CHILDCARE ENROLMENT POLICY

QUALITY AREA <7> | MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

PURPOSE

This policy outlines a clear framework for:

- providing information to families about enrolling in an early learning centre at ECMS
- managing the enrolment of families into childcare
- supporting equitable access to our programs for families by observing priority of access.

This policy governs the systems and procedures for managing registrations and enrolments across ECMS childcare programs. This policy supports ECMS in:

- responding to the needs of local communities.
- complying with state and national legislation and requirements for enrolment in long day care programs.
- upholding Privacy and Human Rights legislation.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- The Approved Provider, persons with management or control, Centre Director, Nominated Supervisor, and persons in day-to-day charge.
- Early Childhood teachers, educators, staff, contractors, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others enrolled and participating in ECMS programs and services, including during offsite excursions and activities.
- All ECMS-operated Early Learning Centres and Kindergarten programs.

POLICY STATEMENT

- Enrolment in ECMS Early Learning Centres meets the requirements of the Victorian Department of Education and Training and the Federal Department of Education and the Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act.
- Universal access to high-quality early learning helps children get a good start in life and has positive effects across society, consistent with ECMS's purpose to foster lifelong learning.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin all ECMS policies:

- Our policies reflect our purpose
- We use evidence to guide decisions

- Our policies are clear, accessible and purposeful
- Safety, equity and inclusion are non-negotiable
- We are accountable, transparent and always learning

Alongside ECMS's overarching principles, the following principles provide specific guidance for this policy:

- **Child-centred:** Enrolment processes are designed around the best interests of each child. Decisions prioritise children's wellbeing, safety, developmental needs, and continuity of learning, with flexibility to support inclusion and smooth transitions. Family input is valued and considered, while the child's rights and outcomes remain central, in line with *Regulations* 155–157 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- **Culturally safe and inclusive:** ECMS is committed to culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive enrolment practices that are free from discrimination. We welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, refugees, and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds through culturally responsive practices, language support where needed, and acknowledgement of Country. Priority of Access is applied to promote inclusion and reduce barriers, in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.
- **Equity:** ECMS promotes equitable access by applying Priority of Access consistently and supporting children and families who may experience vulnerability. Local criteria (such as siblings or proximity) are considered only after priority groups are applied. No child is excluded unlawfully, and enrolment and orientation processes are adapted where needed to address barriers such as technology, language, documentation, or immunisation requirements.

POLICY

Childcare Enrolment

- Families will waitlist their child(ren) for a place directly with ECMS via our website, except for families applying for a place at Oakhill Family Centre, who will waitlist their child(ren) directly with the City of Darebin.
- Places are allocated to eligible children according to the Allocation Procedure.
- Families who receive a place are then sent an offer to complete an enrolment form by the ECMS enrolments team before they can attend.
- There is no deadline or closure for enrolments, though all programs have a set number of places for children available. If there are no suitable vacancies, families will be placed on a waitlist.
- Families can book a tour of the Early Learning Centre before they enrol by submitting a form on the centre page.
- Families are required to submit a completed enrolment form along with the required supporting documentation before they can commence attending.

Free Kindergarten Early Learning Centres

At ECMS, we are committed to providing accessible and affordable early childhood education for families. Some ECMS Early Learning Centres (ELCs) also provide integrated kindergarten programs. Integrated kindergarten funding supports our long day care services by delivering high-quality, play-based kindergarten programs within the convenience of extended care.

These programs are delivered by degree-qualified teachers, providing 15 hours per week (or 600 hours annually) of structured learning aligned with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

For Families Attending Free Kinder in a Long Day Care

Please note that families can only enrol their child in one Free Kinder program at a time and will nominate which service receives their Free Kinder funding.

Free Kinder Funding at ECMS

Through the Victorian Government's Free Kinder initiative, families at ECMS services can access 15 hours of funded kindergarten at a significantly reduced cost in long day care settings.

How Free Kinder Funding Applies

Long Day Care Kindergarten: ECMS receives up to $2,101 per child annually, which is directly applied to offset fees for the kindergarten component of the program.

How Fees Work in Long Day Care

For families enrolled in our long day care services:

- The Free Kinder offset reduces the cost of the 15-hour kindergarten program each week.
- Families are only charged for additional care beyond the funded 15 hours, such as wrap-around care.
- Clear fee schedules are provided within each service to ensure transparency about costs outside the funded program.

Payments and Service Support

The Free Kinder funding is paid directly to ECMS by the Department of Education, allowing us to:

- Deliver high-quality kindergarten programs free or at reduced costs for families.
- Ensure equitable access to early childhood education across our services.
- Support the financial sustainability of our programs while meeting the diverse needs of our communities.

At ECMS, we believe every child deserves access to quality early learning, and the Integrated kindergarten funding and Free Kinder offset are vital tools in making

this vision a reality. Families can enjoy the flexibility of long day care combined with the benefits of a funded kindergarten program, ensuring every child's best start to life.

Long Day Care Fees

For information on Long Day Care fees, refer to the ECMS *Payment of Fees Policy*.

Immunisation

In 2016, amendments to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (known as the 'No Jab, No Play' policy) required children to be up-to-date with immunisations for their age to enrol in early childhood education services.

To finalise a child's enrolment, families will provide:

- current immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) that shows the child is up-to-date with all the immunisations due for their age, or
- current immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) that shows the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule, if they have fallen behind, or
- document that details the child's exemption under the 'grade period' provisions. A grade period of 16 weeks from the first day of the child's attendance at the service may apply to children from families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

ELC Priority of Access (PoA)

The priority of access criteria is applied to ensure fair and equitable allocation of childcare places in accordance with the Priority of Access Guidelines set out in the Family Assistance Law.

High Priority Children:

The groups below are given the highest priority for places within our early learning centres:

1. **Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care:** Children identified as being at risk of significant harm or neglect, including those in out-of-home care or those with a history of abuse.

2. **Children of working or studying parents:** Children of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy the work, training, or study test.

3. **Any other child:** All other children who do not meet criteria 1 and 2.

Within Priority Categories:

The following groups should also be given priority when allocating places within each of the priority groups listed above.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families:** Priority should be given to children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

- **Families with a person with disability:** Children from families that include a person with disability.
- **Low-income families:** Children from families with an adjusted taxable income not exceeding the lower income threshold or whose partner is on income support.
- **Non-English-speaking background:** Children from families who speak a language other than English.
- **Single parent families:** Children from single-parent families.

Room allocation

The ECMS enrolments team will allocate families to rooms taking into account their preferences as well as Priority of Access criteria.

Feedback and Complaints

All complaints and feedback submitted by families will be managed fully, fairly and within a reasonable time frame by ECMS. Families will not be adversely affected by raising and lodging complaints.

Families can find detailed information on this in the ECMS *Complaints and Feedback Policy* on the ECMS website.

Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

ECMS reviews and assesses this policy for effectiveness, adequacy and relevance every three years, or earlier if legislation, Child Safe Standards, or organisational priorities change. The review and update process will be aligned to legislative and regulatory changes, and interim updates may be made sooner, if significant changes occur, with regard to new regulatory obligations, or as a result of incident findings, audit outcomes or organisational restructure. Feedback from children, families, educators, and leaders informs learning and opportunities for continuous improvement to inform training, practice improvement and policy review. Insights are used to strengthen and implement improvement strategies through practice and systems, ensuring children remain safe, seen and heard.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Enrolment in ECMS ELC meets the requirements of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, the Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment, and the Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act.

Universal access to high-quality early learning helps children get a good start in life and has positive effects across society, consistent with ECMS's purpose to foster lifelong learning. This policy is aligned to legal obligations stipulated under relevant Commonwealth and Victorian legislation, regulations and standards, including the

Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010), *Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)*, *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic), Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic),* the National Quality Framework, Child Safe Standards (Vic), and associated relevant legislation, regulation and standards.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards
- Child Safe Standards (Vic)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- **Victorian Legislation** – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- **Commonwealth Legislation** – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- ACECQA: QA7 – Development of child enrolment record
- Australian Department of Education: Early childhood and care laws
- Victorian Department of Health: No Jab, No play for early childhood education and care services

ECMS FRAMEWORKS

- Assurance Framework
- Compliance Management Framework
- Financial Management Framework
- Policy Governance Framework
- Risk Management Framework

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints & Feedback Policy
- Kindergarten Enrolment Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy
- Orientation Policy

- Privacy and Confidential Information Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy

EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, ECMS will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedure, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*.

ATTACHMENTS

- **Appendix 1**: Roles & Responsibilities
- **Appendix 2**: Definitions

DOCUMENT VERSION HISTORY

Document Version History			
Version	**Reason for Amendment**	**Approved by**	**Review date**
2.0	Policy updated	ECMS Executive	March 2026

APPENDIX 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines the key roles and responsibilities required to implement and uphold this policy.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Approved Provider/ Executive Team	• Oversee policy governance, implementation and compliance. • Ensure systems are in place to implement this policy consistently across all ECMS services. • Provide resources, training, and support to services.
Area Managers	• Implement and comply with this policy. • Liaising with Local Government. • Provide information to the Director of Early Childhood Education and People Business Partners on workforce shortfalls.
Enrolments Team	• Apply priority of access criteria and effectively allocate places. • Liaise with Local Government on registration and enrolments processes. • Collect completed enrolment forms and supporting documents (e.g. Immunisation History, Health Care Card, Confirmation of Kindergarten Funding, etc).
Educators, Staff, Students on Placement, Volunteers and Contractors	• Assist families to access enrolment and supporting documents. • Discuss concerns about enrolment processes or submitted documents with Nominated Supervisors and Centre Directors. • Liaise with families about enrolment, entry age, and second year applications.
Centre Directors/ Nominated Supervisors	• Ensure ECMS *Immunisation Policy* and Procedure is followed. • Support educators and families with enrolment, entry age and second year applications. • Inform families receiving CCS about attendance requirements and keep information in their Centrelink account current.

Parents/Guardians	• Follow enrolment processes and providing relevant documents (e.g. Immunisation History, Health Care Cards, etc) • Discuss any additional needs with the team at their service.

APPENDIX 2: DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms, refer to the Definitions file of the ECMS Policy Catalogue.

Term	Definition
Approved Provider	The person or entity approved under the *Education and Care Services National Law 2010* to operate an education and care service.
Child Care Subsidy (CCS)	A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible parents/guardians with the cost of childcare. Payments are paid directly to approved childcare providers.
Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage	Children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child experiencing vulnerability include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, , substance abuse, or mental health; known to Child Protection; in statutory Out of Home Care; Aboriginal and/or Torre Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability.
Enrolment	An enrolment occurs when the provider has an arrangement with an individual or organisation to provide care to a child and the provider submits an enrolment notice in the Child Care Subsidy System. It is a requirement under Family Assistance Law for all children who attend childcare (or have an arrangement for care) to have an enrolment notice regardless of their Child Care Subsidy eligibility status.
Orientation	Process to support the child's transition to the service, whereby families spend time at the service with the child a few times before leaving the child on their own. The time required for orientation and settling in will vary for each child and their family.
Priority of Access (PoA)	The Priority of Access (PoA) criteria support services to prioritise children for enrolment when there are more applications than places available.