
Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment Policy



August 2021






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Kindergarten Central Registration and Enrolment Policy



Responsible director

Responsible officer

Functional area

Date adopted by Council

Review date

Director Corporate and Communities

Coordinator Early Years

Communities

6 September 2021

September 2023

Purpose

This policy outlines the registration, enrolment and allocation of kindergarten places by Northern Grampians Shire Council's Kindergarten Central Registration Enrolment Scheme (CRES). The CRES is a new online system for kindergarten enrolments that aims to simplify access to kindergarten services for families and carers. It also aims to increase kindergarten participation and, through this, provide better outcomes for children.

The CRES will collect and store data to create a central registration databank of children eligible for kindergarten in the Northern Grampians Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA). This will enable parents and guardians to enrol their children for both three and four-year-old kindergarten programs, with a choice of four kindergarten providers across the municipality. The kindergarten service provider will allocate a place based on availability and priority of access guidelines.

Background

The development of this policy is aligned with *The Victorian Government's Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan (2018)* which outlines a vision of early childhood reform in Victoria to create a higher quality, more equitable and inclusive early childhood system.

The Reform Plan builds on the *Early Years Compact (2017)*, a commitment from local governments (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria, MAV), the Department of Health and Human Services ((DHHS), now Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, (DFFH)) and the Department of Education and Training (DET), to work together with the goal of improving outcomes for young children. The *Compact* defines roles and responsibilities, joint planning, consistent goals and coordination across the early years services system to support effective delivery of early years services. The *Compact* also recognises the importance of place-based approaches which can respond effectively to unique local contexts.

Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) is committed to the shared goals of the local Early Years Kindergarten Providers Partnership, a partnership of the kindergarten service providers across the municipality. This includes a commitment to provide an inclusive and accessible kindergarten registration service to support access to kindergarten for all children.

The foundations of a child's long-term development are laid in early childhood. In these years, children develop crucial cognitive and emotional skills. Consequently, access to, and engagement in, a high-quality kindergarten experience prepares a child for school entry and lifelong learning.

Scope

The CRES is a local government-led initiative providing a single point for families to apply for kindergarten services within the NGSC, helping them secure a place that meets their needs. It also encourages closer links between council's services, including Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services and Early Learning Centre, other local kindergartens and family support services, to improve the early identification and engagement of children who need support to access kindergarten.

Details of registration and enrolment procedures, eligibility criteria and priority allocation are outlined in the implementation guidelines that support this policy.

This policy has been developed by NGSC in partnership with parents and guardians, the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service, supported playgroups and kindergarten service providers. It applies to all providers of kindergarten services in the municipality. These are:

- Aussie Kindies Early Learning - Stawell
- Emerge Coinda and Marrang Kindergartens - Stawell
- Northern Grampians Shire Council, St Arnaud Early Learning Centre.

Council Plan Outcomes

This policy aligns with four of the outcomes identified in the Council Plan 2021-2025. These are:

- Wellness and Welfare: we will advocate for facilities and capabilities that improve health and inclusion
- Improving connectivity: we aim to identify, advance and support new community connections through transport, digital services, events and the arts
- Advancing education: we will look for options to attract all ages to develop new skills, cultivate purpose and support community livelihoods
- Being a better council: we aspire to be a more communicative, collaborative and customer-focussed council

Policy Objectives

The NGSC CRES model will:

- improve access to information, registration, and enrolment to kindergarten through the provision of an online process.
- increase uptake of kindergarten through offering a single point of entry for enrolments for all kindergarten programs in the municipality.
- provide a system of fair allocation of kindergarten places through applying the Victorian "Priority of Access" criteria to enrolment applications, ensuring that children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage have priority access to kindergarten.

- provide data on current and projected demand for early years services, to inform evaluation and future planning, including early years infrastructure planning and investment.

Stakeholders

This policy applies to:

- parents/guardians of children eligible to access a three or four-year-old kindergarten program in the NGSC.
- participating NGSC CRES kindergarten service providers, NGSC M&CH service and supported playgroups.
- Council officers involved in the monitoring of early years education, facilities and community access and engagement.
- Council officers involved in the development and maintenance of NGSC CRES website portal.

Legislation and Standards

- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Sex and Age Discrimination Amendment Act 2011](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016](#)
- [Kindergarten Enrolment: Policy](#)

Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Northern Grampians Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information technology systems to support administrative tasks associated with CRES registrations. • Collection and storage of data to create a central registration databank of children eligible for kindergarten in NGSC. • Developing and implementing policy and guidelines • Monitoring implementation and reviewing as appropriate.
Kindergarten Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support best practice recommendations endorsed by Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) • Process incoming enrolments in accordance with DET "priority of access" guidelines and the NGSC CRES policy • Provide families with session times, orientation sessions and fee information in relation to the day-to-day operation of the kindergarten program. • Take responsibility for all operations of the kindergarten • Oversee policy implementation and participate in policy and CRES implementation reviews.

Role	Responsibility
Maternal & Child Health service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support best practice recommendations endorsed by Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).
Supported Playgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote active engagement in CRES for families and children. Provide outreach to support families experiencing disadvantage, vulnerability or other barriers to kindergarten engagement. Improve the early identification and engagement of children who need more support to access kindergarten.
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all required documentation for the kindergarten registration and enrolment. Notify the kindergarten provider of any required changes to parent/guardian information, transfer of preferences or withdrawal / cancellation of kindergarten registration and enrolment.

Review

Assessment of the policy will be undertaken every four years to ensure it remains current with the CRES goals, processes, aims and requirements and to align with council's goals, processes, aims and requirements. Triggers for an earlier assessment include legislative changes and introduction of new systems or procedures.

Communication and implementation

This policy will be available on NGSC's early years website page and the EDRMS (InfoXpert). A copy will also be available at participating CRES kindergartens, including availability at the NGSC Early Years Centre in St Arnaud.

References

- *Victorian Government's Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan* (2018)
- The Early Years Compact (2017): a commitment from local governments (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria, MAV), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria - www.education.vic.gov.au.

Compliance

- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Child Safety Act 2015*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- [Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

Privacy and Data Protection compliance

This policy has been developed in accordance with NGSC *Privacy and Data Protection and Health Records Policy 2018*. The data and information on the CRES system will be held in compliance with *Victorian Protective Data Security Standards (VPDSS)* as the primary reference point.

This includes compliance with *IIP 4.1 (Data Security)* which states that organisations “*must take reasonable steps to protect the personal information it collects from misuse and loss and from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.*”

Council will establish, implement and maintain a *Protective Data Security Plan (PDSP)* to manage data security risks and will maintain a secure system for storing personal and health information. Information Communications Technology (ICT) and operational systems, policies and procedures are in place to protect personal information from misuse and loss and from unauthorised modification or disclosure. Council will dispose of personal and health information when it is no longer necessary to fulfil the purposes for which the information was collected or as required by law, in accordance with Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV) Standards and policies.

Gender Equality Act 2020

As required under Part 3 of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, officers have completed a gender impact assessment as the policy and program impact the public. Gender impact assessments assess the effects that the policy and program may have on people of different genders to ensure the policy better supports Victorians of all genders

Charter of Human Rights compliance

This policy does not impact on any human rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Principles underpinning the CRES

NGSC is committed to ensuring that the CRES:

- meets the needs of the local community
- facilitates equal access for all children based on the priorities set out in this policy
- complies with relevant Commonwealth and State legislation and practice standards
- complies with DET funding requirements relating to the enrolment of children in Victorian Government funded kindergarten services
- complies with relevant NGSC policies and practice guidelines
- maintains confidentiality in relation to all information provided on kindergarten application forms
- is inclusive of all people, acknowledging the contribution of people and communities from diverse backgrounds, within the municipality
- strives for gender equity, specified in council strategies and relevant Commonwealth and Victorian legislation.

Procedures

- 1. Registration:** Child registration for both three and four-year-old kindergarten can be accessed and completed on the NGSC website. To complete the registration form, families and guardians need to provide information about themselves and their child. M&CH nurses and Supported Playgroup Facilitators will encourage and support families to complete registration.
- 2. Enrolment in preferred kindergarten:** Once families have registered, they are notified by their first choice of CRES kindergarten provider who informs them of availability of places. Families are provided with support to complete the enrolment if required.

- 3. Enrolment in preferred kindergarten:** places will be offered to eligible children, according to the parent/guardian preferences and the CRES allocation priorities of this policy.
- 4. Eligibility criteria and priority allocation:**
 - Children are eligible to attend kindergarten in accordance with the Victorian Government funding criteria. This includes access to ESK for Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander children, and children who have had contact with Child Protection or been referred to Child FIRST.
 - The NGSC CRES allocation priorities are aligned with those detailed in the Victorian Government *Kindergarten Guide* and the DET *Priority of Access Guidelines* and specified in the *NGSC CRES Operational Guidelines*.
 - Eligibility for a child to receive a second year of four-year-old funded kindergarten is aligned to the criteria in the DET *Kindergarten Guide*.
- 5. Parent/Guardian preferences:**
 - Parents/guardians may nominate up to three kindergartens of their choice on registration in order of preference and nominate any of the kindergarten providers within the municipality.
 - A change of preferred place must be lodged with the kindergarten service provider the parent/guardian is enrolled with. Once received, this change of preference will be forwarded to the parent/guardian by the nominated kindergarten service provider, who will treat the change as a new enrolment.
 - Where no response to an offer of placement is received by the kindergarten provider within the specified timeframe of two weeks, a courtesy SMS and or telephone call will be made prior to the child's place being cancelled and reallocate.
- 6. Waiting Lists:**
 - If vacancies are not available at their preferred listed kindergartens, parents/guardians may nominate to be placed on a waiting list for their preferred service and will be contacted by the relevant service when a place becomes available. Parents/ guardians who choose to wait for their preferred kindergarten and not take up alternative offers will remain on the waiting list.
 - Children on waiting lists will be allocated places once vacancies arise in accordance with parent/guardian nominated preferences. Places are allocated in order of the parent/guardian nominated preference and in line with the allocation priorities of this policy.
- 7. Fee Waiver:** a fee waiver will automatically apply to families eligible for Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and ESK.
- 8. Timing:** registration may be submitted at any time and allocation will be processed on submission. Kindergarten offers will be distributed to parents/guardians in July-August in the year before the nominated kindergarten year. Parents/guardians are required to accept or decline the offer within a two-week period. Children eligible for *Priority of Access* will be prioritised regardless of when registration is received.
- 9. Reserved places:** two places per kindergarten will be reserved for high priority children, as per the DET definitions. These places will be reserved until 1 December. Any remaining reserved places not filled by this date will be made available to families on the waiting list.

Review history

Date	Review details	Action
6 September 2021	Reported to Council	Adopted by Council