

Education (General Provisions) (Prescribed State Schools) Amendment Regulation 2018

Explanatory notes for SL 2018 No. 204

made under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*

General Outline

Short title

Education (General Provisions) (Prescribed State Schools) Amendment Regulation 2018

Authorising law

Section 419A and 434 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*

Policy objectives and the reasons for them

Under the 2018 *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (NPA)*, the Queensland Government committed to ensuring all children have the opportunity to access kindergarten in the year before full time school. While more than 95% of Queensland children attend kindergarten, access for children in remote communities remains a challenge, with participation in 2017 estimated to be approximately 72%.

It can be challenging for rural and remote communities to sustain a viable kindergarten service due to difficulties attracting and retaining early childhood teachers and fluctuating cohorts of four year olds. In 2016 a Remote Kindergarten Pilot Program (the pilot) was introduced to pilot the delivery of kindergarten from 11 prescribed state schools in remote communities. The pilot commenced in Term 2 of 2016 with 35 enrolments.

The pilot was expanded in 2017, with an additional 25 state schools prescribed as sites for the program in November 2016. In March 2017, two additional schools were prescribed to participate in the program from Term 2, 2017. A total of 38 state schools are now prescribed.

A review of the Pilot in 2016 and 2017 found that children who participated had improved outcomes, both in literacy and numeracy and in social domains when they continued onto Prep.

Given the success of the pilot and ongoing need for kindergarten access in remote areas (school communities more than 50 kilometres from the nearest kindergarten service), the pilot is being transitioned to an ongoing program and expanded to include additional 30 state schools in a staged roll-out from Term 1, 2019.

This will provide certainty for communities with no access to kindergarten. More children in remote areas will benefit from having access to a face-to-face, quality kindergarten program.

Section 419A of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (EGPA) provides that the Minister may approve a program focused on literacy and numeracy, for preparing a child for education in the preparatory year, to be a kindergarten learning program for a prescribed state school or a prescribed non-state school.

Section 74 of the *Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017* (EGPR) provides that the state schools mentioned in schedule 4 are the state schools prescribed for section 419A(5) of the EGPA. The schools listed are those allowed to participate in the pilot of the kindergarten program to be delivered from prescribed state schools in remote communities.

Amendments are required to the EGPR to support the extension of the Remote Kindergarten Program to additional remote state schools, to facilitate their participation in the pilot from Term 1 of 2019. Additionally, a previously prescribed state school has closed and no longer needs to be prescribed. This school is to be removed from the list of prescribed schools in the EGPR.

A further amendment is required to ensure continuation of a kindergarten program at Aurukun State School. The school previously operated as a campus of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy, and in 2016 Aurukun State School was established as a separate school entity. An early years program has been delivered in Aurukun since 2009. Under section 419A of the EGPA, kindergarten programs established after 2009 can only be operated in schools prescribed in a Regulation. As Aurukun State School is now a separate school entity it must be prescribed in the EGPR to ensure the ongoing delivery of the kindergarten program.

Achievement of policy objectives

The Regulation achieves its policy objectives by prescribing additional state schools in rural and very remote areas as prescribed state schools. These schools can then participate in the Remote Kindergarten Program in 2019.

The Regulation also removes a state school from the list of prescribed schools, which is closed and no longer needs to be prescribed.

Consistency with policy objectives of authorising law

The Regulation is consistent with the objectives of the Act.

Inconsistency with policy objectives of other legislation

The Regulation is consistent with the policy objectives of other legislation.

Benefits and costs of implementation

The cost of continuing and expanding the Remote Kindergarten Program is expected to be a total of \$12.35 million from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The cost estimate assumes all schools will deliver a program and an allowance has been made for infrastructure minor works for the additional state schools in 2019 and 2020. The recurrent cost after the implementation of expansion is estimated to be approximately \$3.7 million per annum (from 2020-21). The program is free of charge to eligible families. Costs will be met by the Department of Education from existing resources by utilising funding under the NPA to establish the additional schools as kindergarten providers (infrastructure minor works) and prioritising recurrent state kindergarten funding for ongoing operational costs.

Expanding delivery of kindergarten programs in rural and remote communities will contribute to the Queensland Government's commitment under the NPA to ensure all kindergarten-age children in Queensland have access to a quality early childhood education program. Queensland is very close to meeting the kindergarten participation targets under the NPA. If all the prescribed state schools deliver a remote kindergarten program, it would have a potential reach of approximately 200 children, including over 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles

The Regulation is consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

Consultation

The Queensland Association of State School Principals, the Isolated Children's Parents Association of Queensland, Queensland Teachers' Union and United Voice were consulted on the transition of the Pilot to an ongoing program and its expansion to additional remote state schools. All these stakeholders support the program and its expansion.

As the prescription of Aurukun State School does not reflect a change in Government policy, but rather enables the continuation of an existing kindergarten program, no consultation was conducted. The community of Aurukun is supportive of the continuation of the kindergarten program at Aurukun State School.