

Education (General Provisions) (Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools) Amendment Regulation 2017

Explanatory notes for SL 2016 No. 40

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

General Outline

Short title

Education (General Provisions) (Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools) Amendment Regulation 2017

Authorising law

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

Policy objectives and the reasons for them

The Queensland Government, under the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education 2016 – 2017* (NP UAECE), is committed to ensuring all children have the opportunity to access kindergarten in the year before full time school. Although over 95% of Queensland children attend kindergarten, access for children in remote communities remains a challenge, with participation estimated to be approximately 75% in 2016.

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. The Government has introduced a number of initiatives in response to this issue. These include: *Bound for Success* - a pre-preparatory learning program created for 35 discrete Indigenous communities in 2007; and 'eKindy' - a 2013 distance education kindergarten program. Most recently, a Remote Kindergarten Pilot Program was introduced in 2016 to pilot the delivery of kindergarten from eleven prescribed state schools in remote communities. The pilot commenced in Term 2 of 2016 with 35 enrolments.

Following initial positive feedback from participating communities, Government approved expanding the pilot from Term 1 of 2017. 26 state schools were offered the opportunity to participate in the expanded pilot in 2017. The criteria for choosing the additional schools included: distance from the nearest kindergarten (more than 50 kilometres); socio-economic

disadvantage (SEIFA 1 and 2); and demographic considerations (higher than state average population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four year olds).

Of the 26 state schools invited to participate in the expanded 2017 pilot, 24 schools accepted the invitation and two schools declined the invitation. The *Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006* (EGP Regulation) was amended in November 2016 to prescribe these schools and facilitate their participation in the pilot in 2017, in addition to the existing eleven prescribed state schools.

An additional school - Marlborough State School was also prescribed into the EGP Regulation in November 2016 to facilitate the school's participation in the pilot from Term 1 of 2017. Marlborough State School was invited to participate in the 2016 pilot, but declined at the time as the community did not have any four year olds for participation in the pilot. The school has since identified a number of kindergarten-aged children wanting to access the program in 2017 and sought to be included in the pilot in 2017.

Only 29 of the 36 state schools prescribed in the EGP Regulation currently have kindergarten-aged children in their communities and have been participating in the pilot from Term 1 of 2017. It is proposed to add two additional schools (Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools) to participate in the pilot from Term 2 of 2017, to replace the two schools that declined the invitation to participate in the pilot.

Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools were not offered to participate in the pilot from Term 1 of 2017 because they did not meet the socio-economic disadvantage threshold (SEIFA 1 and 2). However, Dajarra and Camooweal meet the other criteria for participation. These communities have a high proportion (35%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four year olds and are greater than 50 kilometres from a kindergarten program (Camooweal is 189km, Dajarra is 141km). The communities are eager to be part of the pilot from Term 2 of 2017 and have four kindergarten aged children across the two schools, all of whom identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and are ready to register in a kindergarten program.

Section 419A of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* provides that the Minister may approve a program focused on literacy and numeracy, for preparing a child for education in Prep, to be a preparatory learning program for a prescribed state school or a prescribed non-state school. Amendments are required to the EGP Regulation to support the extension of the Remote Kindergarten Pilot Program to Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools, to facilitate their participation in the pilot from Term 2 of 2017. This will take the total number of prescribed schools to 38 with 31 schools participating in the pilot from Term 2 in 2017.

Achievement of policy objectives

The Regulation achieves its policy objectives by prescribing an additional two state schools in rural and very remote areas as prescribed state schools. These schools can then participate in the Remote Kindergarten Pilot Program in 2017.

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

It is estimated that the cost of the Remote Kindergarten Pilot Program in 2017 will be approximately \$5.8 million. Pilot schools will receive extra resources including extra teacher-aide time and training and professional support for principals, teachers and teacher aides at the pilot schools for the duration of the pilot. This funding also includes facility upgrades at schools participating in the pilot, where required.

Expanding delivery of kindergarten programs in rural and remote communities will contribute to the Queensland Government's commitment under the NP UAECE to ensure all kindergarten-age children in Queensland have access to a quality early childhood education program. Queensland is very close to meeting this target. In 2016, 93.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four year olds were enrolled in a kindergarten program. Providing access to a kindergarten program for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will not only provide positive outcomes for children and families, but will assist Queensland in meeting this target and receiving a greater share of funds available under the NP UAECE.

Including Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools in the 2017 pilot will allow a larger sample of schools to deliver the program and provide access to more families to a kindergarten program, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It provides these children with an opportunity to develop social skills, prepares them for a smooth transition to Prep, and meets the needs of working and rural and remote families. Including Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools in the 2017 pilot is anticipated to increase the number of participating students from 98 to 102, with 20% of all participating children identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The impact of the pilot will continue to be monitored across the larger cohort group in 2017.

This proposal will also deliver on the Advancing Education action plan for Queensland, which commits the Government to providing innovative options for quality early childhood programs in rural and remote communities. Specifically, the proposal will assist to address the performance measure of more than 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children engaging in a quality kindergarten program.

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles

The Regulation is consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

Consultation

The Isolated Children's Parents Association, Queensland Association for State School Principals, Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) and the United Voice were consulted and supported the expansion of the pilot in 2017. The QTU was specifically consulted on the

addition of Dajarra and Camooweal State Schools to the 2017 pilot and support the proposal. Consultation with all stakeholders will continue during the pilot period.

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