1. Under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education 2016-2017 (NP UAECE), the Queensland Government committed to ensuring all children have the opportunity to access kindergarten in the year before school. While more than 95% of Queensland children attend kindergarten, access for children in remote communities remains a challenge, with participation estimated to be approximately 83% in 2015.
2. While the distance kindergarten program, eKindy, has proven to be a popular choice for families in rural and remote areas, stakeholders including the Isolated Children’s Parents Association have reported that this is not a solution for all families, particularly for those living in drought stricken areas.
3. In response to these barriers, a trial of kindergarten delivered from 11 prescribed state schools in remote communities commenced in Term 2, 2016.
4. An independent impact assessment of the Pilot was commissioned and the August 2016 interim impact assessment report noted early indications of a positive impact on young children, other students and their families. The interim impact assessment report also noted that the quality of the kindergarten program could be improved through some modificiations to the model, including targeted professional development.
5. The Pilot is considered by participating communities as a great advance on eKindy as it provides children with an opportunity for socialisation; prepares them for a smooth transition to Prep; and meets the needs of working rural and remote families.
6. Cabinet approved expansion of the Remote Kindergarten Pilot in 2017 to additional state schools to enable improvements recommended by the interim impact assessment report to be trialled.
7. *Attachments*
* Nil.