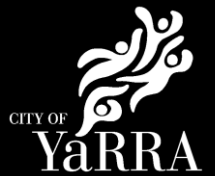


Priority of Access

A clear and transparent operational process for offering places in Council long day education and care services and kindergartens.



We acknowledge Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and their ongoing connection to the land, water, and sky Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present for their continued care of Culture and Country.

Source: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Whole of Country Plan 2025–2035 (2025), opening acknowledgement.

Document Details

Title:	Priority of Access Policy
Type:	Policy
Description:	The policy provides a clear and transparent operational process for offering places in Council long day education and care services and kindergartens to families that register their children through the Central Registration System (CRS).
Content Manager Ref:	[TBC]
Audience:	External and Internal Stakeholders
Approval Authority:	CEO
Responsible Branch:	Family, Youth and Children's Services
Document Owner:	Manager, Family, Youth and Children's Services
Human Rights Compatibility	This Policy has been assessed and is compatible with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights Responsibilities
Approval Date:	02/09/2026
Review Date:	02/09/2028
Version:	3

Background

Access to early childhood education and care, such as kindergarten and long day education and care services, has significant impacts of the long-term outcomes for children. Participation in quality programs supports young children with the development of their social and emotional skills, health and wellbeing, physical development, language development and cognitive function.

Access to early childhood education and care also enables families to pursue employment and study that can support financial self-determination and positive outcomes for family circumstances. Providing long day education and care and kindergarten services removes a barrier to participating in work or study, particularly for women, who have traditionally, and continue to, take on the greater portion of caring responsibilities.

Families and children in our community have a diversity of needs. Each family has a context where there are advantages and disadvantages that can impact a child's life journey. Research shows that access to quality early childhood education and care can support children and families by filling some of those gaps. The Commonwealth Government's Closing the Gap plan highlights the national priority to address the inequity of social outcomes for First Peoples. Closing the Gap targets Three and Four focus on the early years. This includes the target that at least 95% of four-year-old First People's children are engaged in high quality and culturally appropriate early childhood education and care by 2025.

Council also acknowledges that our diversity encompasses those families who include parents and children who are gender diverse or members of the LGBTIQ+ community. These children and families may intersect with our priority cohorts. Council assures rainbow families that they will be welcomed to our long day education and care and kindergarten services and our support to remove any barriers to access our early childhood education and care services is available, also promoting a sense of belonging.

Yarra's Community Profile

According to the Australian Development Census Data 2024, of the children beginning primary school:

- 18.2% of children were vulnerable in 2 of the 5 learning domains measured.
- 10.7% of children were vulnerable in 1 of the 5 learning domains measured.

Population data by ID analytics:

- 18.5% of Yarra households were classed as low-income households.
- 6% of Yarra households were single parent families.
- 88.2% of the Yarra population reported 1 or more health conditions.
- 3.9% of the Yarra population needing support for a disability
- 31.4% of the Yarra population had a mental health condition.
- 0.6% of the Yarra population identified as First Peoples.
- 8.1% of the Yarra population live in social housing.

1. Purpose

The Priority of Access Policy ensures that there are clear and transparent operational criterion and processes for the allocation of places into Council operated long day education and care and kindergarten services and in Council buildings where long day education and care and kindergarten services are operated by a non-Council provider.

Council places a priority on addressing the diverse needs of people in our community, and those who are experiencing vulnerability. This policy is evidenced based and ensures prioritisation of access to long day education and care and kindergarten services is based on the circumstances and needs of each family. With long day education and care provision, priority of access to placement also relates to the need for parents and guardians to participate in the workforce.

The Priority of Access Policy reflects:

- The Commonwealth Government's Child Care Subsidy program, which aims to assist families who are most in need and supports the safety and wellbeing of children at risk.
- The Commonwealth's Closing the Gap early years targets.
- The State Government's Kindergarten Funding requirements and Victorian Department of Education Koorie Kids Shine program.

- The insights from the Australian Early Childhood Development Census Data
- Council's ongoing commitment to residents of Yarra and equitable access to long day education and care and kindergarten services.
- Council's Social Justice Charter guiding principles of access and equity.
- Council's Yana Ngargna Plan priority area – Community Health and Wellbeing.

2. Scope

The Priority of Access Policy is applicable to funded kindergarten programs, and permanent long day education and care enrolment.

This policy applies to:

- Current and future Council managed long day education and care and kindergarten services.
- long day education and care and kindergarten services operating from a Yarra City Council building.

The policy does not apply to:

- Occasional care, Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) sessions, kindergarten after care and vacation care, and casual care sessions in long day education care.

3. Policy Statement

Application of the Priority of Access Policy

The Priority of Access Policy is a tool used by Council to support equitable assignment of placements in long day education and care and kindergarten services; and sits alongside other formal and informal strategies of engagement to support families to access services.

Supports provided by Council to engage in long day education and care and kindergarten services include:

Support/Program	Description
Central Registration System	Online form to register interest in Council's long day education and care and kindergarten services. Data is collected to support the cumulative prioritisation of each individual child to support equitable allocation of places.
Access to Early Learning Program	Referral based program that aims to ensure all children, particularly those facing barriers such as disadvantage, disability, or cultural and language challenges, can participate in quality early education and care. One to one enrolment support is given to families starting three-year-old kindergarten.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Outreach Officer	CALD Outreach officer undertakes activities in the broader community to raise awareness and offer one on one support to families to register and enrol their children into early childhood education service. The CALD outreach is often present at library children's session and playgroups to support families.
Collaboration with Maternal Child Health Services	The Children's Services Unit and Maternal Child Health Unit collaborate on informing families about early childhood education and care services during Key Age and Stage visits. Additionally, the teams collaborate on supporting families to engage in 3-and-four-year-old kindergarten.
Open Days, and Stay and Play Days	These are marketed events specific for Council-operated long day education and care and kindergarten services.

Priority of Access Delegations Applicable to Long Day Education and Care and Kindergarten:

Priority Tier	Criteria
Priority Tier 1	Priority Cohort 1 (as defined by State Government)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out-of-home care (OoHC)	- The child is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, and/or - The family, carer or legal guardian identifies the child as known to or having had contact with Child Protection or in Out-of-Home Care and/or - The parent or carer or child is experiencing family violence and/or has had contact with The Orange Door and/or - The child or family has previously accessed Flexible Support Packages and/or - The child is in receipt of Additional Childcare Subsidy (ACCS) - The child or family is referred by one of the following: - Child Protection - Child and family services - Maternal and Child Health nurse (MCH) - Out of Home Care provider
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	Self-declaration in central registration form
Asylum seeker and refugee children	- The child, a parent, a carer or a legal guardian holds, has previously held, or is applying for, a refugee or asylum seeker visa), or - The child, a parent, a carer or a legal guardian holds a current or expired <i>ImmiCard</i>, or - Children, parents, carers or legal guardians who previously held a refugee or asylum seeker visa and now hold Australian Citizenship or permanent residency.
Priority Tier 2	Priority Cohort 2 (as defined by State Government)
Children and/or families holding concession cards <i>**Evidence required</i>	A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veterans' Affairs Card.
Children from families with multiple births <i>**Evidence required</i>	Multiple birth children (i.e. triplets or quadruplets).
Priority Tier 3	

Priority Tier	Criteria
Children and/or families with additional needs who require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program <i>**Evidence required</i>	Child and family with additional needs who meet one of the following. Child: - is eligible under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or undergoing a continuing assessment of a disability under the NDIS (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist) - is eligible for Early Childhood Intervention Service Continuity of Support (ECIS COS) - is diagnosed with a disability or developmental delay or are undergoing diagnosis (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist) - presents with developmental concerns that presents barriers to accessing a kindergarten program (supported by a letter or other evidence from a MCH nurse or similar practitioner such as an allied health practitioner) - has complex medical needs that presents barriers to accessing a kindergarten program (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist) - holds a Disability Health Care Card. OR The child has previously accessed: - the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program, Commonwealth Inclusion Support Program or another similar program OR The child is referred by: - the National Disability Insurance Scheme - Early Childhood Intervention Service Continuity of Support (ECIS COS) - Preschool Field Officer program, or - MCH nurse or similar professional such as an allied health specialist, where developmental concerns have been identified. Parent or carer: - is eligible under the National Disability Insurance Scheme or undergoing a continuing assessment of a disability under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist) - has complex medical needs that present barriers to accessing a kindergarten program (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist) - holds a Disability Health Care Card.
Children accessing an additional year of Three or Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep	Children assessed with delays in two or more areas and are identified as eligible for an additional year of funded Three-Year-Old kindergarten, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep.
Priority Tier 4	
Children currently attending the service or <i>Early Years Precinct</i>	Children attending the service in the three-year-old kindergarten program and seeking to access four-year-old kindergarten or <i>Pre-Prep</i> at the same service for continuity of learning.

Priority Tier	Criteria
	Priority should be given to these children to remain at the same service for their four-year-old Kindergarten or <i>Pre-Prep</i> year to ensure continuity of learning. OR Children under three years old attending a service who are moving into funded kindergarten in the same service or precinct
Priority Tier 5	
Children of working families	Children where one, or both, parents or guardians are currently employed or studying.
Priority Tier 6	
Children and families with local connection	This includes: • Siblings of children enrolled in the same long day education and care or kindergarten service. • Children whose family resides in the Yarra municipality. • Children whose family work or study in the Yarra municipality.
Priority Tier 7	
All other children	

3.2 Priority places during Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten Reform

Until 2036, as services roll-out to 15 hours of three-year-old kindergarten and 30 hours of Pre-Prep (four-year-old kindergarten), priority of places will be given to:

1. Children accessing kindergarten in the year before school, i.e. four-year-old kindergarten access over a child eligible for three-year-old kindergarten.
2. Children in Pre-Prep Priority Cohort 1 as defined by the State Government.
3. As of 2028, children in Pre-Prep Priority Cohort 2 as defined by the State Government.
4. Ensuring that in the event of supply deficits, the maximum number of children can access kindergarten. This may mean delaying the expansion of kindergarten hours in favour of providing a higher number of places. i.e. 2 places at 15 hours rather than 1 place at 30 hours.

4. Related Documents

- [Commonwealth Government Child Care Provider Handbook](#)
- [Victorian Government Kindergarten Funding Guide](#)
- Victorian Government Implementation Guidance – Priority of Access – 2027-2028