

	<h1>Kindergarten Central Registration Policy</h1>
Version No.	V3.0 - March 2023
Endorsement	Executive – March 2023 Policy Review Panel – 22 March 2023
Authorisation	Council – 27 March 2023
Review Date	March 2024
Responsible Officer	Manager Families and Children
Policy Owner	Early Childhood Coordinator

1. Purpose

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

2. Scope

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

Melton City Council CRES does not include funded kindergarten programs provided in Long Day Care centres.

3. Background

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 DET and MAV. The CRES will support:

- transparently, fairly and equitably allocate kindergarten places in line with the Department's (DET) 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.

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.

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

4. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Allocation Priorities	The priorities referred to when allocating places into a 3 or 4 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 and Training (DET) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).
Deferrals – Four Year Old	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. Children, who have deferred from a four year old kindergarten place and are considered by DET not to have accessed a year of funded kindergarten, are therefore eligible for kindergarten funding in the following year.
DET	State Government Department of Education and Training.
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 3 year old children who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or Refugee or Asylum Seeker or are known to Child Protection.
Early Years Compact Agreement	A ten year agreement between Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Education and Training 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 Goals: <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.

Word/Term	Definition
Funded Kindergarten Place	After enrolment, children receive a funded DET kindergarten place when they attend kindergarten in the year before school From 2022, funded kindergarten places will be available for the two years prior to a child starting school Children are eligible for only one year of each 3 and 4 year old kindergarten place
Non Residents	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.
The Kindergarten Funding Guide	The Kindergarten Funding Guide is developed by DET and is updated from time to time to guide Kindergarten EYMS on operations including the eligibility criteria for funding and Priority of Access Criteria.
Kindergarten Registration	Information provided to Melton City Council by Parent/Guardians, advising of the request for a 3 and/or 4 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 EYMS to process enrolment
Kindergarten Enrolment	Completed by Kindergarten EYMS to enrol a child within their service
Kindergarten Early Years Managers (EYMS)	The service which operates the Kindergarten program that is participating in CRES
Kindergarten Priority of Access Criteria	In line with the State Government and the DET Priority of Access Criteria, Priority of Access Criteria is implemented to support fair and equitable access to kindergarten
Registration Fee	A non-refundable fee payable when lodging a registration for kindergarten that contributes to the cost of Council administering the Kindergarten Registrations.
MAV- Municipal Association Victoria	The legislated peak body for local government in Victoria.

5. Policy Statement

Melton City Council is committed to:

- meeting the needs of the local community regarding kindergarten placement / enrolment
- 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 DET funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in State Government Funded Kindergarten Services
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to all information provided on Kindergarten application 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.

Melton City Council is committed to the shared goals of the Early Years Compact and is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible kindergarten registration service to support **all** children's access to kindergarten.

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.

6. 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.

7. Allocation Priorities

The DET 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 eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- 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 DET 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 4 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 3 year-old Kindergarten they are wanting to enrol for 4 year old for the first two terms of 3 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 olds 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.

7.1. Non Residents

- Kindergarten applications from families who reside outside the Melton City Council municipality are required to have Director City Life final approval and acceptance based on recommendations from Council Officers/Manager based on the criteria above.
- Applications from residents residing outside the municipality wishing to enrol for Kindergarten the following year will not be assessed until November and will be determined on the Kindergarten vacancies at that time. Families should expect to receive an e-mail of the outcome of this decision by late November to early December

- Any applications received in the year that the child is due to commence Kindergarten will be reviewed by the Director City Life within four weeks of the application date.
- Non Residents who have accepted a placement for their child's 3 year old Kindergarten year are not guaranteed a 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

7.2. Second year of funded 4 year old Kindergarten

DET provides funding to support children to access a Kindergarten program in the two years before they start school.

As per the Kindergarten Funding Guide, a child is eligible to receive a second year of four year old funded Kindergarten if:

- the child is observed by the Early Childhood teacher as having delays in at least two outcome areas of learning and development detailed in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- there is evidence to suggest that the child will achieve better outcomes if they attend a second year of funded Kindergarten to strengthen the learning and development of skills in these areas and better facilitate transition to school the following year.

7.3. Deferrals

- In accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guide and its successor agreements, an enrolment may be deferred within Term One, provided the registration has not been recorded by the Kindergarten teacher on the DET Kindergarten Information Management System.
- Families wishing to defer their enrolment should speak with Kindergarten EYM staff as soon as possible to discuss their child's readiness for Kindergarten.
- Families, in consultation with the Kindergarten teacher, are required to complete a deferral form whereby their enrolment will be re-offered the following year.

Note: Families wishing to defer who do not attend the Kindergarten program will not be entitled to a Deferral. The child will need to be re-enrolled following the standard enrolment process.

8. Registration

8.1 Registration Forms

- Registration forms must be completed and accompanied by the registration administration fee (non-refundable) with supporting documentation as outlined in the Kindergarten Information Booklet.
- Registrations for both three and four year old kindergarten may be completed separately or within the same form.
- Kindergarten referral and expression of interest forms are for the purpose of identifying kindergarten eligible children. Information contained in the forms will be used to support kindergarten engagement but does not constitute a kindergarten registration or allocation.

8.2 Fee Waiver

- A fee waiver will automatically apply to families eligible for Early Start Kindergarten and those that meet the fee waiver criteria listed in the Kindergarten Information Booklet.
- A fee waiver due to financial hardship may be applied.

8.3 Closing Dates

- The closing date for the first and second round allocation of places will be listed on the registration form.
- Registration forms may be submitted for the remainder of the year, but will not be included in the first and second round of allocations unless they are received by the required date.

8.4 Changing Preferences

- A change of preference must be lodged with a Kindergarten Registration Officer. Once received, this change of preference will be treated as a new registration and processed in the next allocation round. Fees are applicable.

8.5 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 application form and in line with the Allocation Priorities of this policy.

8.6 Reserving Places

Two places per Kindergarten will be reserved for high priority children. DET defines high priority children to be:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, or Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children who meet the fee waiver criteria listed in the Kindergarten Information Booklet
- 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 disability or developmental delay

These places will be reserved until 30 October. Any remaining reserved places not filled by 30 October will be made available to preference list families and subsequent allocation rounds.

8.7 Managing Preference Lists

Children on preference lists will be allocated places once vacancies arise at individual Kindergartens. Places are allocated in order of the computer generated preference list and in line with the Allocation Priorities of this policy.

8.8 Offers

Families will be notified of a Kindergarten place after the close of first round allocations.

- If vacancies are not available at a preferred Kindergarten, Applicants will be placed on a preference list in accordance with the Allocation Priorities outlines in this policy.
- Second round offers will be administered approximately four weeks after the first round of offers.
- Offers after this time will be administered weekly.

8.9 Acceptance of place

- Following the offer of a place by Council, the parent/guardian must notify their acceptance to Council by the date listed on the letter. Families who do not notify by the date advised will forfeit their place.
- Parents/guardians who do not receive an offer to a Kindergarten of their choice will be notified that they are awaiting allocation via a preference list.
- Parents/guardians who choose to wait for the Kindergarten of preference and not take up a second or third preference offer will be placed on a preference list.

9 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.

10 Privacy

Access to completed application 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 enrolling parent or if required by law.

11 Responsibility and Accountability

11.1	Kindergarten Registration Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
11.2	Kindergarten Engagement Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
11.3	Children Services Team Leader <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that program procedures and systems support the policy• Oversee policy is implemented, referred to and reviewed as appropriate.
11.4	Kindergarten EYMS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
11.5	Parents & Guardians <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for providing all required documentation for the Kindergarten registration form by the date indicated in the Kindergarten Information Booklet.

12 References, Sources, Links to Legislation and Other Documents

Name	Location
<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 2016</i>	https://www.education.vic.gov.au/
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	www.legislation.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
<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