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PRESCHOOL DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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1. Aims and objectives

The aim of the Preschool Disability Support Program (PDSP) is to improve access to preschool education for children with disability, and support equitable education outcomes for children with disability in community preschool settings.

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.

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

The PDSP is funded by the NSW Department of Education (the department) and is administered by a program manager on the department's behalf. The department has appointed Northcott as the program manager. Northcott can be contacted by email or by 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>

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

Information and assistance with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is available from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) website www.ndis.gov.au or by phone: 1800 800 110.

The PDSP comprises four key elements:

2.1 The Universal Disability Loading

The Universal Disability Loading provides funding to all preschools to support the educational inclusion of children with disability. The loading 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 Start Strong funding

using the Annual Preschool Census in August of the preceding year.

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

For information about use of PDSP funding, please refer to section 9.

2.2 Child-focused targeted support

Child-focused targeted support assists community preschools support individual children with disability or additional needs by providing payments based on the level of need. These children will have moderate to high needs in relation to 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 600 hours per year per child.

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

2.3 Support for preschools

Northcott will conduct an annual state-wide training program to provide information to the preschool sector about eligibility for the program, how to apply for funding, and training in how to prepare an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (for more information about Individual Learning Plans, refer to section 7.4). Training will be provided in a range of communities across NSW to support access to preschools no matter where they are located.

2.4 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 applicants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

3. Eligible services

The PDSP is a specific program for community preschools in NSW. To be eligible for this program, a community preschool 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:

- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- the National Quality Framework (NQF)
- Obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

4.1 National Disability Insurance Scheme

The 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 choose 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. Further information on NDIS is available on the department's website or the National Disability Insurance Agency's website.

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. An understanding of the associated requirements of the preschool is also needed, to ensure the inclusion of the child in the education program and the physical environment.

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 Application) Act 2010 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 Early Years Learning Framework
- Preparing an Individual Learning Plan for children who receive child-focused targeted support (for more information about Individual Learning Plans 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
- Preschools accessing funding under the PDSP are also responsible for notifying Northcott of any changes to a child's enrolment pattern, including absences of more than five weeks.

5.2 Family of a child with disability or additional needs

A family's knowledge of their child's support needs is invaluable. They are invited 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 child-focused targeted support. 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 Individual Learning Plan. This document sets out what the preschool will do for the child, and the family must agree with the final Individual Learning Plan. A child may also receive NDIS supports, and the family will be able to contribute to the discussion on the most effective and integrated use of support 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 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

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 or Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

Issues for consideration include:

- The additional support the child requires for their educational development against the five outcome areas of the Early Years

Learning Framework (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 may be removed or adjusted without additional funding
- Whether these identified barriers may be removed or reduced only with additional funding
- Results from administering a recognised assessment (such as the 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.

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 child-focused targeted support, 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 600 hours per year, per child.

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

Children with disability or additional needs enrolled in a preschool and aged 3 to school age are eligible for PDSP child-focused 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.

Children eligible for child-focused targeted support may include, but are not restricted to, those with the following types of disability:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Developmental delay
- Intellectual disability
- Physical disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Hearing impairment
- Vision impairment

Any of the following are criteria for child-focused targeted support funding:

- **Children with a NDIS Participant ID or Plan Approval ID** automatically qualify for PDSP funding. Documentary evidence will need to be provided as part of the application process. Applications will then be assessed to determine the appropriate level of funding for the child.
- **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. To support the child's eligibility, a report indicating an assessment date of no more than 15 months prior to the submission of the application must be provided.
- **Severe chronic health conditions:** These include 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. To support the child's eligibility, a report indicating an assessment date of no more than 15 months prior to the submission of the application must be provided.

7.3 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. The level of support

received will depend on the information provided in the application.

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 determining 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. There are three levels of funding. Details are set out in TABLE 1 – PDSP Funding Levels.

TABLE 1 – PDSP Funding Levels

	Level 1 Funding (\$45 per day support)	Level 2 Funding (\$90 per day support)	Level 3 Funding (\$120 per day support)*
Level of support	<p>A child may be eligible for level 1 funding if they require infrequent support to ensure they are engaged at the same level as their peers.</p> <p>The majority of children may receive this level of funding.</p>	<p>A child may be eligible for level 2 funding if they require frequent support to participate in preschool and engage at the same level as their peers and remain safe.</p>	<p>Children may be eligible for level 3 funding if they require constant and intensive support to attend preschool and engage at the same level as their peers.</p> <p>It is expected that only a very small number of children will be eligible for this level of funding.</p>
Adjustments required to the environment, and teaching strategies to support meaningful participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The use of keyword 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. 	<p>Supporting the child's meaningful participation will involve making substantial adjustments to the environment and teaching strategies.</p> <p>In addition to the level 1 adjustments, the following may also be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The use of keyword 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. 	<p>Supporting the child's meaningful participation will involve making extensive, systematic, individualised and 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.</p> <p>In addition to adjustments used to support children funded at levels 1 and 2 the following may also be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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.

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

TABLE 1 – PDSP Funding Levels

	Level 1 Funding (\$45 per day support)	Level 2 Funding (\$90 per day support)	Level 3 Funding (\$120 per day support)*
Support provided for the child	<p>May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The employment of additional staff to improve staff/child ratios in the daily activities and routines, and provide intermittent support throughout the day ▪ Programming for small group experiences to target specific skills ▪ Staff professional learning related to the needs of funded children. 	<p>May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 ▪ The purchase of specialised equipment or advice to enhance educational outcomes. 	<p>May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The employment of 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 ▪ The purchase or hire of specialised equipment.
Behavioural indicators for a child receiving this level of funding	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 ▪ may be toilet trained or toilet timed, and may be able to dress or undress self. 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 ▪ 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. 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ may have an NDIS Plan Approval ID or NDIS Participant ID ▪ 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.
Supporting documentation required	<p>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.</p> <p>Where appropriate, evidence of NDIS Plan Approval ID or NDIS Participant ID.</p>	<p>A written diagnosis and/or developmental assessment from a relevant specialist.</p> <p>Where appropriate, evidence of NDIS Plan Approval ID or NDIS Participant ID.</p>	<p>A written diagnosis and/or developmental assessment from two specialists.</p> <p>Where appropriate, evidence of NDIS Plan Approval ID or NDIS Participant ID.</p>

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

TABLE 1 – PDSP Funding Levels

	Level 1 Funding (\$45 per day support)	Level 2 Funding (\$90 per day support)	Level 3 Funding (\$120 per day support)*
<p>Approved professional to provide relevant documentation For electronic documentation, the signature block must include the relevant professional qualification.</p>	<p>For children who have either a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ moderate to severe language delay or disorder, a report from a speech pathologist or relevant medical specialist, or ■ severe behaviour and social emotional disability. <p>A report from a psychologist, paediatrician or relevant specialist, indicating an assessment date of no more than 15 months prior to the submission of the application, must be provided.</p> <p>Relevant professionals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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. 	<p>For children who have either a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ moderate to severe language delay or disorder, a report from a speech pathologist or relevant medical specialist, or ■ severe behaviour and social emotional disability. <p>A report from a psychologist, paediatrician or relevant specialist, indicating an assessment date of no more than 15 months prior to the submission of the application, must be provided.</p> <p>The following professionals may make a diagnosis for specific disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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 impairment: 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. 	<p>See above section on supporting documentation required.</p>

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

7.4 Individual Learning Plans

An Individual Learning Plan must be developed for each child approved for level 1, 2 and 3 child-focused targeted support.

It is a written document that details what the preschool will do for the child. It should be considered a “living” document to help preschools record each child’s developmental progress.

The Individual Learning Plan:

- Must be developed in consultation and agreement with the child’s parents or carers
- Does not need to be lengthy or complex
- May be updated regularly
- Must be reviewed every six months.

In the Individual Learning Plan, preschools can document their consultation with the child’s family and the reasonable adjustments being made to support the child.

In some cases, an Individual Learning Plan 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 Individual Learning Plan 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 Individual Learning Plan and report to Northcott and the department, whether or not goals have been met as part of the compliance report process.

7.5 Parent/carer certification

A preschool can only apply for child-focused targeted support with the written agreement of the child’s parent and/or carer. The parent’s and/or carer’s 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.

8. Application process

8.1 Lodging an application

Applications will be through two funding rounds for 2017 and are set out in TABLE 2 – Funding rounds.

- Main round applications will open on 10 October 2016 and close on 4 November 2016 and be made through the PDSP portal.
- Second round applications will open on 26 April 2017 and close on 24 May 2017 through the PDSP portal.
- Applications made in the second round for children who enrolled in Term 1 2017 will be backdated to the date of first enrolment.

- For any child to be eligible for funding in 2017, an application must be submitted in either October 2016 or April 2017, regardless of whether they are currently receiving PDSP funding or not.

Preschools must complete an application for each child seeking child-focused targeted support, including all relevant attachments, parental consent and supporting documentation when funding for the child is first sought.

Northcott will assess applications and determine funding. Where required, Northcott may seek further information from preschools about their applications. Preschools will be notified via email of the outcome of their application.

	Application opening date	Application closing date	First payment instalment	Second payment instalment
Main funding round	10 October 2016	04 November 2016	Week 2 of Term 1 2017	Week 2 of Term 3 2017
Second funding round	26 April 2017	24 May 2017	Week 2 of Term 3 2017	Not applicable

When applications are lodged, preschools may be invited to indicate their willingness to participate in Northcott's evaluation of the PDSP. This will not affect funding application outcomes.

8.2 Emergency funding

In certain situations, Northcott has the discretion to consider applications outside the two 2017 funding rounds for children whose developmental needs place them at significant risk and disadvantage in the preschool setting.

Emergency funding may be provided for a child who may or may not have a diagnosis and needs significant additional support and supervision to participate in the preschool program.

This may include circumstances where:

- there is an extended delay to obtain the required diagnosis
- the safety of the child, other children or staff at the preschool is a concern and
- where there are no other support services in the local community that could provide expertise and support to include the child in the preschool program.

As a minimum threshold, a child receiving emergency funding will require verbal and physical support to remain on task.

To be eligible for emergency funding, a child may also:

- 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

- have social skills that are not age appropriate, may be aggressive to peers, have poor emotional regulation
- engage in parallel or solitary play and may be self-directed and prefer own agenda
- not be aware of danger and may require high levels of supervision to remain safe
- not be toilet trained, can undress self, but needs help with dressing
- have difficulties transitioning between activities and need adult support.

Approved emergency funding will apply between the date of the child's enrolment, and the second funding round to those emergency funding applications which may or may not have a diagnosis.

When a diagnosis is provided, either in or after the second round, Northcott assesses the appropriate level of funding to be allocated for the remainder of the year.

Applications for emergency funding cannot be applied for during the main funding round.

For emergency funding applications submitted after the second round, the funding would apply for the period to the end of Term 4 to those emergency applications which may or may not have a diagnosis.

Emergency applications can be submitted up until the first week of Term 4. Eligible services must contact Northcott by telephone to discuss any application for emergency funding.

Payments for emergency funding applications will be made as soon as possible after the application is approved.

9. Requirements for organisations

Where preschools receive child-focused targeted support for an individual child, those funds must be used to support that child. In contrast, funds provided through the Universal 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.

9.1 Use of child-focused 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 NDIS.

9.2 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 have obligations, under their funding agreement with the department, to submit an annual financial acquittal to the department certifying that funds have been spent in accordance with the program guidelines. A copy of the annual financial acquittal should also be submitted to Northcott.

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 NDIS
- Purchase support that can be provided under alternative funding.

10. Accountability and reporting requirements for preschools

Preschools are required to report to the department on progress for each child receiving child-focused targeted support as requested. This will include a statement for each funded child that:

- An Individual Learning Plan 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.

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.

Preschools are required to provide an annual acquittal to the department consistent with the preschool's funding agreement.

The acquittal will include both the Universal Disability Loading and child-focused targeted support funding received, listing each child funded. The annual acquittal will:

- Identify unspent funds for return to the department
- 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. 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>

12. Scholarships for preschool teachers

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.

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.

To satisfy the conditions of award, applicants must:

- Enrol in an approved post-graduate Special Education course
- Commit to working in a NSW community preschool for a minimum of 12 months (full-time equivalent) within 3 years of completing their course.

Eligible preschool teachers must submit applications by mid-October 2017, and applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by mid-December 2017.

Applicants are responsible for enrolling in their chosen course, payment of course fees and providing the department with proof of enrolment in order to be reimbursed.

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