training

Date:

In the Presence of:


.....

Name:

Position:

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE by



.....

Penny Allbon
Director
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Date: 11 February 2010

In the Presence of:

.....
A. Verhoeven

Name: *Alison Verhoeven*
Position: *Senior Executive, Governance & Communications Group*
11/2/10

SCHEDULE A

Management of the Agreement

1. Membership and structure

Membership of the Early Childhood Data Subgroup (ECDSG) will comprise:

- Nominees of each of the States and Territories who are signatories to this Agreement. Jurisdictions may at any time elect to nominate one or more nominees to represent all the signatories from that jurisdiction.
- A nominee of the Australian Government from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), who is also the chair of the committee.
- A nominee of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- A nominee of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- A nominee of the Secretariat for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision.

2. Operation

- The ECDSG shall meet as required to progress the work that it is responsible for.
- Individual Parties will meet the costs of their participation in the ECDSG.
- The ECDSG will operate according to the Terms of Reference as endorsed by the group.

3. Secretariat

- DEEWR will provide secretariat support to the ECDSG and support to the Chair.

4. ECDSG Work Plan

- In relation to the Agreement, the ECDSG will develop a longer term Work Plan of broader information development priorities and activities over the next 5 years.
- The ECDSG will review and revise the Work Plan, after a period of two years of signing the Agreement.
- The ECDSG will develop and review, on an annual basis, a work program of activities based on agreed short-term national priorities.
- The ECDSG will report the annual work program and budget to the Productivity Data Development Group.

SCHEDULE B

Work Plan for a National Information Agreement (2009-2013)

Purpose

This five year Work Plan is designed to deliver national information capability that will support the COAG early childhood education and care reform agenda and broader policy developments.

Introduction

The Work Plan sets out the main outcomes to be achieved over the five year period, with a specific emphasis on the first 12 months.

The scope of the Work Plan includes projects related to:

- measuring achievement against the six performance indicators in the National Partnership (NP) Agreement on Early Childhood Education
- assessment of outcomes of policy interventions, and
- other activities considered integral for meeting the information needs in the area of ECEC.

The Work Plan

Attachment A tables the proposed tasks, lead agencies and expected timeframes for advancing national information capability in ECEC. The tasks are grouped under six work streams, which are:

- Comprehensive Coverage
- Child-Centred Data
- National Quality and Consistency
- Performance Reporting and Information Sharing
- Research and Evaluation
- Governance and Infrastructure.

Attachment B provides an annotated discussion of the tasks outlined in Attachment A, including the rationale for undertaking the tasks and the activities likely to be involved.

The Work Plan currently includes tasks and activities that may already be underway. Some tasks within the work streams may overlap but have been included in more than one area to identify how the end goal will be achieved.

Attachment C provides a list of abbreviations used in Attachment A and B.

<i>Work Stream</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>End Goal</i>
1. Comprehensive Coverage	1.1 Compile and analyse DCRs to determine coverage issues in administrative collections used for the NP ECE	All jurisdictions	_____					Data are collected across all sectors so is it possible to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know whether Universal Access has been achieved across the broad range of settings • know who is missing out.
	1.2 Jurisdiction projects to investigate coverage issues (using \$250K)	All jurisdictions	_____					
	1.3 Investigate the feasibility for collecting data on the basis of licensing and/or regulation	All jurisdictions		_____				
	1.4 Review requirements for Indigenous data under COAG, including collection through NPC or other means	DEEWR		_____				
	1.5 Investigate possibilities for extending CCMS to include preschool-based NP requirements	DEEWR		_____				
	1.6 Implement arrangements for the collection of preschool-based NP requirements for LDCs	DEEWR				_____		
	1.7 Implement arrangements for the collection of preschool-based NP requirements for other sectors	All jurisdictions				_____		
2. Child-Centred Data	2.1 Jurisdiction projects to investigate potential for proceeding to URL for preschool records (using \$250K)	All jurisdictions	_____					Data collection is focused on the child. Data are collected at the unit record level across all jurisdictions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce duplication in enrolments • increase options for data linkage and outcomes data • increase options for spatial analysis.
	2.2 Assist jurisdictions to investigate potential for proceeding to URL across preschool records, and develop protocols for using URL data	ABS/AIHW			_____			
	2.3 Data linkage pilot studies	Select jurisdiction(s)		_____				

<i>Work Stream</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>End Goal</i>
	2.4 Implement national ECEC collection at unit record level, according to agreed guidelines	All jurisdictions and ABS/AIHW						
3. National Quality and Consistency								
	3.1 Jurisdiction projects to develop and implement standards at jurisdiction level (using \$250K)	All jurisdictions						Data are nationally comparable across time, including for Indigenous and disadvantaged persons.
	3.2 Review consistency of jurisdictional collection requirements for NP ECE performance indicators, including collection timings and reference dates	DEEWR						
	3.3 Develop data standards and classifications according to agreed guidelines	ABS/AIHW						
	3.4 Investigate potential for reconciling jurisdictional and Commonwealth records, according to agreed guidelines	ABS						
4. Performance Reporting and Data Sharing								
	4.1 NP ECE bilaterals agreed	DEEWR						Information on national progress in the COAG early childhood reform agenda is reliable and publicly available.
	4.2 Compile and analyse DCRs to identify gaps in performance information for the NP ECE	All jurisdictions						
	4.3 Investigate system interoperability and legislation for data sharing	All jurisdictions						
	4.4 Develop performance reporting framework and confirm requirements for performance information reporting under COAG	All jurisdictions						
	4.5 Conduct a workforce survey	DEEWR						
	4.6 Investigate options for ongoing collection of workforce and cost data under NP ECE and more	All jurisdictions						

<i>Work Stream</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>End Goal</i>
	broadly 4.7 Improve collection and reporting on ECEC expenditure	All jurisdictions		_____				
5. Research and Evaluation	5.1 Develop evaluation strategy for NP ECE	All jurisdictions	_____					<p>A plan and framework are developed to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy development is supported by evidence • resources are used effectively and efficiently.
	5.2 Develop national outcome measures for ECD	Select jurisdiction(s) and DEEWR	_____					
	5.3 Conduct 18 month review of NP ECE	All jurisdictions			_____			
	5.4 Develop research plan, including links to ECD	All jurisdictions			_____			
	5.5 Conduct evaluation of NP ECE	All jurisdictions			_____			
	5.6 Develop ECD and outcomes research capacity	AIHW			_____			
6. Governance and Infrastructure	6.1 Develop ECEC Information Agreement	DEEWR	_____					<p>A governance framework is established that provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support and impetus for coordinated information collection • analysis in ECE with link to ECD and the participation and productivity agenda. <p>A lead agency is assigned to coordinate and reconcile data to reduce duplication and provide accountability for the final product.</p>
	6.2 Develop an ECD Information Strategy to complement the ECD Strategy	Select jurisdiction(s) and DEEWR			_____			
	6.3 Identify lead agency/ agencies to coordinate, collect and reconcile national data	By agreement			_____			
	6.4 Agree on interim national collection arrangement, while lead agency/agencies are identified.	By agreement	_____					
	6.5 Implement national ECEC data collection	By agreement			_____			

Detailed Work Plan:

1. Comprehensive Coverage

1.1 Compile and analyse DCRs to determine coverage issues in administrative collections used for the NP ECE

Rationale: The Universal Access commitment requires information on early childhood education providers in all settings.

Activities:

- Use DCRs to map the types of providers that are not included in State and Territory figures.
- Use map to identify gaps in coverage and allocate data collection responsibilities for the excluded providers (see item 6.4 for potential transitional arrangements).

1.2 Jurisdiction projects to investigate coverage issues (using \$250K)

Rationale: Undertake initial data development activities in line with agreed parameters under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

Activities: Complete coverage is one of the four parameters on which jurisdictions are able to spend \$250K to undertake data development activities. The key requirements to obtain complete coverage include:

- Engage with all sectors and settings providing ECE programs, including those that are not government funded.
- Information systems address the COAG's stated policy commitment to better integrate child care and ECE with particular regard to the existing information systems in the childcare industry (CCMS and existing software providers).

1.3 Investigate the feasibility for collecting data on the basis of licensing and/or regulation

Rationale:

- Collecting information on licensing and/or regulation broadens the scope of what is currently reported (funded and/or provided).
- Providing information on children is as important as building regulations.

Activities:

- Jurisdictions to look into legal implications of collecting on a licensing basis and/or regulation.

1.4 Review requirements for Indigenous data under COAG, including collection through National Preschool Census (NPC) or other means

Rationale: The NPC is important for distributing Indigenous Education Program funding to Indigenous preschool students. It is also important for collecting more

detailed data on Indigenous students than is reported in ROGS from State and Territory data. However, data currently collected in the NPC needs to be reviewed in the light of current and future COAG requirements for Indigenous data.

Activities:

- Reconcile State and Territory funded and provided (ROGS) provider lists with the NPC provider lists. Is anyone collected in the NPC, not included in State and Territory data?
- Analyse changes necessary for State and Territory Indigenous data to accommodate NP ECE reporting purposes. Are Indigenous data able to be disaggregated by age, location, staff etc.? Can States and Territories provide comparable non-Indigenous data?
- Continue to run NPC until required Indigenous data are available via State and Territory collections.
- Investigate needs and use of early childhood education data collected under Indigenous Education Program funding.
- Support development of better Indigenous population estimates currently being developed by the ABS for the Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

1.5 Investigate possibilities for extending the Child Care Management System (CCMS) to include preschool-based NP requirements

Rationale: ECE conducted in Long Day Care centres through an extension of the existing CCMS to be investigated by DEEWR, with a view to implementing changes to this collection to accommodate NP ECE data requirements.

Activities:

- Investigate possibilities for extending CCMS to include preschool-based NP requirements, including addition of an Indigenous identifier.
- Analyse likely data quality and constraints for collecting additional information.

1.6 Implement arrangements for the collection of preschool-based NP requirements for LDCs

Rationale: ECE conducted in Long Day Care centres to be collected by DEEWR through an extension of the existing CCMS.

Activities:

- Continue to run the DEEWR Provider Survey and include information on preschool programs in LDCs.
- In the longer term, collect preschool-based NP information requirements for the LDC sector (including Indigenous and disadvantaged background data) using CCMS.

1.7 Implement arrangements for the collection of preschool-based NP requirements for other sectors

Rationale: ECE conducted in settings other than Long Day Care centres to be collected by jurisdictions through an extension of their existing administrative arrangements.

Activities:

- Continue to run NPC until required non-government data (currently outside scope of jurisdictional administrative collections) are available via State and Territory collections.
- In the longer term, collect preschool-based NP information requirements for government and non-government sectors (including Indigenous and disadvantaged background data but excluding LDC data) using State and Territory administrative collections.

2. Child-Centred Data

2.1 Jurisdiction projects to investigate potential for proceeding to URL for preschool records (using \$250K)

Rationale: Support initial data development activities in line with agreed parameters under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

Activities: Child-centred data is one of the four parameters which jurisdictions are able to spend \$250K to undertake data development activities. The key requirements to obtain child-centred data include:

- Progress towards using (URL) data as a basis for collections.
- Amendments to legislation to collect and report URL data.

2.2 Assist jurisdictions to investigate potential for proceeding to URL across preschool records, and develop protocols for using URL data

Rationale: Ensure that URL data is used ethically and appropriately and privacy of individuals is not compromised.

Activities:

- Investigate and agree what data should be collected at the unit record level.
- Assess existing protocols for relevance and adequacy, including the AIHW report (2005) *Data linkage protocols using a statistical linkage key*.
- Develop a draft data manual for the compilation of national ECEC data (see also item 3.3).

2.3 Data linkage pilot studies

Rationale: Data linkage provides opportunities to explore duplication and outcome measures through correlations with other data sets in ECD.

Activities:

- Where capability for data linkage already exists, undertake pilot studies.

2.4 Implement national ECEC collection at unit record level, according to agreed guidelines

Rationale: Data are collected at the unit record level across all jurisdictions to:

- reduce duplication in enrolments
- increase options for data linkage and the analysis of outcomes data
- increase options for spatial analysis.

Activities:

- Collect jurisdiction and/or sector-specific data relating to preschool-based NP requirements, including Indigenous and disadvantaged background data.
- Coordinate national data relating to preschool-based NP requirements, including Indigenous and disadvantaged background data, and be responsible for ECEC data quality assurance and reconciliation.

3. National Quality and Consistency

3.1 Jurisdiction projects to develop and implement standards at jurisdiction level (using \$250K)

Rationale: Support initial data development activities in line with agreed parameters under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

Activities:

- Jurisdictions to ensure that national data standards can be implemented when they are agreed.

3.2 Review consistency of jurisdictional collection requirements for NP ECE performance indicators, including collection timings and reference dates

Rationale: The use of common reporting periods improves national comparability across States and Territories and between administrative and population data.

Activities:

- Use DCRs to map the collection timings and use of reference date in State and Territory collections.
- Agree that census/survey date(s) and age reference dates for each jurisdiction's preschool counts should be published as part of ROGS (by 25 Sept 2009, the deadline for 2010 ROGS ECE data).
- Aim to have a nationally common preschool census week. If the preschool census week varies between jurisdictions then any interstate migration will result in either national under-counting (if a preschooler moves from a jurisdiction with a late census date to a jurisdiction with an early census date) or over-counting (if a preschooler moves from a jurisdiction with an early census date to a jurisdiction with a late census date).
- Aim to apply the nationally common preschool census week to all early childhood education services.
- Aim to apply a nationally common age reference date of 1 July. The age reference date needs to be set to a common date because this will identify the

boundary between cohorts (of 3 year olds, 4 year olds and 5 year olds) which can then be matched with other data sets with the same (or very closely similar) age reference date. Ideally, there would be no gap and the Schools Census and the proposed Preschool Census week would be conducted as near to 30 June (in line with the ERP statistics) as possible.

3.3 Develop data standards and classifications according to agreed guidelines

Rationale: Provide common reporting through the development and implementation of national uniform data standards that provide for consistency within a collection and allow for data to be integrated across collections.

Activities:

- The joint ABS/AIHW consultancy will provide the underpinning for revised standards and protocols necessary to produce comparable data across the jurisdictions.
- AIHW to develop requirements for implementing ECEC data standards through METeOR (from 2011), including a review of the existing Children's Services National Minimum Data Set.

3.4 Investigate potential for reconciling jurisdictional and Commonwealth records, according to agreed guidelines

Rationale: It is important to assess the national comparability of the baseline positions for the NP ECE, given the different approaches taken on some performance indicators due to data limitations.

Activities:

- Address data quality issues, such as the ability to analyse duplication or undercounting of records at provider and participant level.
- Investigate implications of compiling statistics from a number of administrative systems, and the validation processes necessary to achieve good quality data outcomes (with regard to information gathered in Item 1.1).

4. Performance Reporting and Data Sharing

4.1 NP ECE bilaterals agreed

Rationale: Following the agreement of baseline data by the Commonwealth, States and Territories, all jurisdictions will use the performance indicators in the NP ECE for the duration of the Agreement to identify and measure progress towards the agreed outcomes and outputs.

Activities:

- Baseline data for the NP ECE indicators is agreed and DCRs are submitted to validate the figures and provide information for development of nationally consistent data.

4.2 Compile and analyse DCRs to identify gaps in performance information for the NP ECE

Rationale: Where gaps occur consistently across jurisdictions, a coordinated approach is adopted to fill the gap to maximise consistency and minimise cost.

Activities:

- Use DCRs to identify indicators where gaps occur across jurisdictions.
- Develop a plan to fill information gaps.

4.3 Investigate system interoperability and legislation for data sharing

Rationale: Moving towards data and information-sharing approaches across public and private sectors of government adds value to research, outcomes and performance assessment capability.

Activities:

- Examine the privacy issues associated with making data more accessible and what changes, if any, would be needed to existing policy and legislation to allow sharing of data and information for statistical and research purposes (see also Item 2.1).
- Investigate and address any legislative barriers to data sharing at agency level.
- Investigate common bases for defining core concept language and program types, developing standard provider definitions and identities, and agreeing common architecture and data exchange protocols.

4.4 Develop performance reporting framework and confirm requirements for performance information reporting under COAG

Rationale: Making data accessible and useful for key stakeholders, including the people and organisations that provide the data, is essential for achieving better data collection, policy development and outcomes for children.

Activities:

- Input to the Review of RoGS as required.
- Input to COAG Reform Council (CRC) reporting as required.
- Use Matt Ryan and Marion McEwin consultancy to identify the outputs needed from an ECEC information system to properly monitor progress towards the policy goals articulated in the National Partnership agreement on Early Childhood Education.
- Ensure that data collections allow jurisdictions to meet their own performance reporting requirements.
- Ensure data are accessible and useful for key stakeholders, including the people and organizations who provide the data.

4.5 Conduct a workforce survey

Rationale: Good quality data on four year university qualified early childhood teachers have already been identified as a gap in NP ECE performance reporting.

Activities:

- Develop a national survey to collect data on four year university qualified early childhood teachers for data to be available in 2010.

4.6 Investigate options for collection of ongoing workforce and cost data under NP ECE and more broadly

Rationale: Longer term options for addressing the performance indicators on workforce and cost (affordability) need to be developed to satisfy NP ECE performance reporting.

Activities:

- Investigate possibilities for extending CCMS and alternative sources to collect workforce and cost for NP ECE requirements, including addition of staff qualification data.

4.7 Improve collection and reporting on expenditure

Rationale: Good quality data on expenditure on ECEC is essential for analyses of cost effectiveness.

Activities:

- Investigate needs for expenditure data, including for evaluation and reporting for ROGS and OECD. This could include improving ECEC expenditure estimates in the publication *Government Finance Statistics, Education, Australia, 2007-08* (ABS cat. 5518.0.55.001) so that ECEC data on expenditure in ROGS could be more comparable with other expenditure data in education.
- Consider work being conducted by the Indigenous Expenditure Report Steering Committee to develop a national framework for collecting and reporting expenditure on services for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The work has been established under the auspices of the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations and was endorsed by the COAG in February 2009. The first Indigenous Expenditure Report is due to COAG in mid 2010.

5. Research and Evaluation

5.1 Develop evaluation strategy for NP ECE

Rationale: The effectiveness of the NP ECE in achieving its outcomes will be determined through a comprehensive national evaluation to be undertaken throughout the life of the Agreement.

Activities:

- The evaluation strategy will be developed by the Commonwealth in partnership with the States and Territories.
- The evaluation strategy will be consistent with any future decisions made by COAG on this subject and will provide the framework for the final report to COAG in June 2014.

5.2 Develop national outcome measures for ECD

Rationale: Development of ECD outcome measures is considered within scope of an Information Agreement because of high priority data requirements through COAG and the ECD Strategy.

Activities:

- Development of a national outcomes-based framework drawing on work already progressed in Victoria and Tasmania.
- Development and reporting of ECD outcome measures covered in the COAG 'wedding cake'.
- Investigation of outcome measures and data linkage relating to the Australian Early Development Index.
- Development of outcomes and place-based data on Indigenous children and those in remote areas.

5.3 Conduct 18 month review of NP ECE

Rationale: The 18 month review of the NP ECE will be embedded in the broader evaluation plan.

Activities: The NP ECE will be reviewed after the first 18 months. The review will have regard to progress made by the Parties against the Agreement, and will specifically address:

- the adequacy of funding to achieve specified outcomes and outputs;
- the appropriateness of timelines;
- achievement of agreed outcomes, outputs and performance indicators;
- satisfactory compliance by governments with all financial and reporting requirements of this Agreement; and
- annual bilateral discussions to review progress against bilateral agreements, and outcomes and outputs as set out in this Agreement.

5.4 Develop research plan, including links to ECD

Rationale: Good quality information is an essential component of the COAG ECD Reform Agenda and will provide a framework for cooperation to ensure access to data and high quality information as an evidence base for policy and programs development and research.

Activities:

- Develop a National Information Strategy for ECD.
- ABS to coordinate cross-sectoral education data through NETSU (currently being reviewed).
- AIHW to coordinate broader ECD research and outcomes reporting.
- Making data available and promoting its proper use to the people who are implementing the policy and inputting the data, so that it is meaningful and useful for them.

5.5 Conduct evaluation of NP ECE

Rationale: The effectiveness of the NP ECE in achieving its outcomes will be determined through a comprehensive national evaluation to be undertaken throughout the life of the Agreement.

Activities:

- Conduct evaluation of NP ECE with regard to the evaluation strategy developed under Item 5.1.

5.6 Develop ECD and outcomes research capacity

Rationale: There is a need to develop a capability for policy-related research for the whole ECD agenda.

Activities:

- Investigate a central coordination role to conduct and manage research into ECD policy issues, outcomes and services, based on research priorities agreed by relevant Parties.
- Investigate outcome measurement and potential research possibilities through data linkage.
- Analyse area based data to identify gaps and to identify program needs at community and local area level.

6. Governance and Infrastructure

6.1 Develop ECEC Information Agreement

Rationale: A National ECEC Information Agreement aims to improve and extend early childhood education and child care data as an integral step towards meeting quality, reliable and defensible performance information required for the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

Activities:

- Draft and sign an ECEC Information Agreement, including a Work Plan to progress the activities related to the agreement.

6.2 Develop an ECD Information Strategy to complement the ECD Strategy

Rationale: A National ECD Information Strategy aims to provide the framework for cooperation to develop high quality information covering children's development across health, education, child care, disability and children's services. It underpins the vision for a stronger evidence base in the whole early childhood field, and will enable provision of the data necessary to monitor both early childhood progress and outcomes, and to support a child-centred, integrated early childhood reform agenda.

Activities:

- Develop an ECD Information Strategy to complement the ECD Strategy.

6.3 Identify lead agency/ agencies to coordinate, collect and reconcile national data

Rationale: Assigning lead agency/agencies to coordinate and reconcile data will increase transparency, quality and provide accountability for the final product.

Activities:

- Assess options for a lead agency using advice provided by the ABS and AIHW on current data sources and developments in early childhood education collections and/or resources that each agency has responsibility for.

6.4 Agree on a transitional national collection arrangement, while lead agency/agencies are assigned.

Rationale: A transitional arrangement for attaining comprehensive coverage needs to be considered while lead agency/agencies are assigned.

Activities:

- Develop transitional arrangement for national data collection. The following transitional arrangements could be considered while a lead agency/agencies for collection/reconciliation are assigned:
 - Preschools linked to Government schools could be captured within an augmented government schools census to be administered by the State/Territory governments.

- Preschools linked to non-government schools could be captured within an augmented non-government schools census to be administered by the ABS or DEEWR.
- A census of community-based preschools could be the responsibility of State/Territory governments.
- ECE conducted in Long Day Care centres could be subject to a census conducted or commissioned by DEEWR.

6.5 Implement national ECEC data collection

Rationale: Assigning lead agency/agencies to coordinate and reconcile data will increase transparency, quality and provide accountability for the final product.

Activities:

- Coordinate collection of data relating to preschool participation (including hours of participation) data, including Indigenous and disadvantaged background data.
- Reconcile jurisdictional and Commonwealth records, according to agreed guidelines.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CCMS	Child Care Management System
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRC	COAG Reform Council
DCR	Data Capability Report
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDS	Early Childhood Development Strategy
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
LDC	Long Day Care
METeOR	Metadata Online Registry
NETSU	National Education and Training Statistics Unit
NP	National Partnership
NP ECE	National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education
NPC	National Preschool Census
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ROGS	Report on Government Services
URL	Unit Record Level

SCHEDULE C

Data Quality Assurance, Collection, and Reporting: Roles and Responsibilities of the Parties and National Data Agencies

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Schedule details the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, in carrying out key data quality assurance, collection, analysis and reporting activities under the National Information Agreement for Early Childhood Education and Care. It also outlines the roles of all Parties to the Agreement, in relation to these issues.

2 Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- 2.1 DEEWR will, on behalf of all Parties to the Agreement, establish appropriate terms of agreement with the ABS and the AIHW to undertake the activities outlined in this Schedule.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics

- 3.1 The ABS, consistent with the provisions of the Commonwealth *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, and through an agreement to be established with DEEWR, will undertake the following activities:
- develop and assure the quality of national ECEC data
 - following quality assurance, provide aggregate data for all jurisdictions to AIHW
 - following quality assurance, return unit record data to the supplying agency under ‘return to source’ procedures that apply under the provision of the Commonwealth *Census and Statistics Act 1905*
 - provide specialist advice in relation to statistics, and assist Parties to the Agreement in using and interpreting early childhood education and care information
 - assist Parties to the Agreement in the use and interpretation of national ECEC information, including provision of advice, where suitable, on ethical standards for information collection, and information on international standards and classifications developments, and
 - work to improve the accuracy and consistency in the collection and reporting of national ECEC information.
- 3.2 In collaboration with all Parties, ABS will develop specialised statistical standards, classifications and protocols relevant to ECEC.
- 3.3 Information provided to the ABS under the terms of this Agreement will be used for the purposes of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, and to support the Statistician’s functions under the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*

relating to the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistics. Where the ABS proposes to compile statistics in a new or revised way, the ABS will seek conceptual and technical advice from relevant Parties to this Agreement to ensure that the data are fit for purpose.

4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

4.1 The AIHW, consistent with the provisions of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*, will:

- support other Parties to maintain and enhance the National Minimum Data Set for ECEC and the quality control standards to encourage accuracy and consistency in the collection and reporting of ECEC information
- ensure that quality control standards relating to national ECEC information through METeOR are maintained and enhanced, as agreed under this Agreement
- undertake national research and reporting on early childhood development outcomes and to inform improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of the early childhood system
- provide specialist advice in relation to statistics, and assisting other Parties to the Agreement in using and interpreting early childhood education and care information, and
- assisting other Parties to the Agreement in the use and interpretation of national ECEC information, including provision of advice, where suitable, on ethical standards for information collection, and information on international standards and classifications developments.

4.2 In collaboration with all Parties, AIHW will develop specialised statistical standards, classifications and protocols relevant to ECEC.

5 Parties to the Agreement

5.1 Parties to the Agreement will be responsible for the provision of data to the ABS, and the AIHW if required, under the following arrangements:

- Data required under the agreed national standards will be supplied to ABS for quality assurance and compilation purposes. Where data quality issues are identified, it may be necessary for the other Party to re-supply some or all of the required data.
- Quality assured data will be provided back to the jurisdiction by ABS under 'return to source' procedures as described above.
- A copy of the relevant quality assured data will be provided to the AIHW for agreed purposes.