



FEES POLICY 2026 – KINDERGARTEN AND PRE- PREP

BACKGROUND

The Best Start, Best Life reform will help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care. A critical part of the reform is Free Kinder, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children. All families with a child enrolled in a funded kindergarten program are eligible for Free Kinder this includes both 3 old kindergarten and Pre-Prep.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing up to free 30-hours of Pre-Prep to four-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5-to-15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service

Free kinder supports every Victorian child to get the best start in life no matter where they live. Research shows that play-based learning is a powerful way to support children's learning and development. Two years of early learning is a crucial part of their educational journey, these benefits last into the school years and beyond.

Regulation 168(2) (n) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. Any voluntary parent donations and/or fundraising must comply with the Free Kinder subsidy guidelines and be responsive to the local community.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
168(2)(n)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to – payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available



172	Notification of change to policies and procedures
-----	---

RELATED LEGISLATION

A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999
A New Tax System (Family Assistance and Related Measures) Act 2000
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017
Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)
Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
National Quality Standards

RELATED POLICIES

Compliments and Complaints Policy Delivery of children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premises Enrolment and Orientation Policy Excursions, Incursions and Special Events Policy	Governance and Management of the Service Policy Inclusion and Equity Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
--	---

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of KCCC, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by KCCC
- how KCCC complies with the Free Kinder funding requirements

SCOPE

This policy applies to Kensington Community Children's Cooperative Limited as the Approved Provider, persons with management or control of a service (PMCs) including the Board of Directors, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, management, educators, families, and children of Kensington Community Children's Cooperative (KCCC).

IMPLEMENTATION



THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ PERSONS WITH MANAGEMENT OR CONTROL/NOMINATED SUPERVISORS/MANAGEMENT WILL:

- Implement and review this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, nominated supervisors and staff, and in line with the requirements of the Department of Education's (DE) Free Kinder initiative
- Ensure that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees (if applicable) and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service, and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed
- Ensure that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures
- Ensure families are informed of the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees for e.g. excursions and any additional hours
- Reimburse families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment
- Ensure families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)
- Ensure families are only charged for optional kindergarten program hours that are over and above the funded 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) and/or "wrap around" care with exception to children eligible as per the Pre-Prep roll out
- Ensure that children enrolled in a kindergarten program are not charged higher fees in comparison to children that are not attracting kindergarten funding
- Directly offset the Full Kinder entitlement from the fees of parents/guardians with children receiving their kindergarten program at the centre (service providers are not required to separately calculate and record the cost of the kindergarten hours separately for integrated programs)
- Apply the fee offset regularly (e.g., fortnightly or monthly) and clearly indicate the offset amount (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset) on parent/guardian's invoice statements
- Communicate with parents/guardians that the offsets will not impact their CCS payments
- Ensure any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines
- Provide communication to families explaining their access to one year of three-year-old and one year of Pre-Prep program
- Ensure families that attend both sessional kindergarten/pre-prep and a long day care service, nominate and document at which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten/pre-prep program
- Use any surplus funding on improvement efforts for the funded kindergarten program, such as improving quality and supporting engagement of families for the minority of cases where parents are charged less than the Free Kinder entitlement out-of-pocket fees for the duration of the kindergarten year
- Ensure any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted
- Charge families only for occasional special event/excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum
- Ensure that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is enrolled at the service and recorded on the Arrival System
- Collect all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and record it on the Arrival system
- Ensure that the *Fees – Kindergarten and Pre-Prep Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- Provide all parents/guardians with information about Free Kinder (refer to Attachment 1)
- Provide all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges to families that have opted in to additional hours/wrap around care (refer to Attachment 2) upon enrolment of their child (if applicable) **NOTE:** parents must also be advised that enrolling for hours over 15 is



optional (with exception to children eligible as per the Pre-Prep rollout) and families can choose to only enrol for 15 hours and receive this program at no cost

- Provide all parents/guardians with an additional hour's payment fee agreement (refer to Attachment 3), if applicable
- Inform parents of any action that will be taken if additional hours fees are not paid (refer to Attachment 3)
- Ensure any additional hours fees are collected and receipted
- Comply with the KCCC's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*, regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees
- Notify parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the additional fees charged, or the way in which the fees are collected, ideally providing one term's notice
- Implement and review this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the approved provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS, EDUCATORS AND OTHER STAFF WILL:

- Implement and review this policy in consultation with the approved provider, parents/guardians, nominated supervisors and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative
- Consult with management about any potential special event/excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum which may incur additional costs
- Inform management of any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is enrolled at the service and recorded on the Arrival System
- Inform management of all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and record it on the Arrival System
- Comply with KCCC's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received
- Inform the approved provider/management of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees or the payment of
- Refer parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the approved provider

FAMILIES WILL:

- Be provided an opportunity to review this policy in consultation with the approved provider, nominated supervisors and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative
- Ensure that children attending both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service, they will nominate and declare at which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program
- Read KCCC's Free Kinder Information for Families (refer to Attachment 1), the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges (refer to Attachment 2) and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement (refer to Attachment 3) if applicable
- Sign and comply with the Additional Hours Fees and Payment Agreement (refer to Attachment 3) if applicable
- Notify the approved provider/management if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- Provide agreement in writing if any additional payments are made to KCCC
- Comply with KCCC's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees

DEFINITIONS



Additional Hours/Wrap Around Care	Care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program. Wrap around care fees are not funded by the Victorian Government but may be covered by CCS
Approved Child Care	Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre-based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in-home care.
Child Care Subsidy (CCS)	A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible parents/guardians with the cost of child care. Payments are made directly to approved childcare providers. [Child Care Subsidy]
Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)	A funding program that provides eligible children 15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten program each week for two years before starting school. To be eligible a child must turn 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with child protection. [Early Start Kindergarten] If a child is eligible for ESK, they should be enrolled in ESK, even where Free Kinder and/or 15 hours per week of funded three-year-old kindergarten is offered. This ensures eligible children have priority access to 15 hours of funded kindergarten provided by an early childhood teacher and that service providers receive additional funding and support. ESK enrolments contribute to School Readiness Funding (SRF) calculations for service providers. It also allows the Department to continue to monitor efforts to engage the most vulnerable children in kindergarten across Victoria and provide additional targeted support where required through SRF or Early Childhood LOOKOUT.
Enrolment Deposit	A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This should not act as a barrier to enrolling families. Services must ensure that families understand the enrolment deposits will only be refunded or allocated to their accounts, if the child commences in the service.
Excursion/service event charge	An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge
Fees	A charge for program hours over and above the 15 funded hours of 3 year old kindergarten per week (600 per year) and/or wrap around care
Free Kinder	A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by: ● Providing up to 30 hours of Pre-Prep for eligible children in the year before school



	● Providing a free 5- 15-hour program to 3-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered) ● Offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service
Funded Kindergarten	The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high-quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Funded kindergartens charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual kindergartens and depend on things like how many hours children attend and whether there are extra costs such as excursions.
Pre-Prep	Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to Pre-Prep over the next decade from 2025. Funded kindergarten hours will double from 15 to up to 30 hours a week. Pre-Prep will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long-day-care centres. By 2036, children across Victoria will have access to 1,800 hours of funded kindergarten before school, comprising 600 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and 1,200 hours of Pre-Prep
Pre-Prep Priority Cohort	From 2026, between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep will be available to: ● Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children ● children from a refugee or asylum seeker background ● children who have had contact with Child Protection ● children who were supported by Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) or Access to Early Learning (AEL) in their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year. Pre-Prep hours for this group of priority cohort children increase to up to 30 hours from 2028.
Voluntary parent/guardian payment/donation	A voluntary payment/donation for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program. Explicit and written agreement from a parent is required for any voluntary payments. Attendance at the service is not conditional on this payment.
Waitlist Fee	A fee for when families register their child directly with a service (not part of the councils central registration and enrolment scheme). This fee will not be refunded as it is not part of the Free Kinder subsidy, and not related to the fee charged for delivery of the kindergarten program. A service may charge for one-off excursions/incursions, and registration fees (sometimes called waitlist fees). Waitlist fees are returned to families once they have accepted a kindergarten place.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

The Fees – Kindergarten and Pre-Prep Policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if required, in consultation with families, staff, educators and management.

ATTACHMENTS



- Attachment 1: Free Kinder Information for Families

SOURCES

- Best Start Best Life: <https://www.vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education): <https://www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide>
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: <https://www.vic.gov.au/resources-funded-kindergartens>

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	NOVEMBER 2025	NEXT REVIEW DATE	NOVEMBER 2026
ENDORSED BY	KCCC Board	ENDORSEMENT DATE	01/12/2025
VERSION	V06.11.25		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy maintenance • Referring to Best Start, Best Life and Free Kinder initiative • Incorporating Pre-Prep roll out • sources checked and updated as required		



ATTACHMENT 1: FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES – KINDERGARTEN AND PRE-PREP 2026

○ General information

Kindergarten programs for three-year-old children and Pre-Prep for four-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

Free Kinder provides families with a free program in sessional services and a fee offset in long day care services.

DE also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Asylum seeker and refugee children and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Operation hours	Monday/Thursday – 8.30am-4.00pm Tuesday /Friday – 8.30am – 4.30pm Integrated – 7.30am-6.00pm
Term 1	28 January – 2 April 2026
Term 2	20 April – 26 June 2026
Term 3	13 July – 18 September 2026
Term 4	5 October – 18 December 2026
Planned Closures	Tuesday 10 March 2026 Friday 30 October 2026
Additional Hours account for closure	

○ What Free Kinder means at our service

Kensington Community Children's Cooperative has opted in to the Free Kinder initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:

- Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children (up to 15 hours per week) – no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (up to 15 hours per week) - no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for eligible Pre-Prep children (16-25 hours per week) – no parent fee
- Kindergarten and Pre-Prep in long day care for 3 and 4 -year-old children – parent fee will be reduced by the Free Kinder Funding

Kensington Community Children's Cooperative will reimburse families in full for any kindergarten/Pre-Prep fee deposit payments that have already been made upon acceptance of enrolment, excluding any voluntary parent donations/payments that you agree to in writing.

○ Other charges

Other charges levied by Kensington Community Children's Cooperative are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges, that will be provided to families upon enrolment.

These may include:

- **Excursion/service event charge:** At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. At this time, any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made. Note – Families are able to opt out of any excursion.



- **Late collection charge:** KCCC reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This charge will be set at a level determined by the approved provider.

- **Additional hours and/or wrap around care fees**

Kensington Community Children's Cooperative offers families 1 hour above the set 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) in the Tuesday/Friday 4-year-old/Pre-Prep program. The additional hours fee is determined by the hourly program rate based on the scheduled [2026] fee (including the costs of regular incursions and excursions).

Families have the option of only enrolling for 15 hours and being charged no additional fees.

4.1 Integrated Services

Kensington Community Children's Cooperative will directly offset the Free Kinder entitlement from the fees of parents/ guardians with children receiving their funded kindergarten program at the centre. The fee offset will be applied regularly (e.g., fortnightly or monthly) and clearly indicating the offset amount (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset) on parent/ guardian's invoice statements. The offsets will not impact their CCS payments.

5. Fundraising and voluntary parent/guardian payment/donations

While participation in fundraising/donation is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

6. Subsidies

6.1 Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is an Australian Government subsidy that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved child care provider. Kensington Community Children's Cooperative is an approved care provider.

Approved child care are providers that meet certain standards and requirements, and are approved by the Australian Government. Approved child care providers must:

- hold the required approvals or licences to provide child care in the state or territory that the service/s operate in
- ensure the provider and any individual who is or will be a Person with Management or Control of the Provider is fit and a proper person to administer the CCS (requirements set out in Section 194E of A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999.
- be financially viable and likely to remain so
- ensure that required fit and proper checks are carried out for each Person with Management or Control of the Provider, Persons with Responsibility for Day-to-Day Operation of the Service and In-Home Care and Family Day Care Educators

The amount of subsidy received is determined by the circumstances of the applicant's including the family income, the hourly rate cap and the hours of activity undertaken by the parents/guardians.

Further information for parents can be found here: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

Long day care providers that offer funded kindergarten as part of the long day care program are required to directly offset the full payment of the Free Kinder initiative from parents'/guardians' out of pocket fees (after CCS is applied). Fee reductions will be made proportionally across the year to families' bills, i.e. fortnightly or monthly. Only children receiving a funded kindergarten place at KCCC, led by a qualified teacher, are eligible under this initiative.



Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for providers that primarily provide an early educational program to children in the year that is two years before grade one of school (preschool or kindergarten).

7. Payment of fees for additional hours

Fees are payable for hours over and above 15 hours per week (600 hours per year).

The Board will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. Where applicable, the first fortnight's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Business Support Manager or Finance Manager to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

8. Unpaid fees for additional hours

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken.

- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date, and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- The Board and management will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

9. Refund of fees

The enrolment deposit will be fully refunded to families only when the child commences at the service. Non-refundable waitlist fees paid will be retained.

In any other case, additional hours are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of KCCC). There will be no refund of these fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent, and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.



10. Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.

11. Notification of fee changes during the year for additional hours

Fees may be reviewed throughout the year would be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents/guardians will be notified 14 days in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.