

CENTRAL REGISTRATION AND ENROLMENT SCHEME (CRES) AND PRIORITY OF ACCESS GUIDELINES



Child, Youth and Family

1. Purpose and Intent

This guideline outlines the responsibilities of the City of Casey's Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) in registering and allocating sessional kindergarten places, as well as the responsibilities of all services under the CRES. The CRES provides a central point of access that streamlines the process for families to access funded three-year-old and four-year-old sessional kindergartens. The purpose of the CRES is to ensure the allocation of kindergarten places in line with the Department of Education's (DE) Priority of Access criteria and City of Casey's local criteria. This ensures the allocation of places is carried out in a fair and equitable manner.

2. Scope

These guidelines apply to Council staff, independent kindergarten providers operating in council owned facilities, other independent kindergarten providers who participate in the City of Casey CRES and families with eligible children registering and enrolling in sessional kindergartens.

3. Definitions

Key Term	Definition
Access to Early Learning (AEL)	Provides additional support for vulnerable children and families to address complex barriers to participation in early childhood education and care settings. This support is provided where Early Start Kindergarten funding alone will not adequately engage and sustain participation in early childhood education and care service.
Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme Funding Requirements	A set of requirements developed by the Department of Education that all CRES providers must adhere to.
Central Registration Platform	The software platform that the City of Casey uses to manage the registration and allocation of sessional kindergarten places.
Department of Education (DE)	The State Government Department that is responsible for ensuring services comply with the Kindergarten Priority of Access, Kindergarten Funding Guide and the Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme Funding Requirements.
Early Years Manager (EYM)	Organisations (Kindergarten Providers) that are local government or community-based that oversee multiple early childhood services to provide professional leadership and centralised management of kindergarten services.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)	Targeted funding for vulnerable children to attend a free kindergarten program for 15 hours per week. This includes: - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, or - Children known to Child Protection, or - Asylum seeker and refugee children.
Early Years Referral	It is identified that a family requires extra support to register and access a kindergarten for their child. Referrals can come in by family services workers.
Four-year-old Kindergarten	A universal early childhood program, funded by the State Government, for children in the year prior to commencing primary school.
Free Kindergarten	Part of the Best Start, Best Life (BSBL) government reforms that provides free funded kindergarten for Three-year-old and one year of Four-Year-Old children for services who choose to opt into the initiative.
Immunisation – No Jab, No Play legislation	The ‘No Jab, No Play’ legislation aims to reduce the risk of vaccine preventable diseases through increased immunisation rates in the community. For children to attend kindergarten their immunisations must be up to date or meet the criteria for an exemption.
Kindergarten Enrolment and Planning team (KEP)	The team (within Council) that executes the functions under the CRES.
Kindergarten Funding Guide (developed by DE)	The Kindergarten Funding Guide is an official Victorian government document designed for service providers, outlining policies, eligibility criteria, and compliance requirements for receiving state funding for 3- and 4-year-old programs. It acts as part of the service agreement, detailing funding types, application processes, and operational obligations.
Local Criteria	A local agreed criteria to prioritise children and determine the order in which offers are made, once DE Priority of Access (POA) has been applied.
Independent kindergarten providers	Independent or Committee of Management kindergarten providers that join the City of Casey CRES.
Parent/Guardian	A biological parent or a person who has parental responsibility for the child under a decision or order of the court.
Priority of Access (POA)	Criteria set out by DE that funded services must adhere to when prioritising kindergarten placements.
Three-year-old Kindergarten	A universal early childhood program funded by the State Government for children in the year prior to commencing four-year-old kindergarten.

4. Background

The CRES is managed by the City of Casey Kindergarten Enrolment and Planning (KEP) team and aims to:

- Simplify the process of sessional kindergarten registrations and placement for families.
- Provide registration and allocation of sessional funded kindergarten places for Early Years Managers, as well as independent not-for-profit and community managed kindergarten providers that form part of the CRES.
- Provide access to free funded sessional kindergarten for eligible children.

- Implement referral pathways that will support and engage vulnerable and Culturally Linguistic Diverse (CALD) families with the process of accessing a funded sessional kindergarten place.
- Collect expressions of interest, and registrations to allocate children to available sessional kindergarten places in a fair and equitable manner using the DE Priority of Access criteria and the City of Casey local criteria.
- Continuously evaluate and update systems and processes to adjust to the evolving needs of the community and all relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure families have access to information in a variety of formats allowing for a clear understanding of the City of Casey's CRES.
- Inform Council's early years services and infrastructure planning.
- Work with internal and external stakeholders to assist families to access sessional kindergarten within the City of Casey's CRES.

5. Responsibilities for this guideline

Kindergarten Enrolment and Planning team	• To oversee the administration and implementation of the CRES for both City of Casey managed and independently managed kindergarten providers who participate in the CRES. • Maintain accurate and detailed records in the kindergarten data base, that meets City of Casey information technology requirements. • Maintain accurate records in DE databases. • Allocate kindergarten places for both new registrations and transfer requests. • Work in partnership with both internal and external stakeholders to execute kindergarten registrations functions. • Support with the planning and allocation of kindergarten places for both City of Casey managed and independently managed kindergarten providers. • Work with internal and external stakeholders in supporting the kindergarten registrations and placements of vulnerable children. • Respond to community enquiries. • Manage information in line with the Privacy and Confidentiality guidelines. • Act in accordance with the CRES Funding Requirements.
Parents/Families and service users	• Provide all required documentation for the Expression of Interest, Registration and Enrolment. • Respond to correspondence from the City of Casey within the specified timeframes. • Notify the KEP team of any required changes to the child's information. • Ensure all information provided is true and correct at the time of submission.

Responsibilities for all service providers in the CRES can be found in Attachment 3 – Information for Service Providers.

6. Best Start, Best Life reforms

The Victorian Government is investing \$14 billion in the Best Start, Best Life reforms. These reforms are intended to improve early learning outcomes for Victorian children through quality education programs.

As a part of the reform, four-year-old kindergarten is becoming Pre-Prep. Pre-prep offers children more hours of a funded kindergarten program. Four-year-old kindergarten will begin to increase from the currently funded 15 hours, to 30 hours of Pre-Prep by 2036. In the City of Casey, this will start in 2034, and services will be required to increase to 20 hours, before reaching 30 hours in 2036.

Priority Pre-Prep Children

Children from eligible priority cohorts will be able to access between 16 and 25 hours of four-year-old kindergarten in the City of Casey. The hours of will vary between kindergartens.

Eligibility criteria for children and their families to access Priority Pre-Prep hours are:

- Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- From a refugee or asylum seeker background.
- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care Children who utilised ESK or AEL in their three-year-old kindergarten year.

Eligible families will be contacted by the City of Casey as part of the CRES process.

7. Funded Kindergarten Eligibility

Age requirements

The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a sessional kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. There are eligibility factors to consider based on the child's age, date of birth, and development:

- A child can only be funded for a kindergarten place at one service at any one time.
- A child is ordinarily eligible to attend one year in a three-year-old kindergarten program and one year in a four-year-old kindergarten program, although some children may be eligible for an additional year of kindergarten in accordance with funding guidelines.
- The year that your child starts kindergarten will directly impact the age at which they start school.

The City of Casey has an age [calculator](#) to assist parents in identifying their child's eligibility for kindergarten.

Children who are born between January 1 and April 30 have the option to start:

- Three-year-old kindergarten in the year the child turns 3 or 4.
- Four-year-old kindergarten in the year the child turns 4 or 5.

Children who are enrolled in a three-year-old sessional kindergarten cannot commence kindergarten until their third birthday.

Deferring kindergarten year

Parents who choose to defer their child's year of attendance at kindergarten to the following year can contact the KEP team and request to update their child's registration. Note that this must be done prior to the child attending kindergarten.

Children eligible for an additional year of kindergarten

As per the [Kindergarten Funding Guide](#), to determine eligibility for an additional year of three or four-year-old kindergarten, an early childhood teacher must declare that:

- The child is observed as having delays in at least two key outcome areas of learning and development, as detailed in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).
- There is evidence to suggest that the child will achieve better outcomes if they attend a second year of kindergarten to strengthen the learning and development of skills in these key outcome areas and better facilitate transition to school the following year.

10. Kindergarten offers

Registrations are based on a set of scoring points in accordance with DE's Priority of Access and City of Casey's local criteria. The system allocates places first to high-priority children, then to those meeting local criteria, based on their preferences and availability that are selected by the family.

Randomised allocation is used for all children who attract the same scoring points.

Allocations for three- and four-year-old kindergarten occur separately.

Placement of twins

Where requested, the City of Casey aims to place twins in the same service or group. Where this is not possible, families can:

- Accept the offer received and then request a transfer, or
- Remain on the waiting list to be considered in future offer rounds.

Request to transfer kindergarten session or centre.

If the child has been placed at a kindergarten that was not the first preference, or family circumstances have changed, a request to transfer kindergartens can be submitted. This includes transferring to another kindergarten or transferring to another session within the same kindergarten.

To be eligible for a current year transfer the child must be regularly attending their kindergarten.

11. Enrolment

Council managed kindergartens

Parents or guardians who have accepted a place at a Council managed kindergarten will be required to complete a Child Enrolment Record prior to their child starting kindergarten. Children are unable to start kindergarten until the required documentation and supporting evidence has been received by the City of Casey KEP team.

Independently managed kindergartens

Parents or guardians who have accepted a place with an independently managed kindergarten provider will be given contact details to enrol directly into the kindergarten service. Children may be unable to start kindergarten until the required documentation and supporting evidence has been provided to the kindergarten.

Immunisation

Under Victoria's *No Jab, No Play* Law, all early childhood services must check that children's immunisations are up to date for their age. To start kindergarten parents/guardians must provide an up-to-date Medicare Immunisation History Statement (IHS). The IHS is the only form of documentation accepted and will show the child's status as:

- Fully immunised for their age, or
- On a vaccination catch up schedule, or
- Unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons.

Funded Kindergarten Place

The Victorian Government funds approved kindergartens for families to access:

- Up to 15 hours each week for three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten.
- 16 to 25 hours each week for Pre-Prep programs from 2026 in the four-year-old program.

Children can only access a funded kindergarten program and free kinder at one service at one time. All places at kindergartens using the City of Casey CRES are funded this way.

12. Feedback and Complaints

Families wishing to provide feedback or make a complaint regarding the kindergarten registration and enrolment process are encouraged to contact the KEP Team by phone or email. The officers will assist in facilitating a resolution. If a satisfactory outcome is not achieved, the matter will be escalated to the Head of Early Years and Partnerships, who will continue to facilitate towards a resolution.

All complaints are managed in accordance with the City of Casey's [Complaint Handling Policy](#).

13. Guidelines and Associated Documents

This guideline should be read in conjunction with:

- Enrolment and Orientation guidelines
- Privacy and Confidentiality guidelines
- Immunisation and Infectious Diseases guidelines
- Complaint Handling guidelines
- Attachment 1 – CRES Stages
- Attachment 2 – Priority of Access
- Attachment 3 – Information for Service Providers

14. Relevant legislation

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012
- 2023 Kindergarten Funding Guide – Department of Education
- No Jab, No Play legislation – Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

15. Child Safety, Access and Inclusion

The City of Casey is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of Council, its employees, contractors, and volunteers. Council has zero-tolerance of child abuse.

Council aims to promote a culture of inclusion, respect and equity. We strive to ensure that all children, young people and families regardless of their background, ability, gender or identity are welcomed and supported. We are dedicated to providing equitable access to our services.

Council expects that all staff act on incidents of child abuse, racism, or any type of discrimination.

16. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The City of Casey will ensure:

- Regular monitoring of the implementation of this guideline and its associated documents including training and compliance.
- This guideline and its associated documents are kept up to date with current legislation, policy and best practice.
- Review and evaluation of this guideline and its associated documents as part of the service's review cycle, or as required.

CENTRAL REGISTRATION AND ENROLMENT SCHEME AND PRIORITY OF ACCESS GUIDELINE

Reviewed by:	CYF Policy Officer in conjunction with KEP Team Leader, Team Leader of Partnerships and Operations and Head of Early Years and Partnerships.		
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