



Kindergarten Central Registration Enrolment Scheme Policy

Purpose

Kindergartens provide an environment in which children's development can be stimulated and encouraged by qualified early childhood teachers. This fosters both educational and social development. International and national research shows that the benefits of quality early childhood educational programs apply for school and for life.

The benefits of a quality kindergarten program on the development of young children have been well documented, and Baw Baw Shire Council is committed to supporting access to kindergarten for all eligible children.

There are a range of strategies used by Council staff to do this, including: Working closely with the managers and staff of local kindergartens to ensure clear and consistent communication to families about the registration and enrolment process and to identify availability of kindergarten places across the municipality.

Definitions

The terms Kindergarten, Early Learning Centre and Preschool used interchangeably throughout this document.

ACECQA– Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

Allocation Criteria– The criteria for the assigning of kindergarten places to participating kindergartens within the CRES.

Allocation Priority– Allocation criteria assigned to applicants for whom protective concerns have been identified and substantiated e.g. children and/or families who are experiencing vulnerabilities and/or additional needs.

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Allocation Process– The process for the assigning of kindergarten places to participating kindergarten programs within the CRES.

Application Form– The form for parents/guardians to complete to enroll their child/ren in a funded kindergarten participating in CRES.

Ballot– A system in which applicants of equal ranking are selected using a random selection process.

CRES– The Central Enrolment Registration Scheme for Kindergartens.

Child FIRST/Orange Door– Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Team is a community-based referral point into family service.

Children with Additional Needs– Children whose development or physical condition requires specialist support:

- Within the kindergarten
- As defined by a medical assessment
- As defined by DET assessment (as per Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) Additional Needs Policy)

Committee/Board of Management– A volunteer committee of parents/guardians responsible for the day-to day management of a kindergarten service.

DE– Department of Education. The Victorian regulatory authority primarily responsible for the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services in Victoria.

Deferral– Is where a parent/guardian chooses to delay an eligible child/ren's start to funded kindergarten. Once the child commences the kindergarten program, this is considered their funded year of kindergarten. Families with children born between January and April can choose which year to start. If your child will turn 6 in late December (between the last day of the school year and 31 December), they can attend Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in that year and attend school the following year. [Sending your child to kinder | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au)

If the child/ren's birth date falls outside of the deferral months:

- Eligible for funded 3-year-old kindergarten the year they are three years.
- Eligible for funded 4-year-old kindergarten the year they are four years.

ELAA– Early Learning Association Australia.

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EYLF– Early Years Learning Framework – Curriculum framework to guide the development of the educational program for children.

Early Years Management– Brings individual kindergarten services together under a single employer. The major responsibilities of early years managers are management and employment of staff, being the Approved Provider and ensuring compliance with licensing requirements, responsibility for the quality of the program through the management and support of the kindergarten staff and financial management for all their services.

Early Start Kindergarten– A Department of Education program that provides 15 hours of free kindergarten to eligible three-year-old children where programs are delivered by a qualified teacher.

Eligible Child– A child who is eligible apply for a place in a participating kindergarten.

Eligible Concession Card– For the purposes of kindergarten applications within the Baw Baw Shire, the following concession cards are considered eligible for a reduction of application fees:

- the child individually holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following:
 - a Commonwealth Health Care Card
 - a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
 - a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card
 - Refugee visa (subclass 200)
 - In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
 - Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
 - Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
 - Protection visa (subclass 866)
 - Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)
 - Woman at risk visa (subclass 204)
 - Bridging visas A-E

Funded Kindergarten– Also known as three or four-year-old kindergarten.

Kindergarten (also known as Preschool or Early Learning)– Kindergarten is a universal early childhood program funded by the Victorian Government for children in the two years prior to commencing primary school.

National Quality Framework– Derived from the National Legislative Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, the National Quality Framework lists the National Standards and sets the national benchmark for the assessment of quality in education and care services.

No Jab No Play–The Victorian Government Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 mandates childhood education and care services cannot confirm enrolment of a child unless there is documentation showing the child:

- Is fully vaccinated
- In on a recognised catch-up schedule
- Has a medical reason not to be vaccinated
 - Conscientious objection to vaccination is not an exemption

Protective Services– A government agency that responds to reports of child abuse or neglect.

Second Year Enrolment– A child is eligible for a second year of funded kindergarten four-year-old if the family and teacher assess the child as having delay in at least two outcome areas of learning and development detailed in the VEYLDF and he or she will benefit from a second year of kindergarten.

VEYLDF– Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework – Curriculum framework to guide the development of the educational program for children.

Scope

This policy applies to kindergarten service providers, who participate in the Central Registration Enrolment Scheme (CRES) in Baw Baw Shire. This policy also applies to all parents/guardians who wish to enrol their child/ren in a funded kindergarten program participating in the CRES.

Legislative context

In Victoria, children are eligible for two funded years of kindergarten in the year prior to school entry. Funding by the State Government is through the Department of Education (DE). In special circumstances the State Government may fund a second year of four-year-old kindergarten. Each application for second year funding is assessed individually. Full details can be found '[Does my child need a second year of kindergarten? | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au)'

This Policy is underpinned by the following legislation and policy documents:

The National Legislative Framework, which is established through an applied laws system and consists of:

- National Quality Framework
- Education and Care Services National Law (2010)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)
- National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Aged Care
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education

Commonwealth legislation and related documents:

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Disability and Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

State legislation and related documents:

- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Privacy and Data Collection Act 2014*
- *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *The Victorian Kindergarten Guide 2023*
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*
- *No Jab No Play – Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Municipal Early Years Plan 2019–2023*

Policy Principles

Eligibility

1. All children are eligible to attend funded kindergarten program:
 - 15 hours of funded four-year old kindergarten will be offered prior to school entry (vulnerable and Aboriginal children will be eligible for 16 hours of funded Kindergarten by 2026 and all children will have access to 30 hours by 2030)
 - 5 hours of three-year- old kindergarten will be offered increasing to 15 hours by 2029
2. Children are eligible to attend a funded kindergarten program if they have turned three or four by 30 April in the year of attendance. Children must be three years of age before they can commence.
3. Children are eligible to apply for funded programs the year prior to the child's attendance year. Applications will open from 1st April to 30th June for first round offers each year. Online application forms are available at www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Kinders
4. Children are eligible to apply for a place in one of the participating CRES kindergartens in the Baw Baw municipality if they live in the Baw Baw Shire.
5. Non-residents of the Baw Baw municipality will not be eligible for first round allocations. If places are available after first round allocations, non-residents of Baw Baw may be eligible for placement.

Priority of Access Guidelines for Funded Kindergarten Programs

Priority of access will be given to applications for a kindergarten program participating in CRES the following circumstances:

- Children who have received funding for a second year of kindergarten by meeting the criteria set by the State Government in the "Kindergarten Funding Guide 2023"
- your family has had contact with child protection

- Children with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- Children who have additional needs that require allocation at a particular kindergarten before other children

Additional priorities will be weighted and reviewed annually by the Kindergarten Registration Enrolment Scheme Review Panel. Part of the review process of these factors may include a survey of the community.

Baw Baw Shire's CRES priority of access criteria:

- deferral age children
- residents of Baw Baw
- same aged siblings attending the same funded program
- three-year-old who attended a service and preference the same service for a four-year-old program

Policy detail

Application Process

- Expression of interest for funded programs can be submitted from the time a child turns 18 months old.
- Application forms are available on Council's website and are submitted online.
- Applications need to be complete including, (if required), payment of the application fee via credit card before they can be submitted.

(The application fee will be waived for holders of current concession cards for funded kindergarten programs. Details of the concession card must be uploaded within the application form to claim the concession)

Allocation Process for Kindergarten Places

- Applications received from residents of Baw Baw Shire by 30 June in the year prior to attendance will be included in first round offers.
- Confirmation of receipt of applications will be sent via email as the preferred method. If confirmation is not received within 1 hour of submission contact should be made to the the Kindergarten Enrolment Officer on 56242540.
- An email will be sent offering a kindergarten placement during August for four-year-old applications and September for three-year-old applications. A response to the offer is required within two weeks. If an offer is not accepted and efforts to contact the family are unsuccessful, the application will be cancelled. If applicants will be away during this time, they must ensure that arrangements have been discussed with Council officers.
- After all offers have been processed, the remaining vacancies will be filled by the next eligible applications.
- Placement offers for second round placements will be sent during September and October.
- Non-residence of Baw Baw Shire are eligible for allocation after first round of offers are processed.
- The Council Kindergarten Enrolment Officer will continue to place eligible children until all vacancies are filled.
- Where demand exceeds capacity, a waiting list will be maintained for those not allocated a place, or those not allocated a satisfactory place through the allocation process.

Communication between Kindergartens and Council Staff

Nominated kindergarten representatives and the Council Kindergarten Enrolment Officer must notify each other of cancellations, changes in family contact details and changes in group sessions. Early childhood services should ensure that a supply of enrolment information sheets is always available at their centres. Information will be provided by the Baw Baw Shire Council and is available by contacting the Kindergarten Enrolment Officer.

Appeal Process

Those applicants dissatisfied with the place offered will have 14 days after the closing date for acceptance of offers to lodge an appeal in writing. The appeal process will *not* displace another eligible child who has already been allocated a kindergarten place.

The following process will apply:

- An Appeal Panel will be constituted in any year that appeals are lodged, and the panel will follow this procedure
- Applicants can provide written or verbal material relevant to their appeal either personally or through an advocate in written or verbal form
- Council officers will also provide the panel with relevant written or verbal information regarding the appeal
- On the consideration of the material presented the Appeal Panel may:
 1. Dismiss the appeal
 2. Offer a place at a kindergarten other than the placement against which the appeal has been lodged- where such a place is available
 3. Place the child's name on a waiting list at a kindergarten other than the centre offered to the applicant, without the child forfeiting the original placement offered
- The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final, and the applicant will receive written notification of the outcome of the appeal within 14 days of the panel meeting

The panel will consist of the Manager Family and Children's Services or delegate to be an ex-officio member of the panel plus two impartial community members involved in preschool/kindergarten programs. Members will be appointed by Council officers and must demonstrate no bias, prejudice or advantage to be gained by themselves, or any personal or business associates by being a member of the Appeal Panel.

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