

Education (General Provisions) (Westmar State School) Amendment Regulation 2019

Explanatory notes for SL 2019 No.36

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

General Outline

Short title

Education (General Provisions) (Westmar State School) Amendment Regulation 2019

Authorising law

Sections 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 were prescribed and included in the pilot for 2017. In October 2018, the Queensland Government approved the pilot be transitioned to an ongoing program and expanded to include an additional 30 remote state schools in 2019 and 2020. In November 2018, an additional 30 remote state schools were included in the Remote Kindergarten Program.

There are no early childhood programs provided in the Westmar community and the nearest approved kindergarten service is 72 kilometres by road at Toobeah. Westmar State School (Westmar SS) meets the Remote Kindergarten Program eligibility criteria in that it is located at least 50 kilometres from the nearest kindergarten service.

Section 419A of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (EGP Act) 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* (EGP Regulation) provides that the state schools mentioned in schedule 4 are the state schools prescribed for section 419A(5) of the EGP Act. The schools listed are those allowed to participate in the remote kindergarten program to be delivered from prescribed state schools in remote communities.

Amendments are required to the EGP Regulation to prescribe Westmar SS deliver a Remote Kindergarten Program from Team 2, 2019.

Achievement of policy objectives

The *Education (General Provisions) (Westmar State School) Amendment Regulation 2019* (the Amendment Regulation) achieves its policy objectives by prescribing an additional state school in a rural and very remote area as a prescribed state school. The Amendment Regulation amends the EGP Regulation to prescribe Westmar SS as a school that can deliver a kindergarten program.

Consistency with policy objectives of authorising law

The Amendment Regulation is consistent with the objectives of the EGP Act.

Inconsistency with policy objectives of other legislation

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

Benefits and costs of implementation

The implementation cost for including Westmar SS in the Remote Kindergarten Program will be funded from the existing Remote Kindergarten budget allocation within the Department of Education. These costs include professional development, accommodation resourcing, teacher aide salaries and ongoing 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 Amendment Regulation is consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

Consultation

Targeted consultation has been conducted with the local community and Westmar SS.

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