

PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

CORPORATE SERVICES



PURPOSE

This policy outlines ECMS's approach to the setting, communication, and collection of fees across all early learning services, including sessional kindergarten and long day care with integrated kindergarten programs. It ensures:

- Transparency and fairness in fee administration.
- Compliance with legislative and funding obligations.
- Support for families experiencing financial hardship.
- Financial sustainability of ECMS services.

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

ECMS is a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality early childhood education. ECMS is committed to an anti-bias approach in early childhood. ECMS operates within a framework of social justice and equity - this means we celebrate family and cultural diversity and aim to be supportive, responsive, and inclusive of all children. We aim to:

- Maintain a fair and transparent fee structure.
- Ensure families are informed of all fee-related matters.
- Support families through flexible payment options and hardship assistance.
- Uphold compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, and relevant government funding programs, such as Free Kinder and the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

ECMS implements its policy through supporting procedures, which also provide for the following where fees are chargeable:

- Fees to be reviewed annually.
- Families to complete a direct debit request form before a child starting at a service.

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- Families may request payment plans in cases of financial hardship. Regular payment for ongoing services is a required part of any payment plan.
- Fees apply during absences and notice periods.

ECMS does not require the payment of a bond to secure a child's place at our centres.

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

POLICY

Free Kinder Requirements

ECMS complies with the Victorian Government's Free Kinder requirements across both sessional and integrated long day care kindergarten programs.

- **Entitlement:** Families are entitled to 15 hours of free kindergarten per week (or 5-15 hours for three-year-old kindergarten) without being required to purchase additional hours. Under the Best Start Best Life (BSBL) reforms, Victorian children have access to two years of free kindergarten (3-year-old and 4-year-old programs). Pre-Prep commenced in six Local Government Areas (LGAs) in 2025, and will gradually roll out across the state, with programs expanding to 30 hours per week by 2032.
- **Offset in Long Day Care:** A free kinder offset is applied to fees no less frequently than monthly, beginning with the first invoice of Term 1. Invoices will show this as Victorian Government Free Kinder Offset.
- **Deposits and Fees:** Enrolment deposits are refundable. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee subsidy are exempt from enrolment deposits and waitlist fees.
- **Donations:** Any donations are voluntary and not required for participation
- **One Service Rule:** Families with children enrolled in more than one service must nominate a single service to receive Free Kinder Funding. If a nomination is not made, families may be responsible for paying the full year's fees.
- **Non-Payment of Fees:** Where fees remain outstanding, ECMS will: (1) issue a reminder notice to families; (2) proactively offer a payment plan; (3) refer accounts overdue to the Accounts Receivable team; (4) in cases of continued non-payment, refer to a debt collection agency as a last resort. ECMS will not remove a child's place solely due to fee arrears where a payment plan is in place or where hardship has been declared. Communication will remain respectful and confidential at all times.

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- **Fee Communication:** ECMS will communicate the fee schedule for each service, including any fees applicable to excursions and hours beyond the funded kindergarten program, prior to the commencement of enrolment.
- **Program Schedule and Planned Closures:** Program days and times are published on the ECMS website at ecms.org.au. Upon confirming enrolment, families can access their booked sessions via their online portal. Families will be notified in writing with reasonable notice of any planned closures outside of standard term dates, including professional development days.

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

Fees management in ECMS kindergarten 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) and Regulations 2011 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

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- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Subsidy) 2023
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic) and Regulations 2019 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) and Regulations 2006 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards – Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships
- Child Safe Standards (Vic) – Standard 4: Families and communities
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (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

- Australian Department of Education: [Early childhood and care laws](#)
- Vic Department of Health: [No Jab, No play for early childhood education and care services](#)
- Vic Government: [Kindergarten Funding Guide](#)
- Vic Government: [Free kinder guidelines for services](#)
- Vic Government: [Early Start Kindergarten](#)
- Vic Government: [Additional year of funded four-year-old kindergarten](#)
- Vic Government: [Going to kindergarten if your child is 6 years old](#)

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
- Governance & Leadership Policy
- Kindergarten Enrolment Policy
- Orientation Policy
- Privacy and Confidential Information Policy

EVALUATION

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

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- 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
1.0	Policy updated	ECMS Executive	July 2025
2.0	Policy updated to include content about program delays, fee communication and non-payment of fees	CFO	May 2026

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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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds ultimate accountability for policy implementation and compliance.
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for oversight of fee structures, debt management, and financial compliance.
Financial Controller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommends debt write-offs and oversees debt collection processes.
Area Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure policy compliance across services. Liaise with Department of Education and local government. Monitor fee collection and support Centre Directors and Nominated Supervisors.
Centre Directors, Nominated Supervisors and Enrolments Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate fee information to families. Support enrolment and CCS processes. Monitor payments and initiate payment plans. Maintain records of fee-related communication.
Accounts Receivable Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue invoices and monitor overdue accounts. Initiate debt collection processes. Communicate with families and external agencies.
Educators, Staff, Students on Placement, Volunteers, Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support families with fee-related queries. Direct families to appropriate contacts.
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and comply with fee requirements. Notify the Centre of changes affecting CCS. Engage proactively regarding financial difficulties.

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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 <i>Education and Care Services National Law 2010</i> to operate an education and care service.
Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)	The AIR is a national register administered by Medicare that records all vaccinations given in Australia, including to children. In the case of medical contraindication, an authorised medical practitioner completes and signs a Medical Exemption Form and supplies it to the AIR (previous forms of documentation, for example a letter from a GP or local council, are no longer acceptable).
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.
ESK (Early Start Kindergarten)	<p>Early Start Kindergarten grants enable families to attend 15 hours of funded kindergarten each week.</p> <p>ESK is available to children who are at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend the program and are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or • known to child protection
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.
Pre-prep	<p>From 2025, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to Pre-Prep, with programs across Victoria increasing from 15 to 30 hours each week.</p> <p>In 2026, Pre-Prep will be available statewide for Victorian children who meet certain eligibility criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander • from a refugee or asylum seeker background • who have had contact with Child Protection

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