



# Emails to the early childhood education and care sector

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## From the department

### National child safety training proving hugely popular

**Foundations of national child safety training is now available in Gecco – and over 20,000 of you completed it within the first few days!**

This reflects strong commitment across the sector to strengthening child safety.

Foundation child safety training is now mandatory for all people working or volunteering in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) service regulated under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

**There's plenty of time to complete foundation training.** All staff have until 27 August 2026 to complete it. You don't need to complete it in one sitting – you can save your progress and return at any time.

Foundation training consists of 2 courses:

- understanding child safety
- understanding and identifying child abuse and neglect.

You must finish both courses to complete foundation training. It is estimated to take approximately 2 hours to complete, although this will vary from learner to learner.

Providers are responsible for ensuring their staff complete the training. We outline support available to help staff complete training below.

Learn more about [national child safety training](#).

### Everything you need to know about service closures for national training

**Services can use approved closure time to complete the new national child safety training without disrupting families.**

Here's a quick summary of what providers need to know.

#### What the measure allows

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved services can close for up to 5 hours per calendar year so staff can complete the mandatory national child safety training. Services can continue to claim CCS during these closures.

Closures must start no earlier than 5 pm.

#### Who it applies to

- Centre Based Day Care (CBDC)
- Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)
- Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) educators

For FDC and IHC, the 5-hour annual cap applies per individual educator, who may be unavailable between 5 pm and normal closing time (no later than midnight).



## Your responsibilities

If you choose to use closures, you must:

- plan and schedule the closure
- notify families early
- ensure staff complete the mandatory training
- [keep required records](#).

Families receiving CCS during a closure must continue to pay the gap fee under Family Assistance Law.

Find out more, including your [record keeping responsibilities](#), on our website.

## Subsidy to support national child safety training coming soon

**A professional development subsidy to help providers cover wages while staff complete national child safety training will open soon.**

CCS approved providers will be able to apply on behalf of staff who:

- provide direct ECEC, or
- supervise children.

This includes centre directors, early childhood teachers and educators.

We encourage providers to use service closure time to support all staff to complete training. You can only apply for the professional development subsidy for staff members who do not complete training during service closure periods.

You can use the subsidy to:

- backfill staff while they undertake the training during work hours, or
- pay staff to complete the training outside their usual work hours.

It is not intended to cover the full cost of wages.

Applications are expected to open in Quarter 2 of 2026. We will prioritise applications from small and medium providers on a first come, first served basis.

Find out more about the [professional development subsidy](#). We will publish more details, including grant guidelines, soon.

## National early childhood worker register now live

**The new national register for ECEC workers is now active. Approved providers must now enter who is working in their services and keep it up to date.**

Regulatory authorities will use the Register to identify who is working in ECEC services and where, helping them monitor and respond to risks.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) will provide instructions on how to enter and maintain information in the Register.

For requirements, guidance and system information visit [ACECQA's website](#).



## CCS Provider Helpdesk closed on Monday

**The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed for the public holiday on Monday 9 March.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 10 March.

You can email the helpdesk anytime at [CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au) and we will respond during business hours.

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.

## CCS period of emergency in the Northern Territory

**A CCS period of emergency was in place in parts of the Northern Territory 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.

## Sector spotlight

### Inclusion Support Program: updated vacation care assessment process

**The Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) is updating its assessment process for vacation care cases in Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) settings.**

This update aligns with the recent changes to the assessment processes for school-aged children who leave for school during the approval period.

Starting from the April 2026 school holiday period, approved vacation care cases will:

- continue to receive the maximum allowable duration of 52 weeks
- receive funding to support an additional educator for the upcoming holiday period only
- require a Change of Circumstances application to access funding for each subsequent holiday period within the approval period.

Rather than receiving up to 12 weeks of funding at the time of approval, services will receive funding aligned to the upcoming holiday period only.

Services can submit Change of Circumstances applications to support succeeding holiday periods.

To support these changes, we have made the Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) review requirements simpler.

We have not changed:

- SIP requirements for all other application types
- renewal requirements for all application types including vacation care.

For more information about this change, speak to your [local Inclusion Agency](#) or refer to the [Vacation Care factsheet on the IDFM website](#).



# Facts from FAL

## Debt explainer – absences before and after enrolments

**Absences reported before a child's first physical attendance or after their last are not eligible for CCS.**

Absences at the start or end of an enrolment may be eligible for CCS only if they fit within the extended period and meet an approved reason. If not, any CCS paid may be raised as a debt.

### How to avoid a debt

- Only report absences after a child has physically attended, unless a valid exemption applies.
- Check if the absence falls within the 6-day extended period *and* meets one of the approved reasons.
- Keep accurate records for any absences that need evidence.

### For example

A child is booked to start on 10 March, but they don't show up.

You report the absence.

Because the child has never physically attended, CCS won't be paid unless there is a valid extended-period reason (like a family tragedy).

If not, CCS paid for that absence becomes a debt to the service.

Learn more about [absences at the start and end of an enrolment](#).

# Workforce support

## Fair Work Commission's gender-based undervaluation proceeding impact

**The worker retention payment has been designed to absorb increases to the *Children's Service's Award 2010* from the Fair Work Commission's gender-based undervaluation proceedings, up to the program's limit of 15%.**

This means:

- eligible workers will continue to get the same minimum hourly rate under the worker retention payment
- the standard payment calculation method for calculating remains unchanged
- providers are not expected to pay more overall, as the worker retention payment will absorb the wage increase.

The worker retention payment continues to ensure eligible workers receive the same total uplift.

**Example:** If the award increases by 5% on 1 March 2026, the provider needs to pay 10% above the award. The standard payment calculation is still intended to fund the full 15% uplift on the pre-1 March 2026 award.

If the standard payment calculation does not provide sufficient funding to meet this commitment, providers [may request a funding review](#).

If you need help applying the worker retention payment after 1 March 2026, free support is available.



[Search the directory](#) on our website to find support that meets your needs.

## We're processing payments

**We have processed worker retention payments for the period 29 December 2025 to 25 January 2026.**

We processed this payment on 23 February 2026. Note that this is the day we processed the payment, not necessarily the date you will receive funds.

We make payments at the service-level through the Child Care Subsidy System. We send payments to the same bank account as your CCS payments.

Learn more about [when and how we make worker retention payments](#).



## From the department

### Final reminder: CCCF sustainability and capital support grant closes today

**The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant closes today at 9 pm AEDT.**

If your service could benefit from sustainability or capital support, we encourage you to apply. Applications don't need to be complex – clear, practical proposals are what matter most.

What you should do:

- submit your online application on GrantConnect
- attach all required documents using official templates
- double check your financial statements, budgets, and supporting evidence for accuracy.

After applications close, we'll assess all submissions for eligibility and merit. Applicants will be advised of the outcome in July 2026.

Visit our [sustainability and capital support grant page](#) to learn more and apply.

### New early childhood service in Kowanyama

**A new early childhood education and care (ECEC) service has opened in Kowanyama in Queensland, supported by the CCCF Restricted Expansion Program.**

The One Tree Kowanyama Children's Service will provide quality, culturally safe ECEC for up to 30 local children. It forms part of an Early Years Hub located on the grounds of Kowanyama State School. The hub will offer families a range of integrated services, including long day care, kindergarten, parenting and other support programs.

Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council received CCCF funding to establish the service. The council partnered with One Tree Community Services, which will act as the approved provider. The Queensland Government provided the building and funds the hub.

This is the fourth service to open under the [CCCF Restricted Expansion Program](#).

### Building early education across Victoria

**The Australian Government, in partnership with the Victorian Government, is delivering ECEC where it is needed most across Victoria.**

Through the Building Early Education Fund, the Australian Government will provide \$63 million to build or expand 11 ECEC services in outer suburbs and regional communities. The Victorian Government will contribute \$107 million towards the projects.

New ECEC supply will be in:

- Geelong, delivering 135 places
- Whittlesea, delivering 130 places



- Casey, delivering 130 places
- Frankston, delivering 130 places
- Swan Hill, delivering 132 places
- Kings Park, delivering 130 places
- Wedderburn, delivering 90 places
- Weir Views, delivering 130 places
- and 3 further locations to be announced.

The services will deliver around 1,110 extra places across the state by 2029, with 3 services opening in 2026, 2 in 2027, 4 in 2028 and 2 in 2029.

Funding is being delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the Victorian Government. This agreement is one funding stream within the \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund, part of a broader commitment to chart the course to universal ECEC.

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

## We're building early education in Derby

**A new integrated ECEC service will soon begin construction in Derby, Western Australia, co-funded by the Australian Government, Western Australian Government and Minderoo Foundation.**

Led by the Ngunga Group Womens Aboriginal Corporation, the Derby Early Learning and Family Centre will deliver culturally safe, integrated early years services for First Nations children and families in the Derby region.

It will offer ECEC for 30 children (with growth to 48) and Outside School Hours Care for 30 children (with growth to 35).

This is the first project under the Building Early Education Fund's \$100 million partnership with the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC) to build supply and capacity of integrated early years services.

The service is expected to open in 2029.

Read [our announcement](#) for more details.

## Gecko

### Mandatory national child safety training starts Friday

**From Friday, the foundation courses for national child safety training will be available on Gecko.**

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.



Requirements for **when** you must complete the training by, and **how often** it must be refreshed, will be set through upcoming changes to the National Regulations. We will provide more guidance once the changes are in place. You will not need to complete training on 27 February.

[Register for Geccko](#) to access the training and ensure your completion is tracked and reported correctly. Visit our website for [help setting up your account](#).

Providers: use the [communication toolkit](#) to tell your staff about the training.

The training has been developed by the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) in partnership with the Queensland Government, on behalf of all Australian states and territories and the Australian Government.

## Facts from FAL

### Avoid infringement notices

**Not following the rules under Family Assistance Law (FAL) can lead to an infringement notice — and costly fines.**

Infringement notices help providers steer clear of more serious consequences — like losing CCS approval, going to court or being prosecuted.

Make sure your team is following all FAL requirements to avoid penalties.

Learn more about [infringement notices](#) on our website.

### Enrolments

You must [enrol](#) children correctly so families can get CCS. You must submit enrolment notices on time.

## Workforce support

### Worker retention payment rates from 1 March 2026

**We have updated the worker retention payment minimum rates to reflect the *Children's Services Award 2010* rates from 1 March 2026.**

On 10 December 2025, the Fair Work Commission released its decision from the [gender undervaluation priority awards review](#) of the *Children's Services Award 2010*. As a result, from 1 March 2026:

- a simpler classification structure will begin for staff covered by the Children's Services Award
- a series of phased wage increases will begin.

The worker retention payment has been designed to reflect the outcomes of the review. As award wages increase, the amount you must pay above the award will reduce by the same amount. This is because the award increases through to 30 November 2026 are less than the worker retention payment. For example, if the award rate increases by 5%, you will still need to pay 10% above the award until 30 November 2026.

View the [updated worker retention payment minimum rates](#) on our website.

All worker retention payment funding must continue to be used for wages or eligible on-costs.

The priority awards review does not impact the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020*.



## From the department

### Don't miss out on sustainability and capital support grant

**The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant closes next week. If you are considering applying, now is the time to act.**

The grant could help your service strengthen day-to-day operations or make small but important improvements to existing facilities.

If your service is eligible, but you are unsure whether your project is the right fit, we encourage you to apply. Many successful applications focus on practical challenges and how proposed activities will support children, families and the local community.

Applications don't need to be complex – clear, practical proposals are what matter most.

Before you hit submit, check that you have:

- completed all parts of the online application form on GrantConnect
- attached all required documents using official templates
- checked your final statements and budgets are accurate and complete.

Importantly, review your submission to make sure you have:

- clearly explained the community need
- identified barriers to participation
- shown how your proposed activities will address these.

Applications close at **9 pm AEDT on 25 February 2026**.

Apply via our [sustainability and capital support grant page](#).

Use our [communication toolkit](#) to let your community know about this grant opportunity.

### Latest National Quality Framework Snapshot out now

**The latest National Quality Framework (NQF) snapshot is now available.**

For the first time, 92% of education and care services with a quality rating are rated *Meeting National Quality Standard (NQS)* or above.

The NQF Snapshot is a national report on children's education and care services. It gives a clear picture of the sector, including the number of services and how they are rated against the NQS.

As at 1 January 2026, there were 18,027 NQF-approved children's education and care services operating across Australia.

You can read the latest [Q4 2025 snapshot](#) on ACECQA's website.



## Unannounced spot checks continuing in 2026

We are continuing to conduct spot checks throughout 2026. Spot checks are unannounced, in-person visits by authorised officers. These help ensure providers and services meet their legal obligations under Family Assistance Law (FAL) and handle Child Care Subsidy (CCS) correctly.

Spot checks support the integrity of CCS and help give families confidence that services are doing the right thing.

### What happens during a spot check?

Officers will:

- introduce themselves
- show their identity cards
- provide required forms (such as a consent-to-enter form).

### What will be reviewed during a spot check?

Officers may review:

- information or records to check compliance with FAL
- record-keeping and reporting processes, such as checking attendance records
- procedures for managing fees and payments.

### Who will we visit?

Spot checks can happen at any CCS-approved service across Australia.

They don't replace routine checks done by state and territory regulators. If our officers see anything that may affect safety or quality, they will report it to your state or territory regulator.

### Why are we conducting spot checks?

This program helps us:

- keep the CCS system fair and accurate
- support safe, high-quality care
- strengthen consistent practices across the sector.

Find out [more about spot checks](#) on our website.

## Report a child safety concern

If you have concerns about quality and safety or a serious incident related to an early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider or service, [contact your state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you are concerned about a child's safety or suspect a child is at risk of harm, abuse or neglect, [contact your state or territory child protection agency](#).



# Geccko

## Is your workforce ready for mandatory national child safety training?

**Mandatory national child safety training goes live next week.**

All persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, Family Day Care Educators and other staff, volunteers and students in ECEC must complete the training.

Requirements for **when** you must complete the training by, and **how often** it must be refreshed, will be set through upcoming changes to the National Regulations. We will provide more guidance once the changes are in place.

**Action required: Ensure everyone has [registered for Geccko](#) with a personal email address.**

Registration is quick and easy. Need help? Visit our website for [account support](#).

Providers: Use the [communication toolkit](#) to remind staff and support them through the registration process.

The training is being developed by the Queensland Government and the Australian Centre for Child Protection.

## Facts from FAL

### Absences

You must report when a child was absent and the family was charged. You must report [absences](#) in session reports.



## From the department

### Building Early Education Fund large-scale grant round now open

**Applications are now open for the large-scale grant round under the Building Early Education Fund.**

This grant will provide capital funding to large not-for-profit providers to build or expand multiple centre-based day care (CBDC) services in areas of need.

We invite applications from large not-for-profit providers operating 10 or more CBDC services with:

- a track record of delivering high quality ECEC services
- experience building CBDC services approved under the National Law
- capacity to build or expand at least 3 new services.

Applications will close 5 pm AEDT 17 March 2026.

Visit the [large-scale grant round page](#) to learn more and apply.

The grant is one stream within the \$1 billion [Building Fund](#). It is part of a broader commitment on the path to a universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system.

A grant round to support smaller providers will open soon.

### Building early education in Canberra

**The Australian Government, in partnership with the Australian Capital Territory Government, is expanding access to ECEC in Canberra.**

Through the Building Early Education Fund, the Australian Government will provide \$10 million to build a new early learning service at Whitlam School. The ACT Government will contribute \$3 million towards the project.

Whitlam School will cater for up to 780 students from preschool to year 6 for the growing number of families in the Molonglo Valley, and will deliver 130 new ECEC places for local families in 2028.

Funding is being delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the ACT Government. This agreement is one funding stream within the \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund, part of a broader commitment to chart the course to universal ECEC.

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

### Sustainability and capital support grant application tips

**If you are applying for the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant, here's what assessors look for and how to make your application stand out:**

#### Explain community need

Clearly describe your community's ECEC needs, using data and evidence where possible.



## Identify barriers and solutions

Show the barriers to participation or financial sustainability and explain how your proposed activities will address those barriers.

## Demonstrate strong relationships

Showcase partnerships with families, local organisations, and stakeholders.

## Provide supporting evidence

Attach all required documents using official templates. Missing or incorrect attachments are one of the most common reasons applications cannot proceed.

Applications close 9 pm AEDT on 25 February 2026.

Visit our [sustainability and capital support grant page](#) to learn more.

If your organisation supports the ECEC sector, use our [communication toolkit](#) to let your community know about this grant opportunity.

# Geccko

## Foundation training starts this month

**Mandatory national child safety training is launching later this month.**

All persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, Family Day Care Educators and other staff, volunteers and students in ECEC must complete this training to meet new national requirements.

[Register for Geccko](#) now to access the training as soon as it's available.

Remember, every user needs an individual Geccko account with a personal email address. If you currently use a shared account at your service, please re-register.

Visit our website for [help setting up your account](#).

Providers should encourage staff to register early and use the [communication toolkit](#) to share reminders.

The training is being developed by the Queensland Government and the Australian Centre for Child Protection.

# Sector spotlight

## Build a culture of inclusion at your service

**We have information and resources to help you embed inclusion at your service.**

Discover:

- what inclusion looks like in an ECEC setting
- where your inclusion obligations come from
- resources to help you embed inclusive practices



- how to get help when you experience barriers to inclusion.

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

## Facts from FAL

### Payments and fees

You must pass on CCS to families as a fee reduction. You must report [fee information](#).



## From the department

### Building early education in Tasmania

**The Australian Government, in partnership with the Tasmanian Government, is expanding access to quality not-for-profit early childhood education and care (ECEC) for families across Tasmania.**

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

- \$5 million to build new services at Westbury Primary School, delivering 36 new ECEC places
- \$5 million to build new services at Rosetta Primary School, delivering 36 new ECEC places
- \$4 million to establish new services at St Marys District School, delivering 24 new ECEC places
- \$3.5 million to establish new services at Bruny Island District School, delivering 20 new ECEC places
- \$3 million for a new service at Bothwell District High School, delivering 20 new ECEC places.

The Australian and Tasmanian governments will also continue work to deliver a new ECEC service at Huonville Primary School, with details to be confirmed as planning progresses.

Funding is being delivered under a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the Tasmanian Government. This agreement is one funding stream within the \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund, part of a broader commitment to chart the course to universal ECEC.

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

### Grant streams in focus: sustainability and capital support

**The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant offers 2 funding streams.**

Each are designed to support ECEC services in areas experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

Understanding the differences will help you choose the right stream and prepare a strong application.

**Sustainability support grants** help strengthen the long-term financial viability of your service. Funding can support activities such as:

- adjusting business practices
- upskilling staff
- supporting service delivery in underserved areas
- providing transport for remote or isolated families.

**Capital support grants** fund smaller works to improve existing facilities so children can learn, grow and thrive in safe, quality environments. Funding can support:

- renovating or repairing ECEC facilities
- improving outdoor play areas and fencing
- completing child safety and compliance works.



You can apply for one or both streams, but you must submit a separate application for each one.

Visit our [sustainability and capital support grant page](#) to learn more.

## Sector spotlight

### Help families find your service in 2026

[StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) is the one place where families can find and compare all ECEC services.

Make sure your details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System so families can find your service.

You must report:

- **current fees:** your hourly or session fees before any subsidies, discounts or reductions
- **fee changes:** any changes within 14 days of the change
- **vacancies:** your current vacancies by 8 pm AEST/AEDT each Friday.

Update this information through the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software. The information then flows through to [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#).

Learn [how to update fee and vacancy details](#).

## Facts from FAL

### Avoiding an infringement notice

**Providers who don't follow the rules under Family Assistance Law (FAL) may receive an infringement notice. It's essential that providers, their employees and their educators comply with these rules.**

Most providers do the right thing and meet their obligations. However, when rules are not followed, infringement notices are one way we address non-compliance and encourage better practices.

An infringement notice is a financial penalty, and it can be costly.

For example, failing to update the status of a current **Working With Children Check** can result in a fine of up to \$16,500.

Infringement notices can help providers avoid more severe penalties. They allow a provider to pay a smaller fine instead of facing much larger consequences, such as losing approval to administer CCS, being taken to court, or being prosecuted.

Learn more about [infringement notices](#) on our website.

### Inducements and advertising: what you need to know

**You may not offer certain types of inducements to families. An inducement is any incentive provided to secure a child's enrolment.**

Inducements that are financial or unrelated to the quality or delivery of services are not permitted.

Examples of prohibited inducements include:



- cash payments, vouchers or gift cards
- iPads, tablets or other electronic devices
- any other gifts or giveaways.

Find out more about [inducements and advertising](#) on our website.

## How to avoid a debt notice

**Staying on top of your CCS obligations is the best way to avoid debt notices and potential penalties. Taking steps early can help you prevent unnecessary stress and financial impact.**

### What triggers a debt notice?

You could receive a debt notice if you:

- make changes to a session report that reduces hours or days of care
- withdraw a session report
- act in ways that breach compliance (contrary to FAL)
- close or transfer ownership of your service **after** the fact
- cease operations while CCS offsetting is still in progress
- report an absence before a child has physically attended (unless a valid exemption applies).

If non-compliance is involved, we may issue an **infringement notice** (essentially a fine).

### What's included in the debt notice?

A formal debt notice on official letterhead will clearly outline:

- the amount owed
- reason for the debt
- available payment options and deadlines
- how to request a review or ask for an extension
- consequences of non-payment, such as referral to debt collection agencies, legal action, or garnishee notices.

Learn more about [managing overpayments and debt](#) on our website.

## Workforce support

### Worker retention payment update

#### Who can request a funding review

**If your situation doesn't fit the standard worker retention payment calculation, you may request a funding review.**

You can request a funding review if you:

- have been approved for the worker retention payment



- have smoothed funding across all services on your grant agreement
- believe you are being undercompensated under the standard payment calculation.

Contact [ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au) to start the funding review process.

Learn more about the [funding review process](#) on our website.

## We're processing payments

**We have processed worker retention payments for the period 1 December to 28 December 2025.**

We processed this payment on 23 January 2026. Note that this is the day we processed the payment, not necessarily the date you will receive funds.

We make payments at the service-level through the Child Care Subsidy System. We send payments to the same bank account as your CCS payments.

Learn more about [when and how we make worker retention payments](#).

## Relationships with children and families from diverse backgrounds

**Are you looking for ways to better support children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds in your learning community?**

Practical ways to support families from diverse cultural backgrounds include:

- recognising different family structures
- creating opportunities for families to share their cultural traditions
- using interpreters or translated information when needed.

Watch this Be You video on [Practical ways to explore and promote cultural diversity in early learning services](#).

## Gecko

### Mandatory national child safety training is almost here

**From 27 February 2026, Foundation training will be available for all persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, Family Day Care Educators and other staff, volunteers and students in ECEC settings.**

The training, developed by the Queensland Government and the Australian Centre for Child Protection, will be available on Gecko. All users must have an individual Gecko account using a personal email address.

[Register for Gecko](#) now to ensure you're ready when the training goes live.

Visit our website for [help setting up your account](#).

Providers: Use the [communication toolkit](#) to encourage your staff to register early.

### New mini learning course: Statement of tax record

**Our new Gecko mini learning course on the statement of tax record (STR) requirements for CCS is now available and takes less than 10 minutes to complete.**



This course explains why ECEC providers must provide an STR as part of their CCS approval.

In the course, you'll learn:

- why STRs are required
- how to get one
- how often you have to provide an STR
- who needs to provide an STR, depending on your business structure.

Login to the [Geccko learning platform](#) to get started.



## From the department

### Are you eligible for a sustainability and capital support grant?

**The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant helps early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in areas experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability stay open.**

Applications are now open. Keep reading to check if your service is eligible.

Who can apply?

You must be a Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved provider who:

- operates in, or services families from, an identified priority area
- operates in, or services families from, a regional, remote or very remote area, or
- provides specialised care to communities experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

All service types can apply. Both not-for-profit and for-profit services can apply, but preference will be given to not-for-profit organisations.

What are priority areas?

Priority areas are communities with high levels of disadvantage compared to most other areas. Check if your service is in a priority area by visiting our [priority areas list](#).

Find out more and apply

Visit our [sustainability and capital support grant page](#) to learn more and apply.

### Direct gap fee collection requirement is now in effect

**From 1 January 2026, Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) providers must collect CCS gap fees directly from families.**

Educators in these services can no longer collect the gap fee themselves on behalf of providers.

All gap fees must be paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) to:

- a provider's nominated bank account, or
- via the provider's nominated online payment system.

Providers must have appropriate systems, processes, and communication in place to meet this requirement.

Services that do not comply may be subject to [compliance action](#).

This change is designed to strengthen the sector by ensuring CCS is administered correctly, reducing the administrative burden on educators, and building confidence in the sector's sustainability among families, governments and regulators.



Need more information?

- [FDC resources](#)
- [IHC resources](#)

## Preparing for an emergency

**Are you ready for severe weather events, like bushfires or floods?**

Here are some practical ways you can prepare your service for an emergency:

- Check the [support available in the event of a CCS period of emergency](#) on our website.
- Make sure you have adequate insurance cover. You can insure against disasters and for business disruption to cover your losses during the recovery period.
- Make sure you back up and store your important business documents in a secure offsite location or cloud-based storage.
- Make sure your contact details are up to date in the CCS system so you don't miss important updates. Check your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software.
- Make sure to tell us if you close your service due to an emergency. You can do this via the PEP or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

[Join our Facebook group](#) and turn on post notifications to get the latest alerts.

## Geccko

### Registering for national child safety training is easy

**Registering for mandatory national child safety training in Geccko is quick and easy.**

Find out who needs to register and how on [our website](#). Use the [communication toolkit](#) to push reminders across staff channels.

## Facts from FAL

### Changing session reports from previous financial years

**Once a financial year ends, the CCS System closes for that year.**

In limited circumstances, you may need to:

- submit a late session report
- vary or withdraw session reports.

If you need to submit, update or withdraw a session report from a previous financial year, you must apply through the department's CCS Provider Helpdesk.

What you need to know



- A separate application is required for each family.
- If you are requesting changes for multiple children or weeks, provide the details in a spreadsheet.
- Your application cannot be accepted until all information is supplied.

Find more information about [changing session reports from previous financial years](#) on our website.

## Workforce support

### Discounted care for staff

**Providers can offer discounted ECEC to some employees without reducing CCS.**

You can give a workforce discount to your staff if they:

- work at a Centre Based Day Care or Outside School Hours Care service
- have a child enrolled at a service where they work or that you own.

You can offer this to:

- early childhood teachers and educators
- centre directors and coordinators who hold an ECEC qualification
- cooks.

Learn more about the [workforce discount](#).



## 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](mailto: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](https://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](https://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](mailto: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
- 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](https://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 [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):

- Ararat
- 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
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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.

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