

## Senate Committee: Education and Employment

### QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

#### Outcome: Schools and Youth

#### Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000737

Senator Paterson, James provided in writing

#### *600 hours of preschool - enrolments*

#### Question

What are the enrolments for vulnerable, disadvantaged and indigenous children by State and Territory? What data do you require or collect with regard to attendance? Does the Australian Government know whether all the children who are enrolled for 600 hours of preschool consistently attend throughout the preschool year?

#### Answer

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (NP), participation in preschool is assessed and reported through data from the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection. The collection takes a 'snapshot' of data across the country in a reference week in August each year and is published as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Preschool Education, Australia* publication. The 2016 publication is available at: [www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4240.0](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4240.0).

The NP ties payments to two main Performance Indicators (PIs):

- PI 2. Access to Quality Program – The proportion of children enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full-time school.
- PI 3. Access to a Quality 600 hour Program – The proportion of enrolled children enrolled in a preschool program in the year before full-time school for 600 hours per year.

Each of the above indicators has sub-cohorts for Indigenous and vulnerable and disadvantaged children, which are based on enrolments rather than attendance (see Tables 1 and 2). Note that PI 3 is a proportion of PI 2. That is, of all of the children enrolled in a preschool program (PI 2), how many of these children are enrolled in preschool programs that run for 600 hours per year. The NP PIs are set out in table 2 of the NP, available at: [www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education.aspx](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/education.aspx).

The NP also measures attendance through PI 4. PI 4 counts one hour of attendance in the reference week as attendance, and therefore may pick up some children who are not attending regularly for 15 hours per week (see Table 3):

- PI 4. Attendance – The proportion of enrolled children who attend, in the year before full-time school, quality early childhood education program(s) for 600 hours per year.

The National Collection also collects attendance data, which reports on those children who attended for 15 hours or more during the reference week (see Table 4). This measure may underestimate actual participation because of factors such as illness, but also as a result of state-specific factors that may impact attendance during the reference week.

Based on 2016 data, the national measure of attendance that takes into account the full 15 hours shows lower numbers of children attending (76 per cent) than the one that takes into account only one hour in the reference week (96 per cent). In reality, attendance for 600 hours per year (once you control for illness) most likely falls somewhere between these two figures. Therefore, attendance data needs to be used with a degree of caution.

On a state-by-state basis, some of the variations between the two attendance measures are much larger. However, currently we do not have data that enable us to understand what is driving the differences or how many children are not attending for 15 hours on a regular basis (versus just in the reference week).

## Enrolment measures

**Table 1: 2016 performance against PI 2 – children enrolled**

	All children *	Indigenous	Vulnerable and disadvantaged
<b>NSW</b>	100%	98%	88%
<b>Vic.</b>	100%	100%	100%
<b>Qld</b>	100%	93%	94%
<b>SA</b>	100%	100%	100%
<b>WA</b>	100%	100%	93%
<b>Tas.</b>	100%	100%	100%
<b>NT</b>	100%	91%	94%
<b>ACT</b>	100%	100%	100%
<b>National</b>	100%	100%	96%

Source: ABS publication *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016* (cat.no. 4240.0) and ABS *Estimated Residential Population (ERP)* (cat. no. 1367.0), ABS *Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026* (cat. no. 3238.0) and ABS *Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia* (cat. no. 3235.0).

\* Because proportions are calculated using two different data sources (National Collection and the ABS' ERP figures) data comparability issues result in figures over 100 per cent – where this has occurred figures are rounded down to 100 per cent and most likely overstate the case of actual enrolment levels.

**Table 2: 2016 performance against PI 3 – of children enrolled those that are enrolled for 600 hours**

	All children	Indigenous	Vulnerable and disadvantaged
<b>NSW</b>	85%	81%	82%
<b>Vic.</b>	98%	99%	98%
<b>Qld</b>	95%	96%	97%
<b>SA</b>	97%	97%	98%
<b>WA</b>	96%	99%	95%
<b>Tas.</b>	96%	97%	95%
<b>NT</b>	98%	99%	99%
<b>ACT</b>	96%	91%	96%
<b>National</b>	93%	92%	92%

Source: ABS publication *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016* (cat. no. 4240.0), *Summary Tables*.

## Attendance measures

**Table 3: 2016 performance against P1 4 – attendance for one hour during reference week**

	All children	Indigenous	Vulnerable and disadvantaged
<b>NSW</b>	96%	95%	96%
<b>Vic.</b>	95%	92%	93%
<b>Qld</b>	97%	95%	96%
<b>SA</b>	98%	95%	98%
<b>WA</b>	96%	90%	94%
<b>Tas.</b>	98%	98%	98%
<b>NT</b>	92%	82%	81%
<b>ACT</b>	98%	99%	99%
<b>National</b>	96%	93%	95%

Source: ABS publication *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016* (cat. no. 4240.0)

**Table 4: 2016 data from National Collection – attendance for 15 hours or more during reference week**

	All children	Indigenous	Vulnerable and disadvantaged
<b>NSW</b>	75%	63%	70%
<b>Vic.</b>	76%	66%	69%
<b>Qld</b>	86%	84%	86%
<b>SA</b>	70%	49%	63%
<b>WA</b>	64%	48%	58%
<b>Tas.</b>	79%	75%	75%
<b>NT</b>	58%	28%	28%
<b>ACT</b>	77%	67%	76%
<b>National</b>	76%	64%	71%

Source: ABS publication *Preschool Education, Australia, 2016* (cat. no. 4240.0), *Summary Tables*.