

Policy

Provision of preschool services in rural communities

Please note this policy is mandatory and staff are required to adhere to the content.

Summary

This policy outlines the criteria for the resourcing of small preschools in rural communities and managing those with declining enrolments with consideration given to alternative models of service delivery to facilitate young children's access to a preschool program where there is no alternative service.

Table 1 - Document details

Publication date	December 2017
File number	DECD16/12838
Related legislation	<i>Children's Services Act 1985</i> <i>Education Act 1972</i> <i>Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011(SA)</i> Education and Care Services National Regulations
Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks	Preschool enrolment policy Playcentre program procedure Amalgamating, closing, opening and naming of preschools and schools procedure
Version	1.1
Replaces	Policy on DECS Children's services for rural communities
Policy officer (position)	Senior policy officer
Policy officer (phone)	8207 2433
Policy sponsor (position)	Director, Early Childhood Services
Executive director responsible (position and office)	Executive director Early Years and Child Development
Applies to	Small rural preschools with declining and fluctuating enrolments
Key words	Small preschools, declining and fluctuating enrolments, staffing small preschools

Status	Approved
Approved by	Chief Operating Officer
Approval date	5 December 2017
Review date	30 September 2020

Table 2 - Revision record

Date	Version	Revision description
16 March 2017	1.0	New publication replacing policy on DECS children's services for rural communities.
5 December 2017	1.1	Minor edit to provide additional information about school-based preschool service delivery options.

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1. Title

Provision of preschool services in rural communities policy

2. Purpose

This policy outlines the criteria for the resourcing of small preschools with fluctuating enrolments in rural communities, including consideration given to alternative models of service delivery to facilitate young children's access to a preschool program where there is no alternative service.

3. Scope

This policy applies to staff in government preschools.

4. Policy detail

4.1 Objectives

This policy identifies alternative approaches to delivering preschool programs in small communities with low or fluctuating enrolments, taking into account the efficient allocation of resources, to facilitate young children having access to a preschool program.

4.2 Review of stand-alone preschool services

Small preschool services which fall below the benchmark of 10 enrolments for 2 consecutive years, based on term 2 data, will be identified for review.

A review process will be undertaken by the education director which will involve consultation with the site leader, the preschool governing council and the local community to determine the long term viability of the preschool service.

During the review process, sites may consider voluntary amalgamation with the school to deliver a school-based preschool program. Consideration will need to be given to:

- whether the service can continue to operate on the existing site
- proximity to the school
- the viability of relocating the preschool to the school site.

4.2.1 Suspension of a stand-alone preschool service

Suspension of a stand-alone preschool service will occur when enrolments fall below 10 for 2 consecutive years unless there are extenuating circumstances for the service to remain open. These may include:

- projected growth
- access to an alternative preschool
- the inability of a school to deliver a school-based preschool program.

4.2.2 Closure of a stand-alone preschool service

A service will be closed if it is suspended for 2 consecutive years.

4.3 School-based preschool service delivery options

The following service delivery options are available for small school-based preschools. The service delivery model may change from year to year depending on the number of eligible preschool aged children.

4.3.1 The delivery of a school-based preschool service for 6 or more enrolments

The Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) will provide funding for a teacher to deliver 15 hours of preschool when there are 6 or more enrolments.

4.3.2 Integrating preschool children with the first years of school for less than 6 enrolments

If there are less than 6 eligible preschool enrolments and there is no access to an alternative preschool, schools may consider integrating preschool children within the first years of school, subject to the endorsement of the education director.

A preschool program delivered to less than 6 children in a junior primary class will not be assessed and rated under the National Quality Framework. Refer to the *Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011* (Schedule 1 R 5), definition of an education and care service.

Curriculum requirements:

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) provides a researched, evidenced based framework for the provision of quality teaching and learning for young children from birth to five years and through the transition to school. There are no requirements to use the EYLF in a junior primary classroom where there are fewer than 6 preschool children enrolled. There are similarities within the key messages in the EYLF and the Foundation year of the Australian Curriculum, which will guide leaders and teachers in their role of providing quality teaching and learning in these integrated classrooms.

For further details or support, contact the Early Years Learners Directorate, Learning Improvement Division: DECD.LIDEarlyYears@sa.gov.au Resource allocation:

Where there are 3 to 5 enrolments, a modified resource allocation of 15 hours per week school services officer (SSO) will be provided to support the inclusion of preschool children in the first years of school.

Where there are less than 3 enrolments, integration with the first years of school may be considered within the existing resources of the school.

4.4 Playcentre program

When a preschool program is suspended or closed DECD will fund a playcentre program as a transitional arrangement for 1 year. Ongoing funding may be provided in keeping with the 'playcentre program procedure'.

4.5 Human Resources

People and Culture, Operations – Schools and Preschools will provide information regarding the tenure of staff at affected preschools and will manage the placement of staff impacted by the decision to suspend and/or close services.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Table 3 - Roles and responsibilities

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Director, Early Childhood Services	Endorsing preschool policies and procedures.
Education director	<p>Provide advice and consulting with the site leader, staff, parents and the local community, regarding the possible suspension or closure of a preschool service, or the voluntary amalgamation of a preschool with the local school.</p> <p>Endorse the establishment of a preschool program integrated within the early years of school.</p>
Preschool Policy and Programs unit	<p>Developing and reviewing the 'provision of preschool services for rural communities policy.</p> <p>Monitoring the utilisation of preschools and identifying preschools for review.</p>
People and Culture, Operations – Schools and Preschools	Consulting with the site leader and the education director regarding the tenure of staff in small rural preschools that have been identified for suspension and amalgamation.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The 'provision of preschool services in rural communities policy' will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Preschool Policy and Programs unit in collaboration with education directors and People and Culture, Operations – Schools and Preschools. Key stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review process.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Table 4 - Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Preschool	<p>An approved early childhood educational program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year before they start school.</p> <p>Preschools may also be referred to as a kindergarten, school-based preschool, children's services centre or integrated children's centre</p>

Term	Meaning
Playcentre	A playcentre is a facilitated playgroup for children from birth to school entry and their families. The playcentre offers a quality play based learning environment to promote children's early learning and development. It creates opportunities for families to develop relationships with other families and early childhood and community services.

8. Supporting documents

[Preschool enrolment policy](#)

[Playcentre program procedure](#)

[Amalgamating, closing, opening and naming of preschools and schools procedure](#)