Preschool Disability Support Program

Grant Program Guidelines
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1 Aims and objectives

1.1 The Department of Education and Communities is the largest provider of public education and training in Australia. The Department's vision is for a highly skilled, educated, vibrant and inclusive NSW, where all people achieve their potential, build social and economic prosperity, participate in activities that contribute to their wellbeing and contribute as informed citizens to our society.

1.2 The Department's strategic priorities encompass quality teaching and leadership, high expectations for all and a commitment to closing the gaps in areas of disadvantage and a responsibility to find new and better ways of doing business to respond to the community's changing needs. In early childhood, the Department is committed to achieving the NSW 2021 goal that all children will receive high quality early childhood education and care to give them a great start in life and at school.

1.3 It is in this broader context that the Department funds the Preschool Disability Support Program (PDSP). The aim of the PDSP is to improve access to preschool education for children with disability, and support equitable education outcomes for children with disability in community preschools settings.

1.4 PDSP funding aims to increase the ability of community preschools to meet the educational needs of children with disability. It is provided as a contribution to direct service delivery consistent with the provisions of the national law, the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law and the accompanying National Quality Framework, and as a contribution to assist preschools to meet their educational obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

1.5 The specific objectives of the PDSP are to:

- support the education of children with disability and additional needs in community preschools
- establish a clear connection between educational support for children with disability or additional needs and the National Quality Framework and the Early Years Learning Framework
- support the development of educators working with children with disability and additional needs in community preschools
- support preschools to provide children with disability and additional needs with a high quality, inclusive early childhood education experience.

2 Preschool Disability Support Program

2.1 The PDSP is funded by the NSW Department of Education and Communities and is administered by a program manager on the Department’s behalf. DEC has appointed Northcott as the program manager.

Northcott can be contacted by email or by phone: pdsp@northcott.com.au or 1800 455 522.
2.2 A PDSP website has been created and is maintained by Northcott. The website address is: http://pdsp.northcott.com.au.

2.3 The PDSP replaces the Supporting Children with Additional Needs (SCAN) program and the preschool component of the Intervention Support Program (ISP).

2.4 The PDSP comprises four key elements:

2.4.1. The Universal Disability Loading

The new Universal Disability Loading provides funding to all preschools to support the educational inclusion of children with disability. The loading will be paid annually, and recognises the widespread prevalence of disability and assists preschools to meet their educational obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and Disability Standards for Education 2005. The disability loading must be used to support the inclusion of children with disability or additional needs.

This formula-based funding is calculated based on total enrolments of children eligible for Preschool Funding Model (PFM) subsidies using the preschool census in August of the preceding year.

In 2015, Preschools located in metropolitan areas will receive $60 per eligible child per annum. Preschools located in regional or remote areas will receive $75 per eligible child per annum, in recognition that children with disability face barriers to funding through difficulty in obtaining medical diagnoses.

Possible ways to use the Universal Disability Loading include:

- assessing ways in which the service could better support children with disability or additional needs
- supporting the needs of children who may not meet the requirements for additional funding (see section 2.3.2)
- arranging professionals to provide advice about the preschool’s facilities or programs, or conduct an information session about a particular disability
- purchasing additional resources for children or
- purchasing relevant material to develop the capacity of all staff employed by the preschool.

For further information about use of PDSP funding, please refer to section 10.2.

2.4.2. Child-focused targeted support

Child-focused targeted support provides funding to assist community preschools support individual children with disability or additional needs. These children will have moderate to high needs in relation to learning or the support that enables them to participate and engage in the learning environment, and funding will assist in achieving equitable education outcomes. Funding is application based, and applications are managed and assessed by Northcott using these guidelines. The amount of funding is based on the child’s level of educational
need and there are three funding levels. Funding is provided to support access for up to 15 hours a week or 600 hours per year per child.

For further information about targeted support, refer to section 7 of these guidelines.

2.4.3. Support for preschools

Northcott will provide telephone and online support for metropolitan, regional and remote community preschools. This will include advice on applications, funding and how to access support, training and resources to help preschools improve educational outcomes for children with disability.

Northcott will conduct an annual state-wide training program to provide the preschool sector with information about eligibility for the program, how preschools can apply for funding, and training in how to prepare an Individual Learning Plan (ILP; for more information about ILPs, refer to section 8.1). Training will be provided in a number of communities across NSW to support access for preschools no matter where they are located.

The focus of the training program in subsequent years will be dependent on the identified learning needs of the sector and feedback received throughout the year.

Northcott can be contacted by email or phone: pdsp@northcott.com.au or 1800 455 522.

A PDSP website has been created and is maintained by Northcott. The website address is: http://pdsp.northcott.com.au.

2.4.4. Scholarships for post-graduate study

Scholarships for post graduate study in Special Education will strengthen the capacity of the preschool workforce. Up to 20 scholarships will be available each year and will cover the full cost of a Graduate Certificate or Master's program at an approved university. Priority access will be given to applicants in rural and remote NSW, and indigenous applicants.

3 Eligible services

3.1 The PDSP is a specific program for community preschools in NSW.

3.2 To be eligible for this program, a service must receive funding under the NSW Government Preschool Grants Program.

4 Background

There are a number of key obligations and frameworks that assist in effective inclusion of children with disability. These are set out below.
4.1 Children (Education and Care Services) National Law

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

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

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

4.2 The guiding principles of the National Quality Framework are that:

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

The National Quality Framework (NQF) encompasses seven Quality Areas that guide the operation and practice of education and care services, and all seven Quality Areas contribute to the delivery of a quality early education experience for all children. Quality Area 1 (Educational Program and Practice) and the accompanying national curriculum document, Belonging, Being and Becoming, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), are particularly relevant as they are the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education 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; and
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice.

The EYLF identifies five learning outcomes, which are designed to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children across the birth to five years range. They include:
1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners; and
5. Children are effective communicators

4.3 Obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005

Preschools, like all providers of education, have three main obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. Preschools must not discriminate on the grounds of disability in relation to:
- a child’s application to, or enrolment, in preschool
- a child’s access (either denying or limiting access) to preschool; and
- curriculum that would exclude or limit the participation of a child with disability.

The accompanying Disability Standards for Education 2005 seek to ensure that children with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other children. This means that they must have opportunities and choices which are comparable to those of children without disability and applies to admission or enrolment, participation and the use of preschool facilities. To achieve this, preschools are obliged to:
- provide reasonable adjustment where necessary
- consult with families about the reasonable adjustments that will be provided; and
- prevent harassment and victimisation.

4.4 National Disability Insurance Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will provide individualised support for people with permanent and significant disability. In the case of young children with disability, the NDIS will enable parents or carers to make decisions about which services to access for their children. The NDIS will be implemented progressively from 2016 and is expected to be fully in place by 1 July 2018 (until 2016, it is only operating in the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Maitland LGAs of NSW).

The NDIS will be responsible for providing functional supports that improve a child’s functional capacity or prevent deterioration (e.g. speech pathology, physiotherapy) and very individualised supports that are specific to a child’s disability that are beyond the ‘reasonable adjustments’ that preschools are required to make under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. These individual supports will only be available in situations where a child has very significant and complex needs (e.g. ventilation which must be supervised by a trained carer).
The NDIS will not provide supports which are the responsibility of the universal education system, and will not replace what preschools are expected to provide to support for the educational participation of children with disability.

As the NDIS is progressively implemented in NSW, preschool staff will need to work with families and NDIS planners to arrange the most effective and integrated use of supports available to each child from the disability and education systems.

5 Roles and responsibilities

The effective inclusion of children with disability or 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.

5.1 Preschools

Preschools are responsible for:

- meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the accompanying Disability Standards for Education, the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law and the National Quality Framework
- identifying children seeking to enrol and attend their service who have a disability or additional need, and for determining the support needed by each child to enrol and access the preschool and education program
- consulting with each child’s family, and other relevant professionals assisting the child, to develop an education program for the child that is appropriate to their needs and abilities and is consistent with the EYLF
- preparing an ILP for children who receive child-focused targeted support (for more information about ILPs refer to section 8.1)
- submitting funding applications with parents’ consent, spending funds in accordance with the guidelines and fulfilling all accountability requirements including the provision of relevant child-level information, as requested.

Responsibilities relating to the privacy and confidentiality of information and the retention of records will be dealt with through individual funding agreements with preschools.

5.2 Family of a child with disability or 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 their child’s quality learning experiences.

A preschool must have the consent of the child’s family or carers in order to apply for targeted support funding. Preschools are obliged to consult with families about their child’s education needs before making reasonable adjustments, and must invite families to participate in the development of their
child’s ILP. This document sets out what the preschool will do for the child, and
the family must agree with the final ILP. A family may also be participating in
planning for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports and so will be
able to advise on the most effective and integrated use of supports for their child.
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 the preschool staff to contact or gather information about
their child from support agencies. Exchanging information with NDIS planners
may also need to be a part of this process. While preschools may exchange this
information with the consent of the parents or carers, some parents may prefer to
take responsibility for sharing such information.

6 Identifying the need for additional support in preschool

6.1 Issues for consideration

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:

- the educational needs of the child
- the number of educators, their skills and experience
- specific areas of the program (excursions, routines, individual activities and
  small group experiences)
- the needs of other children in the preschool
- physical environment
- social environment (that is, the child’s local community, including the
  preschool)
- other supports available to the child through non-government agencies, NDIS
  supports or Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

6.2 Issues for consideration include:

- the additional support the child requires for their educational development
  against the five outcome areas of the EYLF (Identity, Connectedness,
  Wellbeing, Confident and Involved Learners, Communication)
- any barriers preventing this child from participating in all the preschool
  experiences offered
- whether these barriers relate to the skills and experience of the educators
- whether these barriers arise from features of the preschool
- whether these identified barriers be removed or adjusted without additional
  funding
• whether these identified barriers be removed or reduced only with additional funding
• results from administering a recognised assessment (e.g. Ages and Stages Questionnaire) to assess the child’s development, conducted in consultation with his/her parents, and consideration of whether further referral is necessary.

6.3 How to determine level of support and adjustments

To determine the need for funding, preschools will:
• observe the child while engaged in learning activities in an early childhood education setting
• work with the child’s family to understand the child’s specific additional needs
• gather information with parental permission from other support agencies working with the child and their family.

As part of the application for targeted funding, the preschool will set out how the individual child’s educational needs can be met, and what adjustments are required to enable the child’s access to, and participation in, the educational program.

7 Child-focused targeted support

7.1 Funding information

Child-focused targeted support assists individual children with additional needs to participate in a preschool and engage at the same level as their peers. Support is available at three daily rates, based on the level of assistance required for the child to actively participate in the education program and achieve equitable education outcomes.

Funding is provided for a maximum of 2.5 days per week (15 hours) or 600 hours per year, per child. 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, and some children may attend less than 2 days. It is acknowledged that each child and family has unique circumstances, and Northcott will, where necessary, have some flexibility to approve other attendance patterns that meet the individual needs of the child, up to the 600 hours per year limit.

Applications for funding will be on an annual basis, subject to attendance.

Preschools must notify Northcott within two working weeks of any changes to a child’s attendance pattern, including absences of more than five weeks.

7.2 Eligible children for child-focused targeted support through PDSP

Children with disability or additional needs enrolled in a preschool and aged 3 to school age are eligible for PDSP targeted support. This means that a child will 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.

**Eligible children for targeted PDSP support may include, but is not restricted to, children with:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of disability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and social/emotional disability (severe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic health conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech/language (moderate and severe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3 The following information is relevant to eligibility:

**Severe behaviour and severe social/emotional disabilities:** the child must exhibit behaviour 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.

**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 epilepsy. Children with these conditions may be receiving support through the NDIS, and consideration may need to be given to how to integrate the supports for the child to maximum effect.

**Moderate to severe language delays:** the child must have a score on a standardised language assessment of 77 or below.

7.4 Levels of funding

Where a child requires additional support to participate in a preschool and engage at the same level as their peers, funding may be provided at one of three levels based on a child’s individual need.

As the level of support required increases, preschools must support the application for funding by submitting assessment reports from specialist practitioners including paediatricians, psychologists, and/or professionals.
qualified to implement developmental assessments outlining the child's level of disability.

Depending on the level of funding for which a preschool applies, Northcott may engage a range of professionals to assess the application.

The three levels of funding are:

7.4.1. **Level 1 ($45 per day support)**

It is expected that the majority of children will receive this level of funding. A child may be eligible for level 1 funding if they require infrequent support to ensure he or she is engaged at the same level as their peers. This will involve making supplementary adjustments to the environment and teaching strategies, and these may include:

- the use of key word signing or pictorial symbols
- setting up language groups in a quiet area with fewer distractions
- always having at least one or two good language role models in small language groups
- using peers whose skills are just slightly more advanced to teach and role model social skills
- providing meaningful opportunities to practise skills
- providing alternative spaces and experiences for children who require support to regulate their behaviours.

Support may include the employment of additional staff to improve staff/child ratios in the daily activities and routines and provide intermittent support throughout the day. It could include programming for small group experiences to target specific skills. Preschools can seek staff professional learning related to the needs of funded children.

A child receiving this level of funding:

- may have a moderate to severe language delay in either receptive or expressive language (or both)
- may have age appropriate or near age appropriate social skills that may be impacted by the language delay
- may have age appropriate gross motor skills and fine motor skills that are a little behind what is expected for their chronological age
- may require only verbal reminders to remain on task or complete an activity
- is toilet trained or toilet timed, and may be able to dress or undress his/her self.

To support an application for level 1 funding, a copy of the most recent and relevant report, assessment or letter that outlines the child’s disability or additional needs from a relevant professional is required. Documentation must be on letterhead and signed by the relevant professional. For electronic
documentation, the signature block must include the relevant professional qualification. The report or assessment must be less than 12 months old.

Relevant professionals are:

- a General Practitioner (GP)
- an early childhood teacher or 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
- an audiologist, registered psychologist, psychiatrist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist or a professional qualified to administer psychometric assessments.

7.4.2. Level 2 ($90 per day support)

A child may be eligible for level 2 funding if he/she requires frequent support to participate in a preschool, engage at the same level as his/her peers and remain safe.

Supporting the child’s meaningful participation will involve making substantial adjustments to the environment and teaching strategies. In addition to the adjustments used to support children funded at level 1 the following may also be used:

- the use of key word signing or pictorial symbols and or assistive technology
- the use of frequent teacher directed individualised support such as hand over hand guidance to complete an activity
- giving instructions one step at a time and providing physical and visual guidance or verbal prompts to support understanding
- a high level of direct support including physical guidance to promote positive behaviour with peers
- providing alternative spaces and experiences for children who require support to regulate their behaviours and who may have sensory processing issues
- direct supervision and assistance with toileting.

Support may include the employment of additional staff to improve staff/child ratios to closely monitor a child’s development. Adults will provide one to one support to teach new skills, and promote the development and generalisation of these skills. It may include the purchase of specialised equipment or advice to enhance educational outcomes.

A child receiving this level of funding:

- may have a severe language delay in either receptive or expressive language (or both), may use jargon, may involuntarily repeat sounds or words that they hear from others
- may have social skills that are not age appropriate, may be aggressive to peers, have poor emotional regulation
• may engage in parallel or solitary play and may be self-directed and prefer own agenda
• will require verbal and physical support to remain on task
• may not be aware of danger and may require high levels of supervision to remain safe
• may not be toilet trained, can undress self, but needs help with dressing
• may have difficulties transitioning between activities and need adult support.

To receive level 2 support, a child must have a written diagnosis and/or developmental assessment from a relevant specialist. The report or assessment must be less than 12 months old.

The following professionals may make a diagnosis for specific disabilities:

• **intellectual disability**: paediatrician, registered psychologist, school counsellor or other professionals qualified to administer psychometric assessments
• **hearing impairment**: relevant medical specialist or audiologist supported by a report from Australian Hearing
• **vision impairment**: ophthalmologist. Diagnosis may also be supported by a report from Vision Australia or the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC). Diagnosis by an orthoptist or optometrist will not be considered
• **severe language**: relevant medical specialist or speech pathologist
• **physical disability**: relevant medical specialist or paediatrician. Diagnosis by a physiotherapist or occupational therapist will not be considered
• **severe behaviour and severe social/emotional disability**: specialist psychologist, psychiatrist or paediatrician
• **multiple disabilities**: paediatrician or relevant medical specialist
• **developmental delay**: paediatrician, registered psychologist, school counsellor or other professionals qualified to administer psychometric assessments.

### 7.4.3. Level 3 ($120 per day support)

To apply for level 3 funding, preschools must first contact Northcott to discuss the application.

It is expected that only a very small number of children will be eligible for level 3 support. Children who are eligible for level 3 support will need constant and intensive support to attend preschool and engage at the same level as his/her peers.

It is highly likely that children who receive level 3 funding will have had their disability diagnosed at a very young age, will have complex support needs and may have medical conditions associated with their disability.
Supporting the child’s meaningful participation will involve making extensive, systematic, individualised, ongoing adjustments to the environment and teaching strategies.

The child may have access to highly specialised technology, seating and standing equipment. They may also use alternative communication modes. In addition to adjustments used to support children funded at levels 1 and 2 the following may also be used:

- collaborating with allied health specialists to develop specialised programs such as a communication and feeding program
- providing specialised seating and standing frames to ensure the child is correctly positioned to enhance their wellbeing and promote their engagement
- using visual, verbal or tactile prompts and reinforcers to encourage the desired learning outcome
- one-to-one teaching to support the development of choice making
- one-to-one teaching and supported opportunities for the learning of positive and functional behaviours
- one-to-one support for all toileting and self-care.

Funding may be used to employ additional staff to provide one-to-one support so that the child is able to participate in all areas of the preschool program. The adult may have to physically move the child between activities to ensure they are included in all learning experiences or to purchase or hire special equipment.

A child receiving this level of funding:

- may have medical support requirements e.g. tube fed or tracheostomy
- may require specialised seating and standing supports
- may not be mobile
- will not be toilet trained
- may have a severe language delay in either receptive or expressive language or both
- may use visuals or key word signing to communicate
- may be difficult to engage
- may have delayed fine motor skills
- may be able to finger feed or need to be fed by an adult.
8 Requirements for targeted funding

8.1 Individual Learning Plans

A written ILP must be developed for each child approved for level 1, 2 and 3 targeted funding.

An ILP:

- documents what the preschool will do for the child
- must be developed in consultation and agreement with the child’s parents or carers
- does not need to be lengthy or complex
- should be considered a living document to help preschools record each child’s developmental progress
- must be reviewed every six months.

The ILP is also a way that preschools can document their consultation with the child’s family and the reasonable adjustments being made to support the child.

In some cases, an ILP may complement the goals and aspirations expressed in a child’s NDIS support plans, and the potential for integrated assessment and planning should be taken into account.

The requirements of the ILP may form part of the planning/documentation of the child’s educational program and progress as part of the National Quality Framework. It must address the following:

- assessment information reports
- roles and responsibilities of team members and other services that may work with the child at the preschool (e.g. early childhood intervention)
- information about the child’s disability
- documentation of the transition process (either transition within the preschool or from preschool to school)
- summary of the child’s strengths, interests and needs
- long term goals and outcomes
- specific short term objectives
- teaching strategies
- ongoing evaluation.
Preschools will be required to verify that they have reviewed each child’s ILP and report to Northcott and DEC whether or not goals have been met as part of the compliance report process.

8.2 Parent/carer certification

A preschool can only apply for targeted PDSP funding with the written agreement of the child’s parent/carer. The parent/carer signature will authorise the preschool to provide details about their child to Northcott for the purposes of assessing eligibility for funding. Records of the parent/carer’s consent must be held on file by the preschool.

Parents may also be asked to authorise the release of the child’s details to Departmental personnel to support the child’s successful and positive transition to school. However, this is not a condition of funding.

9 Application process

9.1 Lodging an application

Preschools may submit applications in November each year, for funding in the following year. In addition, applications can be submitted at any time throughout the year for funding in the current year within available budget.

At the time that applications are lodged, preschools will be invited to indicate their willingness to participate in Northcott’s evaluation of the PDSP. This will not affect funding application outcomes.

All relevant supporting documentation for each child must be included in the application.

Preschools will be notified in writing (including email) of the outcome of their application for targeted funding by the end of the school year if the application is submitted within two weeks of applications opening for the following year. If an application is submitted after this time, preschools may not be notified until the following school year.

For funding in 2015, applications will open on 3 November 2014. Preschools will be notified of the outcome of their application by the end of the 2014 school year if an application is submitted before 14 November 2014. Preschools may not be notified until 2015 if applications are submitted after this date.

In 2015, if a preschool submits an application for targeted funding during the school year the preschool will be notified of the outcome within three weeks of submitting the application.

Funding will be approved on an annual basis and will be paid in two instalments in Week 2 of Term 1 and Term 3.
9.2 Emergency funding

In certain situations, Northcott may have the discretion to provide funding to a child who needs additional support to participate in the preschool but does not yet have a diagnosis. This may include circumstances where there is an extended delay to obtain the required diagnosis, but the child’s support needs are clear, the safety of the child or other children at the preschool is a concern or there are no other support services in the local community that could provide expertise and support to include the child in the education program.

In situations where the family is unable to provide documentation immediately, ‘Emergency’ funding may be considered for a maximum of 10 weeks. Eligible services should contact Northcott by telephone to discuss an application for ‘Emergency’ funding.

9.3 Backdated funding

Applications submitted after the start of the preschool year will be funded from the date they are received.

Applications may be considered for backdating, subject to satisfactory evidence of enrolment dates. Backdating is limited to the term in which the application was approved.

9.4 Assessment and determination of funding

Preschools must complete an application for each child seeking targeted support, including all relevant attachments, parental consent and supporting documentation when funding for the child is first sought. Where required, Northcott may seek further information from preschools.

Northcott will assess applications and determine funding.

10 Requirements for organisations

Funding support is provided to assist with the educational inclusion of children at preschool. Where preschools receive targeted funding for an individual child, those funds must be used to support that child. In contrast, funds provided though the disability loading are not tied to a particular child and can be used in more general ways to support the educational inclusion of children with additional needs or disability at the preschool.

10.1 Use of targeted support

Targeted support funding can be used for:

- additional staff
- professional development, including course costs related to the education inclusion of children with additional needs
- specialist advice and support
• purchase or hire of equipment that is necessary for educational purposes (excluding medical equipment)

• minor capital improvements.

Any funding allocated under the PDSP cannot be used for:

• payment of fees

• employment of therapists for children

• assessments

• specialist medical consultations (for example, paediatricians)

• medical equipment

• early intervention supports that are most appropriately provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

10.2 Use of the Universal Disability Loading

The Universal Disability Loading (UDL) must be used to support the inclusion of children with disability or additional needs. All preschools that receive the UDL must submit an annual acquittal to Northcott and the Department certifying that funds have been spent in accordance with the program guidelines.

The UDL can be used to:

• support the educational needs of children attending the community preschool who may not meet the requirements for child-focused targeted support

• organise an independent assessment of the preschool to obtain expert advice about how the service could better support children with disability or additional needs

• arrange an information session for staff and parents about a particular disability

• invite specialist disability personnel to provide advice to staff about the preschool’s facilities and/or programs

• purchase additional educational resources to support children with disability or additional needs

• purchase early childhood education resource material such as journal subscriptions or curriculum to develop the capacity of preschool staff

• employ additional staff to assist with meeting the individual learning outcomes of children with disability or additional needs
• provide professional development opportunities, such as courses and training, for staff related to the educational inclusion of children with disability or additional needs

• access specialist advice and support to assist staff to support the specific learning outcomes of a particular child with disability or additional needs

• purchase or hire equipment that is required for a child with disability or additional needs to participate in educational activities

• complete minor capital improvements that will make the preschool more accessible to children with disability or additional needs.

**The UDL cannot be used to:**

• pay fees

• employ therapists for children

• conduct individual child assessments such as speech/language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy or developmental assessments

• conduct specialist medical consultations (for example, paediatricians)

• purchase medical equipment

• purchase early intervention supports that are most appropriately provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

• purchase supports that can be provided under alternative funding.

### 11 Accountability and reporting requirements for preschools

11.1 Preschools are required to report to Northcott and DEC twice yearly on child level progress for each child receiving targeted support. This will occur at the end of Term 2 and Term 4. This will include a statement for each funded child that:

• an ILP is in place

• the plan has been reviewed

• the educational objectives have been met, or the educational objectives have not been met and the plan has been adjusted.

11.2 Preschools are required to provide an annual acquittal as consistent with the preschool's funding agreement. The acquittal will include both the Universal Disability Loading and targeted support funding received, listing each child funded. The annual acquittal will:

• identify unspent funds for return to DEC
• certify that the funds have been expended in accordance with these guidelines
• certify that the attendance requirements for funding have been met
• be signed by the Director and Chair of the governing body or organisational CEO for multi-service providers.

11.3 Preschools must submit the annual acquittal to Northcott and DEC prior to the end of the year to be eligible for funding in the subsequent year.

11.4 Northcott will conduct an annual audit program to ensure that Individual Learning Plans are in place and that the funding provided has been used to support the achievement of educational outcomes for children with disability in accordance with these guidelines.

12 Support for preschools

Northcott will provide telephone and online support for all preschools. This will include advice on applications, funding and how to access support, training and resources to help preschools improve educational outcomes for children with disability.

Northcott will not provide systematic or regular onsite support to preschools. However, Northcott may provide limited onsite support in the form of preschool visits to respond to unplanned issues at preschools. These would be prioritised for preschools that may have difficulty accessing other supports or services. Preschools should contact Northcott if they feel there is a need for onsite support.

Northcott can be contacted by email or phone: pdsp@northcott.com.au or 1800 455 522.

A PDSP website has been created and is maintained by Northcott. The website address is: http://pdsp.northcott.com.au.

13 Scholarships

13.1 To increase the capacity of preschool educators to support the needs of children with disability, up to 20 post-graduate scholarships will be offered each year. Applicants can elect to study either full-time or part-time. Scholarships will be for a maximum of $20,000, depending on the fees and requirements of each course. Priority will be given to applicants located in regional and remote NSW.

13.2 Preschool teachers are eligible to apply if they:

• have completed a Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education, or an equivalent qualification that would enable them to enrol in post-graduate studies
• are currently working in a NSW community preschool.
13.3 To satisfy the conditions of award, applicants must

- enrol in an approved post-graduate Special Education course

13.4 Commit to working in a NSW community preschool for a minimum of 12 months after completing their course.

13.5 Eligible preschool teachers must submit applications by mid-December, and applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by mid-January. Applicants are responsible for enrolling in their chosen course, and providing DEC with proof of enrolment to enable transfer of payment.

13.6 For more information about the PDSP scholarship program and the application process, visit the PDSP website (http://pdsp.northcott.com.au) or contact Northcott by phone or email: 1800 455 522 or pdsp@northcott.com.au.