



Emails to the early childhood education and care sector

2026

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From the department

Community Child Care Fund grant now open

Applications for the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant are now open.

This grant helps early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in areas experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability stay open and continue supporting families.

We invite you to apply if you:

- operate in, or service families from, an identified priority area
- operate in, or service families from, a regional, remote or very remote area, or
- provide specialised care to communities experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

There are 2 funding streams available:

- **Sustainability support** – for activities to improve your financial viability.
- **Capital support** – for minor works to improve your existing facilities.

You can apply for one or both streams.

Visit our website to [learn more and apply](#). Applications close at 9 pm AEDT on 25 February 2026.

Building early education in South Australia

The Australian Government, in partnership with the South Australian Government, is supporting new and expanded ECEC services for families in Kadina, Kimba and Quorn.

Through the Building Early Education Fund, the Australian Government will provide:

- \$5 million to build a new, expanded hub at Kadina Child Care Centre to deliver 109 new places for families on the Copper Coast, raising total capacity to 162 places
- \$330,000 to expand facilities for Kimba Community Kindergarten to deliver 20 new long day care places for the Eyre Peninsula community
- \$330,000 to expand facilities for Quorn Kindergarten to deliver 20 new long day care places in the Flinders Ranges.

The South Australian Government will contribute \$3.2 million towards the project at Kadina Child Care Centre. Kadina Child Care Centre is a not-for-profit, community-based provider.

Kimba Community Kindergarten and Quorn Kindergarten are public preschools operated by the Department for Education South Australia.

The projects are expected to be completed by early 2028, giving more families access to quality ECEC where it is needed most.

The funding is provided through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule signed with the South Australian Government.



This agreement is one funding stream within the \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund. It is part of a broader commitment to chart the course to a universal ECEC system.

Learn more about the [Building Early Education Fund](#).

CCS Provider Helpdesk closed on Monday

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed for the public holiday on Monday 26 January.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 27 January.

You can contact the helpdesk anytime at CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au and we will respond during business hours.

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.

Plan ahead and contact us early if you have any urgent queries.

CCS period of emergency in Queensland

A CCS period of emergency was in place in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.

Visit our website to see:

- [regions and timeframes where the period of emergency applies](#)
- [details of support available during and after a period of emergency](#).

We continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates as required.

Geccko

Have you registered for mandatory national child safety training?

With mandatory national child safety training going live on 27 February 2026, please ensure your workforce has [registered for Geccko](#).

The following people must complete the training:

- persons with management or control
- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge
- Family Day Care Educators
- other staff, volunteers and students.

The training is being developed by the Queensland Government and the Australian Centre for Child Protection. It will be available on Geccko.

Everyone must have their own Geccko account using a personal email. If anyone uses a shared account, they must reregister using their own email.

Use the [communication toolkit](#) to push reminders across staff channels. If staff need help, direct them to our website for [account support](#).



New Geccko course: Payments and fees

Our new course will help you understand how to manage payments and fees.

What you'll learn

The course will help you:

- explain payments and gap fees
- describe what a CCS statement of entitlement must include
- know when a statement of entitlement should be provided
- understand how to apply third-party payments and discounts to a family's fees
- record and report third-party payments and discounts
- explain overpayments and debts and how to avoid them.

Access the course on the [Geccko learning platform](#).

Facts from FAL

The enrolment process in 4 steps

As we enter a new year, it's a good time to refresh your understanding of the enrolment process.

All children who attend approved care must be enrolled. This is a requirement under Family Assistance Law.

Enrolling children correctly means families can get CCS payments.

Follow these steps.

Step 1

Families lodge a CCS claim using their Centrelink online account. They should do this before their child starts at your service.

Step 2

You and the family agree on care arrangements for the child. Families must agree to the care arrangements in writing.

Step 3

Submit an enrolment notice in the CCS System for the care arrangement.

Step 4

The family will be prompted to confirm the enrolment via their Centrelink online account. CCS payments will not start until the enrolment is confirmed.

Read more details about the [enrolment process](#) on our website.

Overseas travel and allowable absences

Families can get CCS when their child is unable to attend child care up to 42 days a year.



Families can use their 42 allowable absences for short-term travel overseas. However, families will stop being entitled for CCS after 6 weeks overseas until they return to Australia.

Learn more about [allowable absences](#) on our website.

Workforce support

Early Childhood Workforce Reference Group strengthens engagement

A new Early Childhood Workforce Reference Group will strengthen engagement between government and the ECEC workforce.

The group gives frontline educators a clear way to share their experiences and ideas with government.

Their real-world insights will help:

- shape decisions
- support how policies are put into action
- guide future planning.

Membership reflects the diversity of the workforce, including:

- educators with different qualifications and experience
- union representatives, peak bodies and sector experts
- voices from different service types, settings and communities.

Minister for Early Childhood Education, Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh, announced the group at the Early Childhood Australia National Conference in October 2025.

The group first met in November 2025, and planning is underway for 2026.

Regular meetings will support ongoing dialogue between government and the workforce, so policy is grounded in lived experience.



Queensland floods: CCS period of emergency declared 12 to 16 January 2026

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 12 to 16 January in the following local government areas (LGAs):

- Aurukun
- Burdekin
- Burke
- Carpentaria
- Cassowary Coast
- Central Highlands
- Cloncurry
- Cook
- Croydon
- Diamantina
- Doomadgee
- Douglas
- Etheridge
- Flinders
- Hinchinbrook
- Isaac
- Mackay
- McKinlay
- Mount Isa
- Palm Island
- Pormpuraaw
- Richmond
- Townsville
- Whitsunday
- Winton
- Yarrabah

We continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates as required.



For action

If you close your service, you must tell:

- us via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software
- your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

Update your details via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System, so you don't miss important information
- your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care.

Support during the emergency

The following support is available in affected regions **during** the CCS period of emergency:

- you can continue to get CCS if your service closes as a direct result of the emergency
- you can waive the gap fee if a child doesn't attend, or your service is closed, during the CCS period of emergency
- families will get unlimited allowable absences for the duration of the CCS period of emergency.

A gap fee waiver is a type of provider discount. You must report the type and amount of [prescribed discounts](#) in session reports if they have been applied for the session.

Read more about [support during a CCS period of emergency](#).

Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.

Recovery after the emergency

Some services may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#). Read the eligibility criteria **before** applying.

Families may be able to access:

- [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [recovery after an emergency](#) on our website.

Other disaster support

The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).

Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [qld.gov.au/emergency](#).



Geccko

Get ready for mandatory national child safety training

Mandatory national child safety training starts 27 February 2026.

The following people involved in early childhood education and care (ECEC) must complete the training:

- persons with management or control
- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge
- Family Day Care Educators
- other staff, volunteers and students.

The training is being developed by the Queensland Government and the Australian Centre for Child Protection. It will be available on Geccko.

To access and complete the training, all users must have an individual Geccko account. Ask your workforce to [register for Geccko](#) or [log in](#) and confirm their details today.

Use the [communication toolkit](#) to encourage your staff to register early. If staff need help, direct them to our website for [account support](#).

From the department

Day Guarantee is now in effect

All Child Care Subsidy (CCS) eligible families can now get at least 72 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. These changes are known as the 3 Day Guarantee.

Families can get 100 hours of subsidised child care each fortnight for each child if they:

- care for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child
- have more than 48 hours each fortnight of recognised participation
- have an exemption or experience exceptional circumstances, or
- receive Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing, temporary financial hardship or grandparent payments.

Families must still pay a gap fee, except in certain circumstances.

Families are not guaranteed a place with a provider. Families will still need to secure a place with their chosen child care service.

Families who want to get more than 72 hours will need to report their recognised participation to Services Australia.

Find out more about the [3 Day Guarantee](#) on our website.



National CCTV Assessment – invitation to participate

Australian governments are working together to strengthen safety, improve quality, and protect children in ECEC. Part of this commitment is a national assessment of CCTV use in ECEC settings.

Up to 300 services across the country will take part in this important initiative – and your service can be one of them!

We invite approved providers that have CCTV installed to submit an expression of interest (EOI).

Participation funding may be available.

What's the aim of the assessment?

- Determine how CCTV can be used safely and effectively in ECEC to maximise child safety.
- Build a strong evidence base to inform future policy and best practice principles.

How to apply

[Apply through our website](#). Submit one consolidated EOI on behalf of your service sites.

The EOI closes 23 January 2026.

More information

You can [watch the recording or read Q&As from our sector briefing](#) on our website.

The briefing covered:

- an overview of the assessment, objectives and timelines
- the assessment's role in the child safety reform agenda
- the EOI process
- data collection and monitoring requirements.

For more information, please contact cctvassessment@nousgroup.com.

CCS period of emergency in Victoria

A CCS period of emergency is in place in parts of Victoria following bushfires.

Visit our website to see:

- [regions and timeframes where the period of emergency applies](#)
- [details of support available during and after a period of emergency.](#)

We continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates as required.

Sector spotlight

Inclusion is everybody's responsibility

Inclusion is a human right. It's also everybody's responsibility.



We have information and resources to help you understand:

- what inclusion looks like in an ECEC setting
- where your inclusion obligations come from
- how to embed inclusive practices
- how to get help when you experience barriers to inclusion.

Learn more about [inclusion in ECEC](#).

Facts from FAL

Getting ready for the new school year

As we approach the start of another school year, here are some key reminders about CCS:

Keep details up to date

Families should confirm their child's expected primary school date with Services Australia. This information is used to calculate the family's CCS rate.

CCS during school holidays

Children who have finished primary school can still attend care and receive CCS over the holidays if they:

- are under 13
- have not yet started high school.

Ending enrolments

If a family advises that their child is leaving care, you must end the enrolment. This may apply to children who leave your service to start school. You can do this in the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or through your third-party software.

Absences after last attendance

CCS is generally not paid for absences after a child's last physical attendance at your service. Read more about [absences at the start or end of an enrolment](#) on our website.

Reporting absences on public holidays

Services are allowed to report absences on public holidays only if they would normally be open on that day.

For example:

- if your service is normally open on Mondays, you can report absences for the upcoming public holiday on Monday 26 January
- if your service only operates from Wednesday to Friday, you **cannot** report absences for this public holiday.

You can only report absences for children who would have normally attended care on that day. If you do report an absence, you must still collect the gap fee from families. It is up to providers whether to report an absence and charge families on a public holiday.



We recently reviewed sessions of care submitted for public holidays. We found that some services recorded attendances on public holidays, even though they were closed.

You must **not** record children as attending if your service is closed. This is incorrect and may result in [compliance action](#). This can include:

- infringement notices
- placing conditions on CCS approval
- raising a debt
- suspending or cancelling CCS approval
- civil penalty orders
- criminal prosecution.

You can find more information about [managing absences on our website](#).

Statement of tax record

New providers must provide a [statement of tax record](#) as part of their CCS approval.

Notify us about changes

You must [notify us](#) about fees, vacancies, closures and changes to information.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment update

Gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review

The worker retention payment will absorb the award increases from the gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review.

On 10 December 2025, the Fair Work Commission's Expert Panel announced changes to the *Children's Services Award 2010* as part of its gender pay equity review. These changes take effect from 1 March 2026. You can read more on the [Fair Work Commission website](#).

The worker retention payment has been designed to absorb the impact of the review for the life of the program. Because the retention payment is higher than the award increase for every classification, the extra amount you pay above the award will reduce by the same amount as the award increase.

Applications for the worker retention payment are still open for eligible providers. If you're thinking of applying, we have [information and resources to guide](#) you through the process.

Tell your community you've signed up

Is your service receiving the worker retention payment in 2026? Let your community know.

Use our [worker retention payment communication toolkit](#) to spread the word.

You may use the materials once you've been approved and entered into a grant agreement.



Supporting smooth transitions

The new year can bring many changes and transitions within a learning community, from changing rooms to welcoming new children and families.

Educators can support positive beginning-of-year transitions by:

- planning and preparing through a supportive orientation process
- communicating consistently with children and families
- establishing predictable routines while remaining flexible to individual needs.

Explore Be You's resources to support smooth transitions, including:

- [fact sheets](#)
- a [micro learning package](#)

the Healthy Transitions topic within the [Connect professional learning module](#).

News for families

Child Care Subsidy changes to help eligible families

From 5 January 2026, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) eligible families can get at least 72 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight or 3 days per week.

These changes are known as the 3 Day Guarantee.

Read more on the [Services Australia website](#).



Victorian bushfires: CCS period of emergency extended, new areas added

We've extended the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Victoria following bushfires.

What's new

- Another 5 LGAs have been added.
- Some LGAs have had their emergency period extended.
- Dates vary by location.

Emergency period: 8 to 16 January 2026

(New areas in **bold**)

- Ararat
- **Alpine**
- Colac Otway
- Corangamite
- **East Gippsland**
- **Golden Plains**
- Greater Bendigo
- Horsham
- Mansfield
- **Mildura**
- Mitchell
- Moira
- Mount Alexander
- Murrindindi
- Pyrenees
- Strathbogie
- Towong
- **Wellington.**
- **Emergency period: 8 to 12 January 2026**
- Campaspe
- Central Goldfields
- Glenelg



- Greater Shepparton
- Hindmarsh
- Loddon
- Moyne
- Northern Grampians
- Southern Grampians
- Warrnambool
- West Wimmera
- Yarriambiack (Central and South).

We'll continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates as required.

For action

If you close your service, you must tell:

- us via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software
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Update your details via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software, including:

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- your vacancy details on StartingBlocks.gov.au to help families looking for care.

Support during the emergency

The following support is available in affected regions **during** the CCS period of emergency:

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Recovery after the emergency

Some services may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#). Read the eligibility criteria **before** applying.

Families may be able to access:

- [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences



- [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [recovery after an emergency](#) on our website.

Other disaster support

The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).

Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [VicEmergency](#).



Victorian bushfires: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Victoria following bushfires.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 8 to 12 January 2026 in the following local government areas (LGAs):

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- Campaspe
- Central Goldfields
- Colac Otway
- Corangamite
- Glenelg
- Greater Bendigo
- Greater Shepparton
- Hindmarsh
- Horsham
- Loddon
- Mansfield
- Mitchell
- Moira
- Mount Alexander
- Moyne
- Murrindindi
- Northern Grampians
- Pyrenees
- Southern Grampians
- Strathbogie
- Towong
- Warrnambool
- West Wimmera
- Yarriambiack (Central and South).

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