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# Early Years Management in Victorian Sessional Kindergartens

**Tabled 15 October 2020**



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## Objective

This audit looked at whether the Department of Education and Training (or DET) has supported organisations managing sessional kindergartens to meet the outcomes of the Early Years Management Policy Framework (or EYM Policy Framework).

## Who and what we looked at

We examined DET and how it has planned and implemented the EYM Policy Framework. We also assessed how it supports and monitors organisations that deliver Early Years Management services (or EYM organisations).

We included six EYM organisations in this audit made up of five not-for-profit organisations and one local council. We examined a further two local councils that support the delivery of EYM services in their areas, but do not deliver these services.

We refer to those delivering EYM services as the 'audited EYM organisations'.

## Conclusion

DET and the audited EYM organisations have made progress in implementing the EYM Policy Framework.

However, DET's support has not effectively helped EYM organisations to meet the policy's intended outcomes.

Due to its limited performance monitoring, DET does not know if EYM organisations are delivering services in line with the policy framework's outcomes.

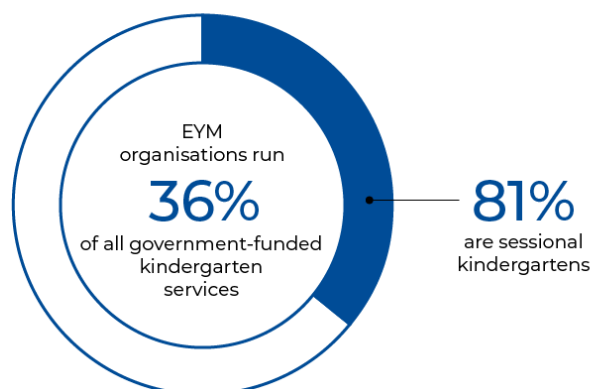
Government funded kindergarten services In 2019, the Victorian Government provided \$406.8 million in funding to kindergarten services. It also provided \$10 million in EYM grants to EYM organisations.

As the accountable contract manager, DET holds service agreements with EYM organisations. Currently, EYM organisations run 36 per cent of all government-funded kindergarten services and 81 per cent of these are sessional kindergartens.

## The EYM Policy Framework

DET developed the EYM Policy Framework in 2016. The policy's vision is for Early Years Management to be a leading platform that will improve outcomes for all young children through world-class and accessible kindergarten services.

## Government funded kindergarten services



DET developed an Outcomes and Performance Framework, which has five outcomes and 31 performance measures, to help it monitor EYM organisations' performance against the policy framework.

### Issue 1: Performance framework not sufficiently developed

DET released its Outcomes and Performance Framework in draft and its measures were sample measures.

DET planned to further develop the framework as its use matured in consultation with the EYM sector. However, DET has not used or developed the framework as it intended.

DET has since started drafting a new performance framework. It has not finalised this yet though.

### Issue 2: Weaknesses in the design of performance measures and a lack of performance monitoring

In its existing performance framework:

- DET has not established clear and practical performance measures for each of the EYM policy framework's \ outcomes.
- The measures are not supported by enough information to enable DET to assess performance at an organisational, regional or statewide level.
- The design of some measures does not enable a fair assessment of performance.
- DET also does not require EYM organisations to report on their performance against the measures. The routine reporting that EYM organisations do only aligns with a limited section of the draft performance framework.

### Issue 3: The view of gaps and challenges is not comprehensive

DET's limited performance monitoring has prevented it from comprehensively understanding the challenges that EYM organisations face to meet the EYM policy framework's outcomes.

While DET provides a range of financial and non-financial support to EYM organisations, it cannot demonstrate that this effectively addresses the gaps and challenges that they experience.

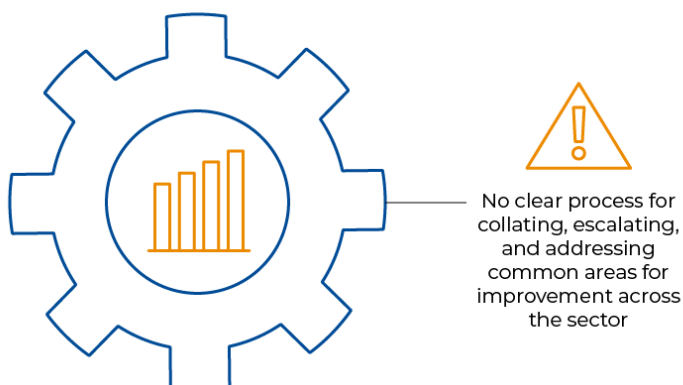
### Issue 4: Limitations in continuous improvement processes

DET has a continuous improvement process for individual EYM organisations.

However, DET does not have a clear process for collating, escalating, and addressing common areas for improvement across the sector.

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## Issue 4: Limitations in continuous improvement processes



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DET also does not promote knowledge sharing across the sector and does not report on the data and information it routinely collects from EYM organisations.

### Recommendations

We made 5 recommendations for DET to:

- strengthen its performance monitoring framework
- ensure that its service agreements with EYM organisations clearly define their performance expectations
- improve its monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
- routinely assess if its support is addressing EYM program gaps and challenges
- and improve its continuous improvement processes.

For further information please view the full report on our website [www.audit.vic.gov.au](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au).