

## Kindergarten Central Enrolment Policy

Policy Endorsement:	Endorsed by Executive Management Team		
Policy Superseded by this Policy:	Not applicable		
Directorate:	Community Services		
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Wellbeing		
Policy Type:	Operational		
File Number:	A8263734	Version No:	3
1 <sup>st</sup> Adopted by Council	Minute No.	Last Adopted by Council:	Minute No.
Review Period:	October 2021	Next Review:	October 2022

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## 1. POLICY OBJECTIVE (OR PURPOSE)

The kindergarten central enrolment scheme administers the allocation of kindergarten places in the municipality and is a central contact for families with children enrolling into state funded kindergarten, this includes three and four year old kindergarten places.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the process of kindergarten allocation across the municipality.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In 2015, the State Government introduced policy and funding changes to kindergarten central enrolment schemes for kindergarten service providers, to support the inclusion of vulnerable children, requiring priority of access into a high quality kindergarten programs.

In 2020, the State Government introduced funded three year kindergarten from 2022, for services in Greater Dandenong at 5 hours per week for each eligible child. Kindergarten service providers in the central enrolment scheme will move to offer 15 hours of funded kindergarten per week for each eligible child by 2023.

This policy is developed in response to increased demand for kindergarten places for three and four year old kindergarten in the municipality and changes to priority of access guidelines for state funded kindergarten programs.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Council staff
- Operators (kindergarten service providers) operating in council owned facilities
- Other operators (kindergarten service providers) participating in the kindergarten central enrolment scheme
- Families with an eligible child enrolling into kindergarten services within the municipality.

## 4. DEFINITIONS (OPTIONAL)

Unless otherwise specified within this policy, the following words and phrases are defined to mean the following in terms of this policy.

**The Operator** - Kindergarten Service Providers, either A early years manager or volunteer committee of parents/guardians responsible for the day-to-day management of a kindergarten service or child care service with integrated kindergarten.

**DET** - Department of Education and Training. The Victorian regulatory authority primarily responsible for the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services in Victoria.

**Priority of Access Allocation Criteria** - The criteria for the allocation of places to participating funded kindergartens within the kindergarten central enrolment scheme.

**Allocation Priority** - Allocation criteria assigned to applicants with the highest priority to attend kindergarten services as outlined by DET in the Kindergarten Funding Guide.

**Allocation of Places** - The process for the allocation of places to participating funded kindergarten programs within the kindergarten central enrolment scheme.

**Change of Details** - The adjustment of information provided to the kindergarten central enrolment scheme in the original application for kindergarten enrolment.

**Early Start Kindergarten** - A DET program that provides free or low cost kindergarten to eligible three year old children where programs are delivered by a qualified teacher.

**Eligible Child** - A child who is eligible to apply for a place in a participating kindergarten.

**Kindergarten Enrolment Portal** - The kindergarten enrolment portal for parents/guardians who wish to enrol their eligible child/ren into a funded kindergarten service, participating in kindergarten central enrolment scheme.

**Funded Kindergarten** - Funded kindergarten refers to both kindergarten and preschool, also known as three and four year old kindergarten. Kindergarten is a universal early childhood program funded by the Victorian Government for children in the two years prior to commencing primary school. In 2022, 3 year old Kindergarten is funded for 5 hours per week for each eligible child, from 2023 this will increase to 15 hours per week for each eligible child with a participating kindergarten service in the kindergarten central enrolment scheme.

**Health Care Card** – A concession card that entitles the person to cheaper medicines and concessions.

**Kindergarten Central Enrolment Officer** - The Greater Dandenong City Council employee responsible for administering the kindergarten central enrolment scheme.

**Child Protection** - A government agency that responds to reports of child abuse or neglect.

**Child FIRST** - Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams is a community based referral point into family services.

**Orange Door** - access point for women, children and young people who are experiencing family violence or families who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children to access the services they need to be safe and supported.

**Resident** - A person living in the City of Greater Dandenong.

**Full Capacity of Registered Space** - Each kindergarten room, accommodating a two groups x 15 hours of funded kindergarten per week over 40 weeks, operating at the licensed capacity of the room.

## 5. POLICY

### Kindergarten Central Enrolment

The Operator (kindergarten service provider) must comply with any policy established by Council, in relation to enrolment of children into kindergarten services in the municipality.

The Operator (kindergarten service provider) must:

- Deliver an accredited children's service/kindergarten that meets the requirements of the State and Commonwealth Early Years Policy Frameworks
- If directed by Council, provide a children's service/kindergarten which operates at registered capacity. The only exception to this is when the demand for children's service/kindergarten places is lower than registered capacity.

### Application Process

Enrolments are welcomed from birth and the child should be of kindergarten age before the 30th of April to be eligible to start kindergarten for the year of attendance for both three and four year old kindergarten.

Applications for kindergarten places will be accepted by the kindergarten central enrolment scheme throughout the year. However, it is preferable that all applications for enrolment into kindergarten services are received by Council by 30 June, the year prior to your child starting kindergarten.

It is important that three different preferred kindergarten service choices are listed in the enrolment portal. <https://kindergartens.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/enrolment/2022>

A separate online enrolment application must be completed for each child for 3-year-old and 4-year-old Kindergarten.

### Eligible year to attend kindergarten

Child's Date of Birth	Eligible Year 3-year-old	Eligible Year 4-year-old
01/05/2017 - 30/04/2018	n/a	2022
01/05/2018 - 30/04/2019	2022	2023
01/05/2019 - 30/04/2020	2023	2024
01/05/2020 - 30/04/2021	2024	2025
01/05/2021 - 30/04/2022	2025	2026
01/05/2022 – 30/04/2023	2026	2027

### Mandatory requirements

Parents and guardians can upload the following documentation to the kindergarten enrolment portal:

- Proof of the child's Date of Birth (e.g. copy of birth certificate, birth extract, or a copy of the child's health record accompanied by a Statutory Declaration verifying your child's date of birth to be true and correct).
- Proof of child's immunisation status (an Immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register will only be accepted)

- Current proof of the applicant's residency (e.g. copy of a rates notice or amenities bill that includes the parent/guardian's name and address and is issued within the last three months).
- Current proof of working, studying or using childcare in the City of Greater Dandenong (pay slip, enrolment notice or childcare payment advice).
- Current proof of asylum seeker/refugee Visa
- Current proof of healthcare or concession card
- Other documents such as Custody orders, additional needs information.

### **Allocation Priority**

Kindergarten Places will be allocated on the basis of the following priority criteria:

#### **Priority 1**

**(All criteria of equal priority)**

**City of Greater Dandenong Resident applicants in highest priority criteria:**

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, or 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 disability or developmental delay

#### **Priority 2**

**City of Greater Dandenong Resident applicants not identified in the highest priority criteria.**

#### **Priority 3**

**Non-resident applicants of the City of Greater Dandenong:**

- With children who attend childcare within the municipality for a minimum of three days per week
- Whose parent/guardian works or volunteers within the municipality for a minimum of three days per week.

#### **Priority 4**

**Non-resident applicants of the City of Greater Dandenong:**

- Other

### **Allocation of places**

Council cannot guarantee applicants will receive a place at the kindergarten of first choice; this will depend on the number of applicants and the number of funded kindergarten places available against the priority of access allocation criteria.

In a situation where the same number of priority criteria is met, kindergarten places will be allocated on the highest vulnerability of children at risk of abuse or neglect, or in Out-of-Home care with Child Protection, Child First or the Orange Door.

If the first preference kindergarten is not available, the kindergarten central enrolment officer will offer a place at the second and third preference kindergarten services listed on the kindergarten enrolment portal or where a vacancy exists throughout the municipality in consultation with the family.

Three and four-year-old kindergarten places are allocated separately. Every effort will be made to place children at the same service for both three and four-year-old kindergarten. However, Council cannot guarantee this will occur due to the number of funded kindergarten places available against the priority of access allocation criteria.

**Confirmation of Details**

Parents/guardians can access the kindergarten enrolment portal and confirm their details and make any changes to preferred kindergarten services up until 30 June. This information will assist in the allocation of first round offers and kindergarten session planning with service providers.

**Allocation Offers**

<b>First Round Offers</b>	From 25 July
<b>Second Round Offers</b>	During August
<b>Late Offers</b>	Late applications received after August 31, will be offered a place where vacancies exist, in accordance with the priority of access allocation criteria.
<b>Offers sent to kindergarten service providers</b>	During September

**Offer process**

Families will be sent an email or SMS offer for placement at a kindergarten service. Parents or guardians can respond to their kindergarten placement offer, by selecting the correct button and responding via email or sms to:

- accept the offer
- decline the offer or
- defer their enrolment application to the following year

Acceptance of a place forfeits the right to remain on a waiting list for another kindergarten in the municipality.

**Managing Waiting Lists**

Children on waiting lists will be allocated places, once vacancies arise at individual kindergarten services. Places are allocated in order of a randomised computer-generated ballot, in line with the enrolment allocation priorities of this policy.

**Disclaimer**

While the general intent of this policy will be adhered to, Greater Dandenong City Council may, at its discretion, make modifications to such procedures where extenuating circumstances require such action. Where incorrect information has been supplied on the kindergarten enrolment portal, offers for places may be retracted.



## 6. RESPONSE TO THE OVERARCHING GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020

### Background

Section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states that a Council must in the performance of its role give effect to the overarching governance principles. These are:

- (a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;
- (b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;
- (c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;
- (d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;
- (e) innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;
- (f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;
- (g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;
- (h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;
- (i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Also, in giving effect to the overarching governance principle above, a Council must take into account the following supporting principles:

- (a) the community engagement principles (section 56);
- (b) the public transparency principles (section 58);
- (c) the strategic planning principles (section 89);
- (d) the financial management principles (section 101);
- (e) the service performance principles (section 106).

All of the above principles are elaborated on within the *Local Government Act 2020* which can be found at the following link:

[Local Government Act 2020](#)

This policy:

- considers and responds to the overarching governance principles; and
- affects members of the community and needs specific community engagement and how that community engagement will be formulated under Council's Community Engagement Policy; and
- is made transparent to the people that it affects under Council's Public Transparency Policy; and
- integrates with Council's Community Vision and Council Plan and considers the resources required to implement and review it regularly; and
- impacts on existing and future budgets and how any funding and resources associated with the policy will be prudently and efficiently managed; and
- delivers equitable, accessible and responsive services of good value to the community and services that are effectively monitored and continuously improved.

## 7. CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006 – COMPATIBILITY STATEMENT

### Background

Council, Councillors and members of Council staff are a public authority under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and, as such, are all responsible to act in accordance with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006* (the Charter). The Charter is founded on the following principles:

- human rights are essential in a democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law, human dignity, equality and freedom;
- human rights belong to all people without discrimination, and the diversity of the people of Victoria enhances our community;
- human rights come with responsibilities and must be exercised in a way that respects the human rights of others;
- human rights have a special importance for the Aboriginal people of Victoria, as descendants of Australia's first people, with their diverse spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters.

Given its diversity and inclusiveness, when developing this policy for the Greater Dandenong City Council, the Charter has been considered and that the policy is consistent with the standards set by the Charter including:

- Section 13 – Right to privacy and reputation;
- Section 14 – Right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief;
- Section 15 – Right to freedom of expression;
- Section 16 – Right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association;
- Section 17 – Right to the protection of families and children (please also check Council Child Safe Standards Policy for relevance);
- Section 18 – Right to have the opportunity to take part in public life and to vote;
- Section 19 – Right to enjoy one's culture, practice religion or use one's own language and in the case of Aboriginal persons, the right to have distinct cultural rights;
- Section 24 - Right to a fair hearing;

The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* can be found at the following link:

[Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)

## 8. RESPONSE TO THE GENDER EQUALITY ACT 2020

### Background

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* comes into operation on 31 March 2021 (if not proclaimed earlier). It requires that councils take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services. In this regard, the objects of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* must be considered in the development of this policy and are as follows:

- (a) to promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women; and
- (b) to support the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs and delivery of services in workplaces and communities; and
- (c) to recognise that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes; and
- (d) to redress disadvantage, address stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence, and accommodate persons of different genders by way of structural change; and
- (e) to enhance economic and social participation by persons of different genders; and
- (f) to further promote the right to equality set out in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* can be found at the following link:

[Gender Equality Act 2020](#)

Council's Diversity, Access and Equity Policy and the *Gender Equality Act 2020* have been considered in the preparation of this policy but are not relevant to its contents.

The policy is purely administrative in its nature and does not have the potential to influence broader social norms and gender roles.

## 9. CONSIDERATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

### Background

One of the overarching governance principles of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted

In January 2020, this Council joined a growing number of cities around Australia and declared a "Climate and Ecological Emergency" and committed this Council to emergency action on climate change. Council has developed a Climate Change Emergency Strategy and Action Plan 2020-30 to help the City of Greater Dandenong become a resilient, net zero carbon emission city with an active community prepared for the challenges of changing climate. You can find the strategy and action plans at the following link:

[Greater Dandenong Website – Sustainability, Climate and Energy](#)

Council's Declaration on a Climate and Ecological Emergency, Council's Climate Change Emergency Strategy 2020-2030 and the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* in relation to the overarching governance principle on climate change and sustainability have been considered in the preparation of this policy but are not relevant to its contents, as this policy is for administration and allocation of kindergarten places.

## 10. RESPONSIBILITIES

All Council Officers involved in undertaking community engagement with kindergarten central enrolment are responsible for ensuring that any community engagement and associated activities are compliant with this policy.

## 11. REPORTING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Evaluation of all kindergarten central enrolment processes will allow for the ongoing review and improvement of this policy. These evaluations will enable Council to better identify barriers to participation and any areas of our community who are continually under-represented. The success of this policy will be measured by the quality of Council's engagement processes and the satisfaction of our community in how we engage with them.

## 12. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

### Legislation

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*
- *Disability and Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Law 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Privacy and Data Collection Act 2006*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*

### Related Council and Other Policies, Procedures, Strategies, Protocols, Guidelines

- Council Plan
- Community wellbeing Plan
- Children's Plan 2021-2026
- Imagine 2030 Community Plan
- Greater Dandenong City Council Access, Diversity and Equity Policy
- Climate and Ecological Emergency, Council's Climate Change Emergency Strategy 2020-2030
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training)
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *Victorian Auditor General Early Childhood Development Services: Access and Quality 2011*