



Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme Policy

Kindergartens provide an environment in which children's development can be stimulated and encouraged by qualified early childhood teachers in the two years before children start school. 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. Research suggests that children who attend kindergarten are more confident, independent and have a smoother transition into primary school.

Baw Baw Shire Council manage the Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) which provides families with a single point to apply for multiple kindergarten services within the Baw Baw Shire.

Purpose

This Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) Policy affirms Councils approach to the coordination of CRES to provide families with best practice recommendation endorsed by the Department of Education (DE) and Municipal Association Victoria (MAV).

Commitment to Child Safety

Council is committed to providing and actively promoting a safe environment for children. Council has zero tolerance towards child abuse, and is committed to protecting the physical, emotional, cultural, and social wellbeing of all children. Council has policies and systems to protect children, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously.

Baw Baw Shire Council acknowledges that children's safety is a whole of community responsibility and is everyone's business.

Governance Principles

Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) specifies the overarching governance principles and supporting principles that Council must adhere to in the performance of its role and functions.

This policy gives effect to the following overarching governance principles outlined in Section 9(2) of the Act:

- Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;
- Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;
- The economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;
- The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;
- Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;
- Collaboration with other Councils, Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;
- The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;
- Regional, state, and national plans and policies are to be considered in making strategic planning and decision making;
- The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

This report also considers the following supporting principles defined in Section 9(3) of the Act:

- The community engagement principles (Community Engagement Policy);
- The public transparency principles (Public Transparency Policy);
- The strategic planning principles;
- The financial management principles; and,
- The service performance principles.

Definitions

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

Word/Term	Definition
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.
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.
Access to Early Learning	Access to Early Learning (AEL) is a targeted early intervention program for three-year-old children from families with complex needs.
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As defined by a medical assessment • As defined by DET assessment (as per Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA)) Additional Needs Policy • As defined by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
CRES	The Central Enrolment and Registration Scheme for Kindergartens.
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 years of kindergarten. Families with children born between January and April can choose which year to start. If your child will turn six 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) If the child/ren's birth date falls outside of the deferral months, they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Eligible for funded three-year-old kindergarten the year they are three years. – Eligible for funded four-year-old kindergarten the year they are four years.
Early Years Management (EYM)	Organisations (Approved Providers) that bring individual kindergarten services together under a single employer. The major responsibilities of early years managers are employment and management of staff, being

	the Approved Provider and ensuring compliance with licensing requirements, ensuring the quality of the program 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 delivered by a qualified teacher.
Eligible Child	A child who is eligible to apply for a place in a participating kindergarten.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is fully vaccinated • Is on a recognised catch-up schedule • Has a medical reason not to be vaccinated Conscientious objection to vaccination is not an exemption.
Non-residents	A non-resident is a person who does not live within the Baw Baw Shire municipal boundary and does not pay Council rates for a property within the Baw Baw Shire municipality.
Pre-Prep	Four-year-old Kindergarten will gradually transition to Pre-Prep. This will begin in Baw Baw Shire from 2026 for Priority of Access children and for all children from 2028.
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 if the family and teacher assess the child as having delays in at least two outcome areas of learning and development detailed in the VEYLDF and they will benefit from a second year of kindergarten. From 2026, children meeting eligibility requirements can access an additional year of either funded three-year-old kindergarten or funded Pre-Prep, but not both.
Service Provider	Early childhood service provider that offers a kindergarten program for children.
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 parents/guardians who wish to complete a kindergarten expression of interest form or apply for kindergarten for their child/ren in a funded kindergarten program participating in the CRES.
- Baw Baw Shire Council provides CRES on behalf of participating kindergartens service providers within the shire.

These include:

Provider	Services
Y Ballarat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drouin (Adam Court) Kindergarten • Drouin Primary Kindergarten • Drouin West Kindergarten • Erica Preschool • Grace Berglund Kindergarten • Longwarry Kindergarten • Mary Beck Kindergarten • Oak Street Kindergarten • Thorpdale and District Kindergarten • Trafalgar Primary Early Learning Centre • Warragul Community Kindergarten • Willow Grove Kindergarten
Bestchance Child and Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warragul Primary Early Learning Centre
Uniting VicTas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Andrew's Uniting Kindergarten Warragul
Yarragon Primary School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarragon Early Learning Centre

- To apply for a kindergarten that is not part of CRES please contact the providers directly. Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of these services.
- The coordination of CRES sits within the Early Years team in the Family and Children's Services Department of Baw Baw Shire Council. If you would like to contact them, please email Early.Years@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au

Key Responsibilities

Who	Key Responsibilities
Baw Baw Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative tasks associated with registration and allocation of kindergarten placement in line with processes in this policy • Review CRES policies and procedures as appropriate • Communicate with Maternal and Child Health Services to provide additional support for children experiencing disadvantage, vulnerability, or other barriers to kindergarten engagement • Communicate with EYM partners of any kindergarten cancellations, changes in family contact details
Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing enrolments and communication with families regarding enrolment information (session times, orientation sessions, information regarding day-to-day operations of the kindergarten, etc.) • Management and operation of the kindergarten • Employment and management of the kindergarten staff • Communicate with Council any kindergarten cancellations, changes in family contact details, or changes to staffing/group sessions
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide all required documents for kindergarten registration and enrolment • Complete registration forms by the date indicated • Respond to offers within the specified time frame • Notify Council/Kindergarten provider of any changes to information, transfer of preferences or withdrawal of kindergarten registration and enrolment

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 kindergarten. Each application for second year funding is assessed individually. Full details can be found at [‘Does-my-child-need-second-year-kindergarten’](#)

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
- Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide 2023
- Victorian State Government DE CRES Practice Guide 2023
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- No Jab No Play – Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Local Government legislation and related documents:

- Baw Baw Shire Council (BBSC) Council Plan 2025–2029
- BBSC Community Vision 2021
- BBSC Municipal Early Years Plan 2024 – 2027
- BBSC Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan 2025– 2041
- EYM Partnership Agreement 2024
- BBSC Timetabling and CRES Operations Guide and MOU 2024
- BBSC Child Safety Policy 2025
- BBSC Kindergarten Services Policy 2024

Guiding Principles for CRES Delivery

This policy is underpinned by CRES principles as outlined in the DE CRES Practice Guide 2023.

Baw Baw Shire Council aim to provide the following:

Simplicity

- A simple to understand kindergarten allocation process to ensure all families/carers have access to kindergarten services

Adaptability

- Accommodate different service types and needs
- Be flexible to support families throughout the allocation process

Transparency

- A clear and streamlined application process to build understanding and trust with families/carers and services

Inclusivity

- Provide allocation information that is accessible
- Proactively engage with families who may require additional support during the allocation process

Consistency

- Provide families and services with consistent information and practices
- Ensure kindergarten allocations align with the Department of Education's policies and guidelines

Collaboratively

- Work in partnership with service providers, support services, Maternal and Child Health and families/carers

Policy detail

Kindergarten Enrolment

Eligibility

In accordance with the State Government Kindergarten Funding Guide 2023, the following apply:

Both three and four-year-old kindergarten eligibility criteria:

- All children are eligible to attend a funded kindergarten program
- Children are eligible to apply for funded programs the year prior to the child's attendance year. Applications will open from 1 April to 30 June for first round offers each year. Online application forms are available at www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Kinders
- Children can only enrol in one funded service at a time

Additional 3-year-old kindergarten eligibility criteria:

- Children will be eligible for between 5 and 15 hours of funded kindergarten per week
- Children must be at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend kindergarten
- Families with children who are born between January and April can decide whether they send their child to kindergarten in the year they turn three, or the following year. For further information, visit When to start kindergarten | vic.gov.au
- Although a child can enrol in kindergarten prior to turning three, children must be three years of age before they can commence

Additional 4-year-old kindergarten eligibility criteria:

- A minimum of 15 hours of funded four-year old kindergarten will be offered prior to school entry (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, children who have had contact with Child Protection services or children who were supported by Access to Early Learning as three-year-olds will be eligible for 16–25 hours of funded Kindergarten from 2026)
- Children must be at least four years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend kindergarten
- A child can commence four-year-old kindergarten at the beginning of term even if they have not yet turned four

Priority of Access Guidelines for Funded Kindergarten Programs

The DE requires CRES providers to have a Priority of Access (PoA) in place to assist children at risk of disadvantage to access a kindergarten program. In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places, Baw Baw Shire Council will prioritise children in accordance with the Department's PoA criteria and Pre-Prep operational policy settings, as well as our locally agreed Criteria.

Children must be prioritised based on the follow criteria:

Level	High priority children	Criteria and Process that could be used to verify need(s)
1	Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out-of-home care	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eligible for ESK or AEL, and/or • family, carer, or legal guardian identifies the child as known to Child Protection or in out-of-home care, and/or • referred by one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Protection - Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) - Maternal and Child Health nurse - out-of-home care provider
1	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'do you identify your child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information in KIMS.
1	Asylum seeker and refugee children	Child or family holds a visa or supporting documentation and information, including an ImmiCard, identifying the child and/or parents, carers or legal guardians as a refugee or asylum seeker, and/or referred as a refugee or asylum seeker by a CALD outreach worker.
2	Children that meet the eligibility criteria for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<p>A child or parent/guardian holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, and/or</p> <p>The child is identified on their birth certificate as one of a set of triplets, quadruplets or more.</p>
3	<p>Children with additional needs, defined as children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with an identified specific disability or developmental delay • who require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program • who require a combination of services which are individually planned 	<p>The child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holds a Child Disability Health Care Card, and/or • has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program, and/or • Has been referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the National Disability Insurance Scheme - Early Childhood Intervention Services - Preschool Field Officer - Maternal and Child Health nurse, or • is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Highest priority will be given to children who meet the DE Priority of Access Criteria (this includes both Baw Baw residents and non-residents)

Consideration will then be given to applications based on Baw Baw Shire's locally agreed CRES criteria:

Baw Baw Shire Council Locally agreed CRES Criteria:
Deferral age children
Siblings attending the same funded kindergarten service in the same year
Three-year-old children who attended any sessional Kindergarten within CRES applying for a four-year-old program
Residents of Baw Baw <ul style="list-style-type: none">- If an application is completed before 30 June and residents move within Baw Baw Shire a change of preference is permitted (with evidence) to be included in first round offers- Families who have moved into Baw Baw and not before 30 June will be considered in second round offers.

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

Application Process

Optional pre-step:

- Expression of interest for funded programs can be submitted from the time a child turns 12 months old.

First round of applications open:

- Application forms are available on Council's website and are submitted online.
- 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 a member of the CRES team on 03 5624 2540.

Allocation of Places

- To be considered for first round offers, applications need to be received by 30 June in the year prior to attendance.
- A points-based weighting system is used to allocate places based on the Department of Education Priority of Access Criteria and then Baw Baw Shire Council's local criteria. Where two or more children have the same points value and same preference, the Central Registration System randomly allocates places.
- Families will be required to provide the mandatory number of preferences on the application. Duplicated preferences will not be considered.

Placement Offers:

- 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. The following options apply:
 - Accept: Accept the kindergarten offer. Families will be connected with their kindergarten provider to begin the enrolment process
 - Accept and waitlist: Kindergarten allocation is accepted, but families are put on the waitlist for one higher preference. Families will be connected with their kindergarten provider to begin the enrolment process
 - Defer: Choose to defer your child's application to the following year. You will not automatically be given a place in the following year; however, you will be given higher weighting for your place. You will need to complete another application form the following year
 - Decline and waitlist: Decline the offered kindergarten place and be put on a waitlist for a higher preference. Please note this is at the risk of no places becoming available. The Priority of Access criteria applies to waitlisted applications. Waitlisted applications will be maintained until end of Term 1. At this time families will be contacted regarding their waitlist status
 - Withdraw: Decline the kindergarten offer and withdraw from the Baw Baw Shire CRES service
- If there is no response to an offer 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 a member of Council's CRES team.
- If none of the applicants' preferences can be offered a member of Council's CRES team will contact to discuss available placement options. This may include re-preferencing or an opportunity to be waitlisted.
- Second year placements will have a two-week response time from allocation to decline or accept an offer for an additional funded year.

Kindergarten Enrolment:

- After a kindergarten offer has been accepted, Council's CRES team will provide your child's details to the kindergarten provider. The kindergarten provider will then contact the family directly with further information and communication around enrolment.
- Sessions changes may occur after acceptance of a placement; these changes will be communicated to families by Council's CRES team.

Subsequent Round Placement Offers:

- Placement offers for second round placements will be sent during September and October.
- Council's CRES team 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.

Application Process Timeline Summary:	
Expression of interest	From the time a child turns 12 months
Enrolment opens	1 April
First round offers close	30 June
First round email letter of offer	Four-year-old: August Three-year-old: September
Response to offer due	Within two weeks of receiving the offer
Second round email letter of offer	September and October
Other enrolments	Ongoing

Appeal Process

Applicants dissatisfied with the place offered can lodge an appeal. The appeal process will not displace another eligible child who has already been allocated a kindergarten place.

Step 1

- Contact Baw Baw Shire Council within 14 days of the offer closing date and provide written or verbal material relevant to the appeal, by phoning 5624 2540 or emailing Kinder@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au.

Step 2

- An Appeal Panel will be constituted. 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 conflict of interest
- The Panel will be provided with any relevant written or verbal information regarding the appeal from both families/advocates and Council officers

Step 3

The Panel will consider the material presented and may choose to:

- Dismiss the appeal
- Offer a place at a kindergarten other than the placement against which the appeal has been lodged – where such place is available
- 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.

Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this policy, such a change may be made. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact, and when new services are added. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, it must be considered by Council.

Please note:

- Pre-Prep, service allocations and hours offered are guided by State Government: [Best Start, Best Life reforms | vic.gov.au](#)
- Chronic medical conditions (with evidence from a medical practitioner) **may** be considered when allocating, **if placement in a particular group could compromise a child's health**. If two impacted families place the same preferences and cannot be allocated to the same session **for medical reasons** these applications will be randomly allocated.

Approval date	03/02/2026
Approval authority	Executive
Effective from	03/02/2026
Review term	Annual
Next review date	03/02/2027
Responsible position	Manager Family and Children's Services
Responsible Director	Director Strategy and Organisational Performance
Version	3

Revision History

Approval date	Version	Revision description
2025	2	<p>The following updates were made to Baw Baw Shire's locally agreed CRES Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – siblings attending the same funded service was added to the criteria <p>The Priority of Access Criteria was updates based on changes received from the Department of Education</p> <p>Information in the policy was rearranged and expanded to make it more user friendly (based on feedback from our 2024 enrolment process)</p>
2026	3	<p>Updated local CRES criteria to include any child who has completed a 3YO CRES funded session and a change of preference for residents permitted if they move and had their application in on time.</p> <p>Duplicated preferences will not be considered.</p> <p>Highest priority will be given to children who meet the DE Priority of Access Criteria (this includes both residents and non-residents). PoA criteria extends to waitlisted applications.</p> <p>Waitlisted applications will be maintained until end of Term 1. At this time families will be contacted regarding their waitlist status.</p> <p>Second year placements will have a two-week period from allocation to decline or accept an offer for an additional funded year.</p> <p>Chronic medical conditions (with evidence from a medical practitioner) may be considered when allocating, if placement in a particular group could compromise a child's health. If two impacted families place the same preferences and cannot be allocated to the same session for medical reasons these applications will be allocated at random.</p> <p>Sessions changes may occur after acceptance of a placement and these changes will be communicated to families via a member of the CRES team.</p>

Appendix 1:

Kindergarten Providers that do not participate in CRES

Contact the following providers directly to apply for kindergarten:

Chairo Christian School Drouin
Goodstart Early Learning Centre Drouin
Goodstart Early Learning Centre Burke Street Warragul
Goodstart Early Learning Centre Sutton Street Warragul
Journey Early Learning Centre Yarragon
Little Saints Early Learning Centre Main South Road Drouin
Little Saints Early Learning Centre Princes Way Drouin
Little Saints Early Learning Centre Warragul
Nido Early School Trafalgar
Sparrow Early Learning Princes Way Drouin
Sparrow Early Learning Grant Street Drouin
Sparrow Early Learning Waterford Rise Warragul
St Pauls Anglican Grammar School Warragul
St Pauls Anglican Grammar School Drouin
Thrive Early Learning Centre Warragul
Twinklekids Early Learning Longwarry
WISE Kids Warragul

Please note:

- Kindergartens are subject to change, please refer to [Find A Kinder Program - Department of Education](#) for the most up-to-date information.
- To find funded and approved kindergarten programs look for the Victorian Government Kinder Tick. For more information visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder-tick>