

Enrolment management and priority enrolment – guidelines

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1. Introduction

All Northern Territory 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 2015* and section 17 of the *Education Regulations 2015*.

2. Guidelines

2.1. Priority enrolment areas

2.1.1. 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 School Operations, Strategic Policy, Projects and Performance, and Infrastructure Planning and Investments business units.

2.1.2. Changes to 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 Senior Director Education 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.

2.1.3. Basic principles

- No eligible child will be denied enrolment at their 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.
- 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 or secondary education at that school.

2.1.4. 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 85% 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:

- if the student is the sibling of a current student 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.

These criteria will form part of the school's Enrolment management plan, which provides the grounds on which out of priority enrolment area enrolment applications will be evaluated. 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.

2.1.5. 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 or outlined in the school's Enrolment management plan supporting their case for enrolment.

The appeal should be lodged with the relevant Senior Director Education within 10 working days of the decision being made by the principal.

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

2.2. Enrolment management

2.2.1. Enrolment management

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 of enrolment numbers, such as 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 managing 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 or curriculum demands in the school.

2.2.2. Enrolment management plan

Where a school is approaching or has reached 85% of its operational capacity, the principal must advise their Senior Director Education and develop an Enrolment management plan within 10 working days.

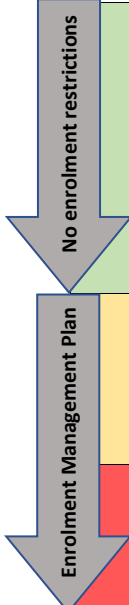
Alternatively, the Infrastructure Planning and Investments business unit may recognise that a school is approaching its operational capacity and request through the Senior Director Education that the school develop an Enrolment management plan.

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 area enrolment applications
- the school's contingency for priority enrolment area students. This must be a minimum of 5% of the school's operational capacity and will be based on historical data, enrolment fluctuations and projected population trends. 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 an Inclusive Centre or annexe at the school as there is no such facility in the student's priority enrolment area, refer to the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
 - exceptional circumstances evaluated on a case by case basis
- 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 accepted 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 primary 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, such as an outside school hours care service or a dedicated music room, stage or drama area.

Figure 1 – Summary of enrolment management requirements for schools

	School operational capacity below 85%	No enrolment restrictions imposed 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. Principals will monitor enrolment numbers to ensure there is sufficient operational capacity to cater to students residing in the priority enrolment area.
	School operational capacity at 85% - 95%	Priority enrolment area assessment criteria imposed All enrolment applications for students residing outside of the priority enrolment area will be assessed using the criteria outlined in the Enrolment Management Plan.
	School operational capacity approaching 95%	Enrolment contingency imposed No enrolment applications are to be accepted from out of priority enrolment area students (see section 4.2)

The principal will work in conjunction with their Senior Director Education and if required, the Senior Director Infrastructure Planning and Investments, to develop the Enrolment management plan. Enrolment management plans are approved by Senior Directors Education and published on the relevant school's web page.

Independent public school principals may also choose to consult with their Senior Director Education to develop the Enrolment management plan. Senior Directors Education and the Deputy Chief Executive Regional Services are required to endorse Enrolment management plans for independent public schools for approval by the Chief Executive.

An Enrolment management plan will remain in force until enrolments fall to 75% or below operational capacity. The plan is to be reviewed annually or more frequently if required to reflect a significant change in enrolments or the operational capacity of the school.

A template for an Enrolment management plan can be found on eLearn.

2.3. 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 Senior Director Education to the Senior Director Infrastructure Planning and Investments.

The department will consider provisions for additional facilities only if they are required to meet increased enrolments from within a school's priority enrolment area. No additional accommodation, permanent or transportable, will be provided to cater for increased enrolments resulting from non-priority area placements.

Acknowledging that not every school has a preschool, in order to cater for an effectively larger priority enrolment area, such as when 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.

Senior Directors Education, the Infrastructure Planning and Investments business unit and principals will work collaboratively to ensure a well planned and appropriate infrastructure solution is provided, be it permanent or transportable facilities.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. Chief Executive

The Chief Executive will:

- determine and review priority enrolment areas
- provide written notice to the principal of any amendment to a school's priority enrolment area
- approve Enrolment management plans for independent public schools.

3.2. Deputy Chief Executive Regional Services

The Deputy Chief Executive Regional Services will:

- endorse Enrolment management plans for independent public schools.

3.3. Senior Directors Education

Senior Directors Education 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
- review priority enrolment decisions where an appeal is submitted
- endorse Enrolment management plans for independent public schools
- approve Enrolment management plans for government schools.

3.4. School Operations

School Operations will:

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

3.5. Principals

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 85% operational capacity.

3.6. Senior Director Infrastructure Planning and Investments

The Senior Director Infrastructure Planning and Investments will:

- collaborate with the relevant Senior Director Education and principals to develop infrastructure solutions for schools as required
- lead the review of the operational capacity of all NT government schools.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Contingency	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 5%.
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	Children who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have Australian citizenship, permanent residency or hold a relevant visa • reside in the NT • meet the age of entry requirements for either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-compulsory school age - compulsory school age or compulsory participation phase age requirements between the ages of 6 and 17 years • meet the mature age enrolment requirements • have not been expelled by the Minister, refer to the Expulsion guidelines.
Enrolment management plan	Developed when a school is approaching or has reached 85% of its operational capacity.
Operational capacity	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	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.

Term	Definition
Parental responsibility	A person who has: (a) daily care and control of the child (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	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	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 such as a current telephone bill, power bill or rental agreement. A document indicating a post office box is not considered adequate proof of residence.

5. Related legislation, policy and documents

5.1. Legislation

- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth) - <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>
- Education Act 2015 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>
- Education Regulations 2015 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-REGULATIONS-2015>

5.2. Policy and documents

- Enrolment policy, guidelines and procedures - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Expulsion guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>
- Enrolment management plan template - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>

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