The aim of the SCAN Program (Supporting Children with Additional Needs) is to improve access to funded preschools for children with additional needs. SCAN funding aims to increase the ability of preschools to include children with additional needs and is provided as a contribution to direct service delivery consistent with the provisions of the national law Children, (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 and the Early Years Learning Framework.

Background

There are a number of key obligations and frameworks that assist in effective inclusion of children with additional needs. These are set out below.

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010

The objective of this Law is to establish a national education and care services quality framework for the delivery of education and care services to children.

The objectives of the national education and care services quality framework are:

- a) to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending education and care services;
- b) to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children attending education and care services;
- c) to promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care services.

The guiding principles of the national education and care services quality framework are as follows:

- a) that the rights and best interests of the child are paramount;
- b) that children are successful, competent and capable learners;
- c) that the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity underlie this Law;
- d) that Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued;
- e) that the role of parents and families is respected and supported;
- f) that best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia

The Framework forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning.

The five principles of the EYLF are:

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
2. Partnerships
3. High expectations and equity
4. Respect for diversity to ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice.

Obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992)

Preschools, as providers of education, have three main obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) which include:

1. Obligation to consult
2. Obligation to make reasonable adjustments
3. Obligation to eliminate harassment and victimisation.
The Education Standards cover all stages of a child’s time at preschool, from the time that they are enrolled right up until the time they finish. The Education Standards make it against the law to discriminate against a person because of their disability at any of the following points in the education process:

- When an education provider is deciding what will be taught in preschool
- When a child is being enrolled in a preschool
- While a child is taking part in preschool
- If a child requires support services to take part in preschool
- When a child finishes preschool
- If a child is harassed or victimised while taking part in preschool.

**Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist preschools and SCAN organisations to identify the need for funding to:

- support a child with additional needs to access a preschool setting and participate meaningfully in a quality early childhood education program consistent with the EYLF; and
- outline the administrative and accountability processes the Department requires of SCAN organisations in their funding of preschool services.

**Outcomes**

The outcomes for the SCAN Program are:

1. **Supplementary support for preschools.** SCAN organisations fund preschools directly to enable preschools to support children with additional needs to access an early childhood education program consistent with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

2. **Capacity building for preschool staff.** Staff in preschools are confident, thoughtful, and informed in their interactions with children. They act with knowledge and purpose and challenge practices that contribute to inequities.

3. **Professional development for preschool staff.** Staff in preschools are provided with the knowledge to inform their education practices for children with additional needs by focussing on specific learning outcomes and promoting meaningful participation in the life of the service.

4. **Specialised equipment.** Preschools have the required specialised equipment (not medical equipment) to support children with additional needs to access the early childhood education program.

**Eligibility**

**1. Services**

The service must be an approved preschool in NSW that is not-for-profit and incorporated (that is, must be regulated under the National Law and Regulations). It is noted that a very small number of children in settings other than preschools currently receive SCAN funding. It is the Department’s intention for the principal focus to be on preschools.

**2. Children**

The target group for SCAN funding is children with additional needs who are enrolled in preschools. Additional needs may include:

- severe behaviour and severe social/emotional disabilities (the child must exhibit behaviours at a frequency, duration and intensity that seriously affects their educational functioning and emotional well-being in the home, community and preschool. The behaviour may also put those in the preschool setting at risk, if it is not appropriately managed)
- delayed developmental or diagnosed disabilities (for example, intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy, vision and hearing impairment)
- severe chronic health conditions (long term health conditions which significantly impact the child’s ability to access the service and program. The conditions are life threatening and require a high level of supervision in the early childhood setting, and may include diabetes and anaphylaxis)
- moderate to severe language delays (the child must have a score on a standardised language assessment of 77 or below).

The children in attendance at the preschool will have additional needs and be:

- at least 3 years old on or before 31 July; or
- at least 4 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and not yet in compulsory schooling.

This means that the target group for SCAN are children with additional needs enrolled in preschools and aged 3 to school age. Previous provisions in SCAN for Aboriginal children and children with an additional English language need no longer apply, as their needs are met through loadings in the Preschool Funding Model.

**Roles and responsibilities**

The effective inclusion of children with additional needs in preschool requires an understanding of the specific needs of each child and the associated requirements of the preschool to ensure the inclusion of the child in the education program and physical environment of the preschool.
SCAN organisations

The Department has contracted the SCAN organisations to manage the program across regions. These organisations are responsible for the management and distribution of funding to eligible preschools to support access and opportunities for individual children based on funding applications received. SCAN organisations are required to collect information on individual children including the child’s first and last name, gender, date of birth, residential postcode, disability type, severity of disability, who diagnosed the disability, the child’s attendance pattern and whether the child has an additional English language need or is Aboriginal.

The SCAN organisation is responsible for assisting preschools to facilitate the inclusion of all children with additional needs by providing:

1. Supplementary support for preschools (SCAN organisations fund preschools directly to enable preschools to support children with additional needs to access an early childhood education program consistent with the EYLF)
2. Capacity building for preschool staff (for example, specialist support and expertise is provided directly to the staff in the preschools to assist them in developing the knowledge and skills to include children with additional needs)
3. Professional development for preschool staff (for example, involves training and workshops)
4. Specialised equipment (does not include medical equipment, but includes items such as seating and standing frames that are required for educational purposes).

The SCAN organisation is also responsible for working with the preschool to ensure that each child has an education program appropriate to their needs and abilities that is consistent with the Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia. The education program should be developed in consultation with the child’s family and other professionals involved in assisting the child as relevant.

Preschool responsibilities

Preschools are responsible for identifying children attending their service who have additional needs and for determining the support needed by each child to access the preschool and education program.

Preschools must not act outside their area of expertise when determining the level of support need of a child or establishing a program of support for the child.

Preschools are responsible for completing and forwarding funding applications to their SCAN organisation, spending funds in accordance with the guidelines and fulfilling all accountability requirements.

Preschools receiving funding must demonstrate that they are achieving the funding program outcomes and are required to provide SCAN organisations with relevant child-level information, as requested.

Family of a child with additional needs

A family’s knowledge of their child’s support needs is invaluable and they are invited both to provide information about their child’s ongoing support needs and to participate as partners in planning for quality learning experiences.

If additional expertise is required to make accurate determinations of the child’s support needs the child’s family may arrange contact with support agencies or give permission for preschool staff or the SCAN organisation to contact or gather information about their child from support agencies. The family responsible for the child is able to access records, including individual education/learning programs (IE/LPs), individual child portfolios and other records the preschool has kept on their child in accordance with relevant legislation.

Identifying the need for additional support in preschool

When considering whether an application for funding is required, the preschool needs to consider an individual child’s ability to access the service and program in relation to the following key areas:

1. social environment (that is, the child’s local community including the preschool)
2. the number of staff and their skills and experience
3. specific areas of the program (excursions, routines, individual activities and small group experiences)
4. the needs of other children in the service
5. physical environment
6. other supports available in the community or through other government agencies (for example, ADHC).

Issues for consideration include:

1. what, if anything, is preventing this child from participating in all the preschool experiences offered?
2. to what extent do these barriers arise from features of the preschool?
3. to what extent can these identified barriers be removed or adjusted without additional funding?
4. to what extent can these identified barriers be removed or reduced only with additional funding?

How to determine level of support and adjustments

To determine the need for funding, preschools will:

1. observe the child in the early childhood education setting
2. work with the child’s family to understand the child’s specific additional needs
3. gather information with parental permission from other support agencies working with the child and their family.
The adjustments required to the preschool and education program will relate to the severity of the challenges and barriers each preschool faces in meeting the needs of the individual child.

**Funding support through SCAN**

Funding support is available from the SCAN Program to assist the inclusion of individual children in the preschool. There are four key streams for this funding with caps applied to capacity building, professional development, specialised equipment and administration in order to further maximise funding to preschools. Funds can be used to support:

1. **Supplementary support for preschools.**
   (SCAN organisations fund preschools directly to enable preschools to support children with additional needs to access an early childhood education program consistent with the EYLF.) SCAN organisations must allocate a minimum of 70% of the amount that they have been funded to provide support for preschools.

2. **Capacity building for preschool staff.**
   (Specialist support and expertise is provided directly to the staff in the preschools so they have the skills to include children with additional needs.) SCAN organisations are limited to allocating 5% of the amount that they have been funded to capacity building.

3. **Professional development for preschool staff.**
   (Training and workshops related to inclusion of children with special needs for example autism spectrum disorder.) SCAN organisations are limited to allocating 3% of the amount that they have been funded to professional development.

4. **Specialised equipment.** This equipment does not include medical equipment, such as that required for tube feeding. SCAN organisations are limited to allocating 2% of the amount that they have been funded to specialised equipment.

Up to 20% of the funding provided to SCAN organisations may be allocated to administration costs including, for example, office accommodation and employment of staff.

Any funding allocated under the SCAN Program cannot be used for:

1. payment of fees
2. employment of therapists for children
3. assessments
4. specialist medical consultations (for example, paediatricians)
5. capital improvements
6. medical equipment.

**Funding**

Funding is limited to a maximum of 2.5 days per week (15 hours) or 600 hours per year, per child, and will be paid on a half day or full day basis. However, it is anticipated that most children will attend for less than 2.5 days through choice and that the average will be around 2 days, with some children attending less than 2 days.

The daily rate per place is $45. The daily rate per place for “Exceptional circumstances” is an additional $25.

**Funding Process – Application forms**

Funding determinations will be based on the information provided through the funding application forms and may involve the SCAN organisation seeking further information from preschools, if required.

For each individual child, eligible preschools must complete the “Individual child application” form including all relevant attachments and supporting documentation when funding for the child is first sought.

**Funding timetable**

For individual applications funding will be on a six monthly basis. A request must be made by the preschool for a continuation of funding if funding has been approved for the previous six month period.

For late preschool enrolments funding application forms may be submitted as children enrol. Capacity to fund applications will be dependent on the available funding and total number of applications received. Late applications will be funded from the date they are received by the SCAN organisation.

Applications may be considered for backdating, subject to satisfactory evidence of enrolment dates. Capacity by the SCAN organisation to fund applications will be dependent on the available funding and total number of applications received. Backdating is limited to the term in which the application was approved.

**Exceptional circumstances funding**

Limited additional funding may be administered by the SCAN organisation where, due to “Exceptional circumstances”, the child cannot be accommodated within the preschool without regular adjustments throughout the day to the structure of the environment; programming and staffing of the service.

Note: Applications for “Exceptional circumstances” funding will involve the SCAN organisation visiting or contacting the preschool.

Circumstances that constitute an application for “Exceptional circumstances” may include, but are not limited to:

- Safety of the child and/or those nearby (for example, the child exhibits behaviours that puts others at risk)
- Limited or no support services (for example, there are no other services in the local community that provide expertise and support to include the child in the education program).

An individual application from the preschool is required for a child who has been identified as requiring additional support to access and participate in the education program.
Emergency funding
In situations where the family is unable to provide documentation immediately, an “Emergency” funding form may be submitted and funding allocated for a maximum of 10 weeks until the required documentation can be provided. Eligible services should contact their SCAN organisation by telephone to discuss procedures for “Emergency” funding applications.

Funding assessment and approval process
SCAN organisations will assess applications against the eligibility requirements and notify preschools of the outcome of their applications.

Variations to funding
Preschools are required to notify the SCAN organisation through the “Continuation of funding/Funding adjustment” form within two working weeks of any changes to a child’s:

1. attendance pattern (including absences of more than five weeks)
2. support need.

Purchase of specialised equipment
Funding obtained through individual applications can be used to purchase minor items of specialised equipment. In making the funding determination for the purchase of specialised equipment the preschool may need to provide further information, supporting documentation or confirmation from a relevant qualified therapist that the specialised equipment is necessary for educational purposes.

Documentation requirements
A copy of the most recent and relevant report, assessment or a letter that outlines the child’s additional needs is required from a relevant professional for all funding applications. Documentation must be on letterhead and signed by the relevant professional. For electronic documentation the signature block must include the relevant professional qualification. Relevant professionals are listed below:

1. Early Childhood Teacher with an additional qualification in Special Education not working with the child for whom funding is sought or employed by the preschool the child attends
2. Primary Teacher with an additional qualification in Special Education not working with the child for whom funding is sought or employed by the preschool the child attends.
3. A General Practitioner (GP)
4. Specialists including medical, audiologist, registered psychologist, psychiatrist, speech pathologist and professional qualified to administer psychometric assessments (for example, paediatrician).

Where families have difficulty obtaining the relevant paperwork, preschools should contact their SCAN organisation for assistance.

The SCAN organisation reserves the right to visit the preschool or seek additional/updated documentation and/or information prior to making a decision. It is expected in these cases the preschool would be contacted.

Accountability requirements
Prior to the end of term two and term four preschools are required to complete accountability forms for the funding period. Preschools will not be eligible for further funding until the accountability forms have been received and approved by the SCAN organisation.

Preschools unable to meet the accountability timeframes must contact the SCAN organisation to discuss the matter.

If the preschool does not spend the allocated funds in the calendar year they must report this to the SCAN organisation and arrange for residual funds to be returned to the SCAN organisation.

Definition of Terms
Children with a severe behaviour or social/emotional disorder must exhibit behaviours at a frequency, duration and intensity that seriously affects their educational functioning and emotional well-being in the home, community and preschool. The behaviour may also put those in the preschool setting at risk.

SCAN organisation – refers to the organisation which administers funding for preschools on behalf of the Department of Education and Communities Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate.

Severe Chronic Health conditions – are long term health conditions which significantly impact the child’s ability to access the service and program.

Safety – refers not only to aggressive/dangerous behaviour but also to the wellbeing of the child. For example, if a child is not mobile, and therefore unable to move out of the way of children/objects their safety would be at risk, or if they are prone to choking.

Specialised Equipment – refers to specialised equipment purchased for the specific use of the children with additional needs to support their access to the early childhood education program.