

# GUIDELINES

## ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT AND PRIORITY ENROLMENT

Responsibility of:	School Support Services	FILE2015/90
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Target Audience:	Corporate and school staff, parents and community	

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Enrolment policy and the associated guidelines](#).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

All Northern Territory (NT) government schools, excluding distance education centres, must actively manage student enrolments consistent with these guidelines to ensure sufficient operational capacity is reserved for students living in the school's priority enrolment area.

These guidelines are aligned with the provisions established under sections 77, 78 and 79 of the [Education Act](#) and section 17 of the [Education Regulations](#).

### 2. DEFINITIONS

**Contingency** for the purpose of this policy is a percentage of the school's operational capacity that is set aside for students residing in the school's priority enrolment area. The contingency is established and applied as part of a school's Enrolment Management Plan and is to be set at a minimum of five per cent.

**Daily care and control of a child (in regards to the definition of parent)** refers to a person who is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the day-to-day care and control of the child.

**Eligible** refers to children who:

- (a) have Australian citizenship, permanent residency or hold a relevant visa; and
- (b) reside in the NT; and
- (c) meet the age of entry requirements for either;
  - pre-compulsory school age, or
  - compulsory school age or compulsory participation phase age requirements (between the ages of 6 and 17); or
- (d) meet the mature age enrolment requirements
- (e) have not been expelled by the Minister (refer to the [Expulsion guidelines](#)).

**Enrolment Management Plan** is developed when a school is approaching or has reached eighty-five per cent of its operational capacity.

**Operational capacity** is the total number of students that the school facilities and infrastructure can support, taking into consideration all programs offered by the school, while maximising the effective use of teaching, learning and ancillary spaces. It is calculated using a formula and periodically reviewed and agreed to by the principal.

**Parent** signifies a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition.

**Parental responsibility (in regards to the definition of parent)** refers to a person who has:

- (a) daily care and control of the child, or
- (b) is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the long-term care and development of the child, or
- (c) has daily care and control of the child and the entitlement and responsibilities at (b) and includes a person who has been given the above responsibilities under another state or territory law.

**Priority enrolment area** is the geographical area surrounding a school that includes residential properties. Children residing within the priority enrolment area have priority of placement within the school over children who live outside the priority enrolment area.

**Proof of residence** is required to support an application for enrolment when a school has an Enrolment Management Plan in force. Proof of residence must display the actual residential address of the student (e.g. a parent's driver's licence, rental agreement or a utility bill). A document indicating a post office box is not considered adequate proof of residence.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Chief Executive (or delegate)** will:

- determine and review priority enrolment areas
- provide written notice to the principal of any amendment to a schools priority enrolment area
- approve Enrolment Management Plans for independent public schools.

**Executive Directors** will:

- approve Enrolment Management Plans
- note Enrolment Management Plans for independent public schools.

**Regional Directors** will:

- ensure principals adhere to the requirements of these guidelines
- maintain an awareness of school infrastructure demands in their region and assist principals to develop Enrolment Management Plans as required
- note Enrolment Management Plans for schools, including independent public schools
- review priority enrolment decisions where an appeal is submitted.

**School Operations (North/South)** will:

- maintain priority enrolment area maps and making these available to schools and the public.

**Principals will:**

- manage enrolments within their school to ensure sufficient operational capacity is available for eligible students who live within the priority enrolment area
- develop and implement an approved Enrolment Management Plan when the school reaches eighty-five per cent operational capacity.

**Senior Director Planning and Infrastructure will:**

- assist principals to develop Enrolment Management Plans as required
- collaborate with School Education Division and principals to develop infrastructure solutions for schools as required
- lead the review of the operational capacity of all NT government schools as directed by the Chief Executive.

## **4. GUIDELINES**

### **4.1 Priority enrolment areas**

#### **(a) Establishment of priority enrolment areas**

In general, the priority enrolment area for a middle school is determined by allocating primary schools to an associated middle school. These middle schools in turn, form the basis of a priority enrolment area for associated senior secondary colleges.

A priority enrolment area is determined by the Chief Executive through a process involving consultation between the School Education Division, Performance and Data Management, and Planning and Infrastructure business units.

#### **(b) Changes to the priority enrolment areas**

Priority enrolment areas are reviewed regularly and may be altered by the Chief Executive to ensure that school infrastructure resources are used efficiently. Enrolment trends and forecast population trends are considered against the operational capacity of schools to guide a review of priority enrolment areas. If changes are proposed, these are reviewed by the Regional Director with the relevant principal and school representative body of an affected school.

The Chief Executive approves any changes to a school's priority enrolment area and notification must be placed on the department website. As there is potential for families to be adversely impacted by a change in the priority enrolment area, the department and the relevant principals will ensure the affected community is notified well in advance of the change and has the opportunity to discuss their options.

#### **(c) Basic principles**

- No eligible child will be denied enrolment at their local school, providing they reside within the school priority enrolment area.
- Parents may apply to enrol their child in any school of their choice; however, a school can only accept an application for enrolment from a student residing outside of the priority enrolment area if the school has the operational capacity to accommodate that enrolment.
- A principal may decline an application for enrolment for a child living outside the school's priority enrolment area at any time provided that the decision is transparent and made without discrimination or prejudice.

## DoE Guidelines: *Enrolment Management and Priority Enrolment*

- Acceptance of an application for a preschool enrolment for a child who lives outside the priority enrolment area does not guarantee subsequent enrolment for that child, or their siblings, at the primary school in that priority enrolment area.
- Acceptance of an application for enrolment of a child into a primary school outside their priority enrolment area does not guarantee enrolment at the middle or senior school in the same priority enrolment area for that child or their siblings.
- Once a child has been enrolled in a school, that child is entitled to complete the remaining years of their primary/middle/secondary education at that school.

### **(d) Enrolling students from outside the priority enrolment area**

A school may accept students from outside its priority enrolment area if it has current and future capacity to do so. If a school is approaching or has reached eighty-five per cent of its operational capacity, then the school must carefully consider the approval of applications for enrolment from students who reside outside the priority enrolment area in line with its Enrolment Management Plan.

Schools will establish transparent criteria to assess out-of-priority enrolment area enrolments. The criteria might include:

- whether the student currently attends a school in the local priority enrolment area
- if the student is the sibling of a current student/s at the school
- the student's suitability for enrolment in a specialised program offered by the school
- individual year level and subject level operational capacity.

This criteria will form part of the school's Enrolment Management Plan, which provides the grounds on which out-of-priority enrolment area enrolments will be evaluated/accepted. The assessment criteria will be applied consistently to all applications.

Students who apply for enrolment from outside the priority enrolment area may be placed on a waiting list. Waiting lists are current for one year and should reflect realistic expectations of potential vacancies.

Parents of unsuccessful applicants will be provided with an explanation in writing, should they request it, and be given the opportunity to discuss the decision with the principal should they desire.

Parents will be informed that students who have been accepted into a school outside their priority enrolment area are not guaranteed subsequent enrolment in the primary, middle or senior school in that priority enrolment area.

### **(e) Appeals**

Parents may appeal a principal's decision to not accept their child into an out-of-priority enrolment area school. Parents should provide claims against the criteria underpinning the principal's decision and/or outlined in the school's Enrolment Management Plan supporting their case for enrolment.

The appeal should be lodged with the relevant Regional Director or emailed to [schoolops.det@nt.gov.au](mailto:schoolops.det@nt.gov.au) within 10 working days of the decision being made by the principal.

The Regional Director will review the decision to determine whether, in the first instance, there is capacity available at that school, and secondly, that the stated criteria contained in the school's Enrolment Management Plan have been applied fairly.

The Regional Director must give reasons for their decision in writing. The decision of the Regional Director is final.

## **4.2 Enrolment management**

### **(a) Enrolment management strategies**

All schools must manage enrolments to ensure sufficient operational capacity is available for eligible students who live within the priority enrolment area. Enrolment management strategies that schools will employ on an ongoing basis include:

- ensuring an even distribution of students across all year levels while maintaining class size targets
- ensuring that the starting cohort enrolment numbers (e.g. preschool or Transition enrolments) do not increase to the extent that the overall capacity of the school is exceeded for the life of the cohort
- assessing infrastructure capacity and manage processes to acquire necessary resources and facilities to accommodate eligible students
- maintaining accurate and complete enrolment records and data (refer to the [Enrolment procedures](#))
- monitoring enrolment trends and subject/curriculum demands in the school.

### **(b) Enrolment Management Plan**

Where a school is approaching, or has reached eighty-five per cent of its operational capacity the principal must advise its Regional Director and develop an Enrolment Management Plan within 10 working days.

Alternatively, the Planning and Infrastructure business unit may recognise that a school is approaching its operational capacity and request through the Regional Director that the school develop an Enrolment Management Plan.

The Enrolment Management Plan will outline:

- the school's priority enrolment area
- the school's enrolment statistics, including the number of enrolled students residing within and outside of the school's priority enrolment area
- specialised programs delivered by the school, their current capacity for enrolments and the criteria for accepting students into the programs
- the criteria for assessing out-of-priority enrolment area applications
- the school's contingency for priority enrolment area students. This must be a minimum of five per cent of the school's operational capacity and will be based on historical data, enrolment fluctuations and projected population trends for the area. Places in the contingency are not to be offered to out-of-priority enrolment area students with the exception of:
  - the siblings of students with disabilities who are attending a Special Centre at the school as there is no such facility in the student's priority enrolment area (refer to the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)).
  - exceptional circumstances evaluated on a case by case basis.

## DoE Guidelines: *Enrolment Management and Priority Enrolment*

- additional enrolment management strategies to be applied by the school which will include:
  - strict adherence to the priority enrolment area assessment criteria for the acceptance of future enrolments
  - a requirement that adequate proof of residence is provided with an application for enrolment
  - advising families of future preschool students who reside outside of the priority enrolment area that, although their child attends the preschool, they may not be able to enrol in the school for Transition and beyond
  - increasing capacity through the utilisation of classroom space to maximise the use of available infrastructure. Consideration of sharing classroom space with other school facilities should be given; for example, Outside School Hours Care service, dedicated music room, stage/drama area.

The following diagram provides a summary of the enrolment management requirements for schools.

Figure 1- Enrolment management requirements of schools

No enrolment restrictions	<b>School operational capacity below 85%</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>No enrolment restrictions imposed</b></p> <p>Principals may approve or decline enrolment applications for students residing outside the priority enrolment area provided decisions are made in a transparent manner and without discrimination or prejudice.</p> <p>Principals will monitor enrolment numbers to ensure there is sufficient operational capacity to cater to students residing in the priority enrolment area.</p>
Enrolment Management Plan	<b>School operational capacity at 85% – 95%</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority enrolment area assessment criteria imposed</b></p> <p>All enrolment applications for students residing outside of the priority enrolment area will be assessed using the criteria outlined in the Enrolment Management Plan.</p>
	<b>School operational capacity approaching 95%</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Enrolment contingency imposed</b></p> <p>No enrolment applications are to be accepted from out-of-priority enrolment area students (see section 4.2 (b)).</p>

The principal will work in conjunction with the Regional Director, and if required the Senior Director Planning and Infrastructure, to develop the Enrolment Management Plan. Enrolment Management Plans are approved by the Executive Director (North/South) and published on the department website and the relevant school's web page.

Independent public school principals may also choose to consult with the Regional Director and or Senior Director Planning and Infrastructure to develop the Enrolment Management Plan.

Regional Directors and Executive Directors are required to note Enrolment Management Plans that have been approved by the Chief Executive, or delegate, for independent public schools.

An Enrolment Management Plan will remain in force until enrolments fall to seventy-five per cent, or below, operational capacity. The plan is to be reviewed annually or more frequently if required to reflect a significant change in enrolments and/or the operational capacity of the school.

Attachment A provides a template for an Enrolment Management Plan.

### **4.3 Request for additional school infrastructure**

If monitoring of the school's enrolment numbers determines that enrolment pressure is localised and not the result of out-of-priority area enrolments, then the school may initiate a request for additional school infrastructure. The principal will submit a request through the Regional Director to the Senior Director Planning and Infrastructure.

The department will consider provisions for additional facilities only if they are required to meet increased enrolments from within the priority enrolment area. No additional accommodation (permanent or demountable) will be provided to cater for increased enrolments resulting from non-local placements.

Acknowledging that not every school has a preschool, to cater for an effectively larger priority enrolment area (i.e. the preschool caters to its own school's priority enrolment area plus the nearest school without a preschool), additional school infrastructure may be provided for the effectively larger priority enrolment area.

The School Education Division, Planning and Infrastructure business unit and principals will work collaboratively to ensure a well-planned and appropriate infrastructure solution is provided, be it permanent or transportable facilities.

## **5. ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Enrolment Management Plan template