

Kindergarten Central Registration Policy

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Adopted by	Council
Review due	1 March 2025
Responsible officer	Manager Child, Family & Youth Services
Records reference	9331205

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the allocation of kindergarten places by Melton City Council's Kindergarten Central Registration Enrolment Scheme (CRES).

2. Application And Scope

This policy applies to parents/guardians wishing to access a three- or four-year-old kindergarten place at an associated Council kindergarten, Kindergarten Early Years Manager's (EYM), Council officers and agencies involved in the placement of children into three- or four-year-old kindergarten as part of Council's CRES.

In partnership with Kindergarten EYMS, Melton City Council Kindergarten CRES operates central registration, and allocation of kindergarten places for both three- and four-year-old children within twenty-six (26) kindergartens across the municipality.

3. General Provisions

Melton City Council is committed to:

- meeting the needs of the local community regarding kindergarten registration
- equal access for all children based on the priorities set out in this policy.
- compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* and the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*.
- compliance with DE funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in State Government Funded Kindergarten Services.
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on Kindergarten Registration forms.
- being inclusive of all people, acknowledging the contribution of people and communities from diverse backgrounds, within the municipality.
- striving for Gender Equity as per the Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy.

A CRES is a local government-led program that aims to minimise the barriers to getting Victoria's children into kindergarten with the provision of a Best Practice model of Central Kindergarten Registration. The CRES takes a holistic view of a child's journey from birth to their first day at kindergarten. It is a collaborative model that coordinates councils, service providers, MCH staff, support services and other stakeholders to support families and carers.

Melton City Council has implemented the CRES to support Best Practice recommendations endorsed by the Department of Education (DE) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). The CRES will support:

- transparently, fairly and equitably allocate kindergarten places in line with the Department's (DE) Priority of Access guidelines.
- proactively identify and enrol vulnerable children in quality kindergarten programs.
- minimise administrative burden on service providers.
- responding to the needs of the community in early year's services provision.

Once a child has been allocated a place, Kindergarten EYM are responsible for the kindergarten enrolments within their service.

3.1. Central Registration Enrolment Scheme

The CRES model aims to:

- assist vulnerable families / carers who are at risk of not enrolling their child in kindergarten.
- inform infrastructure, early years planning and investment: for evaluation and future planning, during which Council can gather data on current and projected demand for early years services.
- ease of access for families: a CRES enables families / carers to register for enrolment at the number of kindergartens with a single registration form.
- fair allocation of kindergarten places: CRES ensures the Kindergarten Priority of Access Criteria are applied so that children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage have priority access to kindergarten. Additionally, children can also be prioritised based on locally agreed criteria.
- increase uptake of kindergarten: the CRES seeks to find and register as many kindergarten-aged children as possible through a network of stakeholder relationships.
- continue to ease the burden on individual kindergartens so that they can run most effectively, and the value of council-owned facilities is maximised.

Central Kindergarten registration procedures, systems and software will align with the CRES Best Practice model.

3.2. Eligibility Criteria

Consistent with State Government funding agreements, the following children are eligible to attend kindergarten:

- Children who are three years of age or older by 30 April in the year they are to attend three-year-old kindergarten.
- Children who are four years of age or older by 30 April in the year they are to attend four-year-old kindergarten.
- Families of children born between January and April can decide whether to enrol their children in the year they turn three, or the following year. These decisions will be up to the individual families and factors that might be taken into consideration include the individual child's developmental and learning levels, family circumstances and potential school starting ages.

Early Start Kindergarten provides kindergarten to eligible three-year-old children where programs are offered by a qualified Kindergarten teacher. Eligible children are those identified as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander decent or a refugee and/ or asylum seeker or known to Child Protection. Children eligible for ESK funding continue to have access to 15 hours of kindergarten per week.

3.3. Allocation Priorities

The DE Priority of Access Criteria states that in instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places, available children must be prioritised via:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care.
- Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander children.
- Asylum seeker and refugee children.
- Children with additional needs defined as children who:
 - Require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program.
 - Require a combination of services which are individually planned.
 - Have an identified specific developmental delay.

Any parent or child with an experience of displacement (a refugee experience or experience similar to a refugee) will be considered by exemption for ESK.

Consistent with the State Government and the DE Priority of Access Criteria, locally agreed criteria may be implemented to prioritise and determine the order of offers made. To support fair and equitable access to kindergarten, children of City of Melton residents will also be considered for priority of access should they have the following risk factors of vulnerability:

- A parent/guardian or child has a life threatening or debilitating illness or disease.
- A parent/guardian who has a disability, diagnosed mental illness or drug and/ or alcohol dependency.
- Court orders that limit choices for kindergarten.
- Risk of family violence.
- Risk of homelessness.
- Eligibility for Early Start Kindergarten.

Children of City of Melton residents will also be prioritised if they have:

- attended kindergarten in Term One but withdrew.
- are eligible for a second year of funded four-year-old kindergarten.
- previously attended or had a sibling attend the kindergarten of preference, in a three- or four-year-old program, in the year of enrolling the current child or the previous year.
- Attended the three-year-old kindergarten they are wanting to enrol for four-year-old for the first two terms of three-year-old kindergarten.
- two children from the same family enrolling for kindergarten in the same year.

Note: Once First and Second round allocations have been finalised, children will be prioritised according to the number of criteria met.

- In mixed-age groups, the Priority of Access Criteria will equally prioritise three- and four-year-old children considered vulnerable under the policy.
- Where programs for three- and four-year old's are provided separately, the Priority of Access Criteria should be applied separately for each age cohort.

In the situation that three- and four-year-old registration has been completed on the same registration form, the Priority of Access Criteria must be considered separately for each year at the point of allocation.

3.3.1. Non-Residents

Council will consider kindergarten registrations from families who reside outside the Melton City Council municipality. These will be assessed annually in November and will be determined on the kindergarten vacancies at that time. Council is committed to providing an outcome of this registration request by late November to early December.

Any registrations received in the year that the child is due to commence kindergarten will be resolved within four weeks of the application date.

Non-Residents who have accepted a placement for their child's three-year-old kindergarten year are not guaranteed a four-year-old placement the following year. Normal Non-Resident processes will still apply.

Families are considered to live outside of the municipal boundaries if they move out of the municipality prior to the commencement of the kindergarten year.

Note: Children in Out of Home Care may be an exception to the above and will be considered on a case-by-case basis according to the best interest of the child in consideration of the Early Years Compact Agreement.

3.4. Registration

3.4.1. Registration Fees

Council will contribute to the administration cost of operating the kindergarten CRES via State Government funding, enabling council to now provide this service to the community free of charge.

3.4.2. Allocation of Places

Places will be allocated to eligible children, including those who are on the preference list, in accordance with the preference listed on the registration form and in line with the Allocation Priorities of this policy.

3.5. Kindergartens Located on School Sites

A child enrolled into a City of Melton Kindergarten on a primary school site does not confirm your child's entry into that school the following year.

For further information in relation to school zoning boundaries go to www.findmyschool.vic.gov.au

For school enrolment processes, contact your local primary school.

3.6. Privacy

Access to completed registration forms will be restricted to the Kindergarten Registration Officers, and other relevant Council Officers, in accordance with Council's Information Privacy Policy. Sharing of information will only occur with the consent of registering parent/guardian or if required by law.

3.7. Responsibility and Accountability

Kindergarten Registration Officer/ Central Registration team

- Responsible for the administrative tasks associated with the receipt of registrations and allocation of kindergarten placements in line with the Allocation Priorities of this policy.

Kindergarten Engagement Officer

- Responsible for the identification, active engagement and outreach to families experiencing disadvantage, vulnerability or other barriers to kindergarten engagement.
- Support the kindergarten registration and allocation process for families experiencing disadvantage, vulnerability or other barriers to kindergarten engagement.

Children Services Team Leader

- Ensure that program procedures and systems support the policy.
- Oversee policy implementation, referred to and reviewed as appropriate.

Kindergarten EYM

- Responsible for processing enrolments.
- Responsible for providing families with session times, orientation sessions and fee information in relation to the day-to-day operations of the kindergarten program.
- Responsible for all operations of the kindergarten including employing kindergarten staff.

Parents & Guardians

- Responsible for providing all required documentation for the Kindergarten Registration form by the date indicated in the Kindergarten Information Booklet.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Allocation Priorities	The priorities referred to when allocating places into a three- or four-year-old kindergarten program.
Applicant	A child whose parent/guardian has lodged a completed kindergarten registration.
Best Practice	A best-practice model that streamlines the process of registering and enrolling children in kindergarten for families and service providers, ensuring the process is simple, consistent, inclusive and equitable.
CRES- Central Registration Enrolment Scheme	The CRES model is designed to reduce challenges for Central enrolment schemes and achieve consistency of kindergarten registration across Victoria. The model has been co-designed by stakeholders across Victoria, the Department of Education (DE) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).
Deferrals – Four-Year-Old	<p>Children of City of Melton residents who attended kindergarten in Term One but withdrew their place and deferred to the following year with DET approval.</p> <p>Children, who have deferred from a four-year-old kindergarten place and are considered by DE not to have accessed a year of funded kindergarten, are therefore eligible for kindergarten funding in the following year.</p>
DE	State Government Department of Education
Eligible Child	A child who is eligible to be allocated a place in a CRES Melton City Council kindergarten.
Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)	Early Start Kindergarten provides free or low-cost kindergarten to eligible three-year-old children who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or Refugee or Asylum Seeker or are known to Child Protection.

Term	Definition
Early Years Compact Agreement	<p>A ten-year agreement between Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Education and local government with the goal to support vulnerable children including to increase the participation of children in out of home care and children known to child protection in early years services.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability, location and disadvantage do not determine outcomes for children. • Families are well supported by high quality, inclusive services for children and families in the early years. • families can access help when and where they need it. • Stronger place-based governance and planning.
Funded Kindergarten Place	<p>After enrolment, children receive a funded DE kindergarten place when they attend kindergarten in the year before school.</p> <p>From 2022, funded kindergarten places will be available for the two years prior to a child starting school.</p> <p>Children are eligible for only one year of each three- and four-year-old kindergarten place.</p>
Non-Residents	<p>Families who reside outside the Melton City Council municipality. Families are also considered to live outside the municipality boundaries if they move out of the municipality prior to the commencement of the kindergarten year.</p>
The Kindergarten Funding Guide	<p>The Kindergarten Funding Guide is developed by DE and is updated from time to time to guide Kindergarten EYMS on operations including the eligibility criteria for funding and Priority of Access Criteria.</p>
Kindergarten Registration	<p>Information provided to Melton City Council by Parent/Guardians, advising of the request for a three and/or four-year-old child to be allocated a kindergarten place. This information is used by Melton City Council to allocate the child a kindergarten place and provided to the Kindergarten EYM to process enrolment.</p>
Kindergarten Enrolment	<p>Completed by Kindergarten EYMS to enrol a child within their service.</p>
Kindergarten Early Years Managers (EYM)	<p>The service which operates the kindergarten program that is participating in CRES.</p>

Term	Definition
Kindergarten Priority of Access Criteria	In line with the State Government and the DE Priority of Access Criteria, Priority of Access Criteria is implemented to support fair and equitable access to kindergarten.
Municipal Association Victoria (MAV)	The legislated peak body for local government in Victoria.

5. Related Documents

Name	Location
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020
<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Child Safe Standards</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)</i>	www.comlaw.gov.au
<i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)</i>	www.comlaw.gov.au
<i>Kindergarten Funding Guide</i>	https://www.education.vic.gov.au/
<i>Melton City Council Kindergarten Registration, language services and eligibility information</i>	https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/
<i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)</i>	www.comlaw.gov.au
<i>Sex and Age Discrimination Amendment Act 2011</i>	www.comlaw.gov.au

Name	Location
<i>Health Records Act 2001</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>The Early Years Compact Agreement</i>	https://www.education.vic.gov.au/
<i>The Equality and Respect 2030 Strategy</i>	https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/
<i>Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria.</i>	http://www.education.vic.gov.au

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