Australian Government
Department of Education

Emails to the early childhood education and care sector

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18 November 2026

From the department

Check your Geccko account details

A few minutes now can save time later.

If you've changed roles, moved services or updated your contact information, make sure your Geccko account details are current.

Check that your current role is recorded correctly and that you can access the email address linked to your account.

Keeping your account details up to date helps ensure your training records remain accurate and accessible.

Before you contact the Helpdesk, check the FAQs

Do you have a question about managing the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and need help? You may be able to find the answer straight away.

Our new range of frequently asked questions (FAQs) cover the most common queries received by the CCS Provider Helpdesk. You can browse questions, answers and practical examples that cover topics such as absences and CCS provider approval.

Examples of common questions answered in the FAQs:

- How do absences before and after care work?
- How long does it take for CCS provider approval?
- What's the difference between an offset and a debt?
- When should a Provider Eligible Arrangement be used?

Checking the FAQs first may save you time and help you find an answer without needing to contact us.

Explore the CCS frequently asked questions on our website.

Share your feedback in less than 10 minutes

The 2026 Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff survey takes less than 10 minutes and is a quick and easy way to share your experience working in the sector.

If you're an educator, teacher, director, manager, coordinator or educational leader working in an ECEC service, you're invited to take part.

The survey is anonymous and confidential. Your feedback will help improve understanding of the ECEC workforce and inform future workforce policies and initiatives.

As a thank you for taking part, you can also enter a draw to win 1 of 50 $250 gift vouchers.

Complete the 2026 ECEC staff survey.

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.

Sector spotlight

Preschool Outcomes Measure pilot: learning from participants

Teachers, educators and services across Australia are helping shape a national tool designed to support children's learning and development in the year before full-time school.

The Preschool Outcomes Measure pilot is underway. Participating services are helping test and improve the national tool and resources that support it.

The pilot is exploring:

- how the tool works in different preschool settings
- how it supports assessment, planning and teaching practice
- how it fits into everyday practice.

The goal is to make sure the tool is practical and easy to use across a diverse range of preschool settings.

Teachers and educators play an important role in this work. Early feedback is providing valuable insights into how the tool can support teaching and learning in different preschool settings.

One participant shared:

> **"It is a good opportunity to further my skills and to be a part of shaping a tool that will help students to learn and to be the best version of themselves."**

Thank you to all participating services, teachers and educators.

Participating jurisdictions include Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia. Queensland, South Australia and Victoria are participating in outcomes measurement using other tools that are nationally aligned.

Learn more about the Preschool Outcomes Measure.

Practical inclusion strategies for educators

The Inclusion Ready Toolkit is designed for educators and the realities of everyday practice.

The toolkit provides practical strategies, real-world scenarios and professional learning resources that can be applied straight away.

Educators can use the toolkit to:

- reflect as a team and recognise what is already working well
- make small, intentional adjustments that support inclusion
- strengthen whole-of-service inclusion.

The toolkit and resources are flexible and self-paced, making them suitable for ongoing development and staff induction.

Explore practical inclusion strategies in the Inclusion Ready Toolkit.

Fraud Awareness Week: stay alert, stay compliant

This week marks Fraud Awareness Week, a reminder that everyone has a role in protecting the integrity of CCS and preventing fraud in the ECEC sector.

Here are 3 practical things you can do:

Complete a compliance check-up
Review your obligations on our website and make sure your service is meeting all requirements.

Take the Fraud Awareness course on Geccko
Build your understanding of how to prevent, detect, and report fraud.

Report suspicious activity
If you have information about individuals, services or providers that may not be following the rules, let us know.

Use our CCS fraud tip-off form. It's anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete.

Learn more about reporting CCS fraud on our website.

Facts from FAL

ACCS child wellbeing checklists

We have updated our Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing pages to include checklists.

These changes will support providers with their applications.

What's new?

To help providers and families avoid delays, we've added 4 checklist pages:

- applying for ACCS child wellbeing
- issuing a child wellbeing certificate
- applying for a child wellbeing determination
- providing third-party evidence checklist to support an application.

Use these checklists when preparing your application or share them with anyone helping you prepare evidence.

More information

Find out more about the ACCS child wellbeing subsidy.

Declaration of compliance: next steps

If you receive a section 158 notice and a declaration of compliance, you must respond within 14 days.

When you receive the notice, you need to:

- review the information
- confirm your current provider information and details about a specific service
- complete the declaration by answering questions about your compliance with Family Assistance Law (FAL).

What is a declaration of compliance?

A declaration of compliance is a simple form that confirms your key obligations as a provider under FAL.
You may have received a declaration of compliance:

- as part of targeted compliance activities
- through random selection.

It helps us identify potential compliance issues early and provide:

- customised feedback and education
- support to help providers meet their obligations.

To make sure you receive important notices, keep your contact details up to date in the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Find out more about the declaration of compliance.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment: new safety condition from July 2027

From 1 July 2027, a new safety condition will apply to the worker retention payment.

Centre Based Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care services that do not meet Quality Area 2 (QA2) of the National Quality Standard may have their funding cut or suspended.

Most services already meet QA2. If your service is rated below meeting for QA2, you should:

- address any findings
- seek reassessment from your state or territory regulatory authority as soon as possible, and no later than 31 March 2027.

We are contacting providers with services that do not meet QA2. We will ask you to provide evidence of the steps you are taking to address your findings.

If you have taken these steps and are waiting for reassessment, you can continue to receive funding until the reassessment is completed.

Different arrangements apply in some circumstances, including for:

- services not regulated under the National Quality Framework
- services awaiting their first quality rating
- services participating in recognised quality uplift programs.

Learn more about worker retention payment conditions, including different arrangements that may apply.



New Be You micro learning course

Be You's new microlearning course, moments that matter in building infant and toddler mental health, is designed for early childhood educators.

Part of supporting a young child's mental health and wellbeing is teaching them that their feelings and needs matter. Early learning services are key spaces where infants and children can learn that they matter.

The new micro learning course explores 4 ways educators can help support this.

Micro learning courses are short, easy-to-use resources available through the Be You dashboard upon registration.

Find out more on the Be You website.

How to acquit 2026–27 workforce subsidies

Providers who received a professional development or paid practicum subsidy in the 2026-27 financial year can now acquit their funding through the grants portal.

An acquittal is the process of reporting how you've spent your funding. It helps us confirm you've used the funding correctly.

An acquittal is done when:

- you have no remaining funding, or
- you have unused funding to be recovered.

You must acquit all funding received under the subsidies, even if your service has:

- closed
- transferred to a new provider
- had its CCS approval cancelled.

You must acquit all funds by:

- 27 March 2027, if you received a professional development subsidy
- 14 July 2027, if you received a paid practicum subsidy.

You must acquit all funding by the deadline. If you don't, we may recover the funding.

If you need help, contact ececgrants@deloitte.com.au.

Share with families

Free healthcare options under Medicare

Australian families can get Medicare services , including expert health advice, bulk billed or urgent medical care, for free.

24/7 health advice

If you have a health issue and don't know what to do, you can call **1800MEDICARE** for free, 24/7.

Anyone in Australia can call 1800MEDICARE (1800 633 422) and speak with a registered nurse. They can give you health advice and tell you what to do next.

Bulk billing GP services

More GP pracices offer **bulk billing**. If you are eligible for Medicare, you may be able to see a GP without paying anything out of pocket.

Medicare Urgent care clinics

If you have an urgent but non-life-threatening illness or injury and can't see your GP, you can visit a **Medicare Urgent Care Clinic (UCC)**.

You do not need an appointment, and you can access bulk billed, walk-in care from trained health professionals.

UCCs can help treat a range of conditions, including minor illnesses, infections, cuts, burns, sprains and minor fractures.

To learn more:

- Visit medicare.gov.au/1800
- Learn more about bulk billing and find a bulk billing GP at health.gov.au/bulkbilling.

Find your nearest UCC at health.gov.au/MedicareUCC.

11 November 2026

Queensland floods: CCS period of emergency applied 21 to 23 October 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applied from 21 to 23 October 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Fraser Coast
- Goondiwindi
- Lockyer Valley
- Moreton Bay
- Scenic Rim
- Southern Downs
- Toowoomba.

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 CCS 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 for a full day, 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

From the department

Actions from November 2026 Education Ministers Meeting

Education Ministers met on 2 November to discuss reforms across the education sector.

Ministers discussed several key reforms for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector including:

- their commitment to explore the development of an early education and care commission
- reforms to quality and safety
- the findings of the national CCTV assessment.

Ministers also agreed to strengthen supervision practices in ECEC. Further information will be available on our website shortly.

For more information, read the announcement.

National CCTV assessment report released

Governments across Australia are working together to strengthen safety, improve quality, and protect children in ECEC.

Throughout 2026 an assessment considered whether CCTV can support child safety in ECEC settings. The assessment had a strong focus on ethics, safety and transparency. More than 300 services participated across Australia.

Education ministers met on 2 November 2026 to consider the assessment findings.

What the assessment found

CCTV can be a useful tool. It can improve safety when it is good quality, well placed and used with purpose.

CCTV is most effective when part of a wider safeguarding approach. It is not a replacement for supervision, judgement or a strong child safety culture.

The assessment found insufficient evidence to support a national mandate.

However, it did recommend national, practical guidance. This will lift standards and improve consistency across the sector.

CCTV is already used in about a quarter of ECEC services, and uptake is expected to grow. National guidance will help these services use CCTV safely, lawfully and effectively.

What happens next

Ministers have agreed to fund the development of national guidance. This is being fast-tracked, and should be out during the first half of 2027.

This work will include practical tools, resources and guidance. The sector will be consulted during its development.

A grant program for eligible services to buy or upgrade CCTV infrastructure will follow.

More information

Read the reports:



- Assessment report
- Executive summary
- Evaluation executive summary.

Reminder: complete the National Workforce Census

We encourage all Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers and services, preschools and kindergartens to take part. This will make sure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven't already, visit our website to complete the census. Further information and regular updates on the National Workforce Census are available on the Social Research Centre website.

Help spread the word about the 2026 ECEC staff survey

The 2026 ECEC staff survey is now open, and we're encouraging providers and service leaders to help share it with their staff.

Please share the survey with all staff at your service, including full-time, part-time and casual employees. Feedback from staff working in different roles and settings will help build a better understanding of the ECEC workforce.

You can also help by displaying the survey poster in staff areas and sharing the flyer with your team.

The survey is anonymous, confidential and takes less than 10 minutes to complete. It closes **10am AEDT 14 December 2026**.

Share the survey with your staff.

2026–27 Christmas and New Year period

We've published important information to help ECEC providers manage their CCS obligations over the 2026–27 Christmas and New Year period.

The key things to remember:

- The CCS Helpdesk will close at **12.30 pm AEDT Thursday 24 December 2026 and reopen at 9 am AEDT Monday 4 January 2027**.
- You must not submit session reports or claim absences when your service is closed, unless the closure is due to a public holiday or a CCS period of emergency.
- If your service closed early on Thursday 24 December, you must report the shorter hours of care provided.
- Session reports submitted on public holidays may experience short delays in processing or payment.
- You must collect the gap fee when claiming absences on a public holiday.
- You must notify us if your service is closing for a longer period or you are changing your operating hours.

Read more about CCS and the 2026–27 Christmas and New Year period on our website.



Prepare your service for emergencies

Emergencies and natural disasters can happen with little warning. Preparing now can help your service respond and recover when it matters.

Some practical steps you can take to prepare your service include:

- **Check** your contact details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important updates.
- **Review** your emergency management plan, or create one using the templates on business.gov.au.
- **Check** your business insurance provides appropriate cover in the event of business disruption.
- **Back up** and secure important business records and documents.
- **Understand** the support available during a CCS period of emergency.
- **Know** how to notify us and your state or territory regulatory authority if your service closes because of an emergency.

You can also build your knowledge by completing our **disasters and emergencies course** in Geccko.

Find out more about the help available during a CCS period of emergency on our website.

Sector spotlight

Latest National Quality Framework snapshot out now

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

For the first time, 93% 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 of 1 October 2026, there were 18,176 NQF-approved children's education and care services operating across Australia.

You can read the latest Q3 2026 snapshot on ACECQA's website.

Preschool Outcomes Measure pilot underway across Australia

Teachers, educators and services across Australia are helping test and refine a new national formative assessment tool.

The Preschool Outcomes Measure is designed to help teachers and educators support children's learning and development in the year before full-time school.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is delivering a 2-year pilot of the national tool on behalf of Australian, state and territory governments. The pilot is taking place across 2026 and 2027 calendar years and builds on a national trial of a prototype tool that took place in 2025.

The pilot is testing:

- how easy the national tool is for teachers and educators to use
- if the national tool is beneficial to teachers and educators to support children's learning and readiness for fulltime school
- how it can be used in different preschool settings
- if the national tool supports children from diverse cohorts
- how it can support understanding of children's learning and development over time
- what further improvements may be needed.

Participating jurisdictions include the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia. Queensland, South Australia and Victoria are participating in outcomes measurement using other tools that are nationally aligned.

Since the pilot began:

- **236 services** have joined
- **691 teachers and educators** are participating and have already completed over 1,000 assessments
- **25 professional learning sessions** have been delivered.

Thank you to everyone participating in the pilot. Your early insights are helping ensure the tool is practical and suitable for diverse preschool settings.

The Preschool Outcomes Measure national tool is not a test. It is designed to support teachers' and educators' professional judgement and everyday practice. It will not be used to rank or compare children, services or jurisdictions.

Learn more about the Preschool Outcomes Measure.

Facts from FAL

Every child must be enrolled

Did you know that all children attending approved care must be enrolled? This applies regardless of whether they are eligible for CCS.

Enrolling all children is a requirement under Family Assistance Law.

An enrolment links:

- the child
- the person claiming CCS (usually a parent or carer)
- the service.

By following the correct steps, you can make sure that enrolments are set up correctly.

Learn more about the enrolment process on our website.

Submit complete session reports

Submitting accurate session reports and supplying a fortnightly statement of entitlement helps families receive the correct CCS.

You must submit a session report for every child at your service, for each week that care is provided. Reports must be submitted within 14 days after the end of the week in which care occurred.

Make sure each session report includes:

- dates and times of care
- absences
- fee information
- third-party payments
- educator details
- preschool information.

If a child has more than one enrolment, you must submit a separate session report for each enrolment. For example, this may occur under a shared care arrangement.

Before you submit, check that all information is complete and accurate.

Learn more about what information to include in session reports on our website.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment reminders

Joining the program

All providers that are not currently participating in the worker retention payment can now apply to join.

Before applying, check the program conditions and read the grant guidelines.

When you're ready to apply, follow the steps outlined on our website.

Continuing in the program

We have sent offers to providers currently participating in the program to extend their grant agreement.

Look for an email from noreply@smartygrants.com.au. It explains:

- how to review your extension offer in the grants portal



- what you need to do to continue participating in the program.

To continue receiving funding without disruption, you should:

- accept the extension offer by mid December 2026
- provide an updated workplace instrument and have it approved by us by 28 February 2027
- continue meeting all grant conditions
- meet a new safety standards condition from 1 July 2027.

You do not need to submit a new application.

Learn more about continuing in the program.

Get help

Free support is available to help you apply, meet the grant conditions, manage your grant agreement and more. Search our directory to find support that meets your needs.

We've processed payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 7 September to 4 October 2026.

We processed this payment on 2 November 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.



4 November 2026

Help shape how we communicate with you

Thank you for shaping our communications

Our annual communication survey has now closed. Thank you to everyone who took part.

We've heard your feedback. One of the things you have told us is that the different roles of the Australian Government and state and territory education departments can be confusing.

Here's a quick explanation:

- the Australian Government Department of Education (that's us) is responsible for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and the legislation that underpins it, known as Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- regulatory authorities administer the National Quality Framework (NQF) in each state and territory, usually part of your state or territory's education department.

Thank you for taking the time to have your say. Stay tuned to see how we use your feedback to shape our communication approach for 2027.

From the department

Why your participation in the 2026 ECEC staff survey matters

Each year, the Australian Government runs the early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff survey to learn more about the people who work in the sector.

By collecting data over time, we can get a better understanding of the ECEC workforce and how it is changing.

More than 7,000 ECEC staff completed the survey in 2025. Their responses helped build a clearer picture of workforce experiences, including job satisfaction, wellbeing and workplace challenges.

The survey is anonymous, confidential and takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

As a thank you for taking part, you'll go in the draw to win 1 of 50 $250 gift vouchers.

Complete the 2026 ECEC staff survey.

Understanding national child safety training certificates

Did you know there are different national child safety training certificates?

Geccko issues separate certificates for:

- Foundations of child safety (courses 1 and 2)
- Advanced child safety (courses 3 and 4)
- Advanced child safety (course 5)

The certificates you receive depend on your role and the courses you are required to complete.

Certificates are not automatically sent to your employer or provider. After completing training, you should:

- download your certificate(s) from Geccko
- provide a copy to your provider
- save a copy for your records.

Learn more about completion certificates.

Need help with a CCS question?

Finding help with CCS tasks is easier than ever.

The CCS Provider Helpdesk webpage brings together information, resources and support in one place.

On this page, we are very excited to share our new range of frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you have a question about administering CCS, check out the FAQs first. We cover common questions received by the CCS Provider Helpdesk, so the answer you are looking for is probably there!

We also have practical examples to help you better understand and meet your obligations.

Visit the CCS Provider Helpdesk page to:

- browse FAQs and examples
- access forms, task cards, handbooks and guides
- submit an online enquiry about CCS, worker retention payment or Starting Blocks
- submit an online enquiry about access to and use of the Provider Entry Point.

CCS period of emergency in NT

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.

Facts from FAL

End-of-year CCS approval health check

Before the end of the year, take the time to check that your CCS approval details are up to date.

This can help you avoid compliance issues, delays or disruption to CCS payments.

Check the following:

- Are your persons with management or control (PMCs) current and complete?
- Have any directors, office holders or key personnel changed?

- Has your Australian Business Number (ABN), legal entity or business structure changed?
- Are your educators using the approved service name on invoices, receipts, websites and social media?
- Are families clearly enrolled with the correct CCS-approved service?
- Are you planning any business changes that you need to tell us about in advance?

If your ABN or legal entity is changing, contact us before the change happens. You must notify the department at least 42 days before a legal entity change.

The end of the year is a busy time for the approvals team and applications may take longer to process. If you think you may need help or are planning to submit a provider application, get in touch early.

Learn more about when and how to notify us about changes by visiting our website.

Gap fee audit: what does this mean for you?

Under FAL, you must collect gap fees from families by electronic funds transfer (EFT).

We conduct regular audits to make sure providers are taking reasonable steps to do this. This means we may:

- request information through a compliance notice
- visit your service to complete a face-to-face audit.

If we contact you about an audit, please respond as soon as you can. We may ask for extra documents and statements about how you collect gap fees.

Read more about:

- what to do if you get a compliance notice
- guidance on collecting gap fees.



30 October 2026

NT floods: CCS period of emergency applied 12 to 16 October 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applied from 12 to 16 October 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Alice Springs
- Central Desert
- MacDonnell.

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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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 nt.gov.au/emergency.

28 October 2026

Help shape how we communicate with you

Do you have feedback on our channels?

Thank you to everyone who has completed our communication survey so far.

Each year, you tell us what you think of our communication channels. We read every response and value your feedback.

Here's some of what we've heard so far:

'Since completing the National Child Safety Training, I have been visiting **Geccko** much more frequently. I have found a wealth of valuable resources that have proven to be excellent learning materials for both myself and my team.'

'I'd love an index of the most recent **web updates** – a quick place to see what's new and then link from there for relevant info that we need to know.'

'Not all the information listed in the **newsletter** is relevant to my service. I investigate specific information before sharing with my staff and the parents.'

Have feedback on our channels? Complete our quick survey and tell us what's working and how we can improve the way we share information.

Anyone working in early childhood education and care (ECEC) can take part. Your responses are anonymous, and we don't collect any personal data. You can share the survey with your colleagues as well.

Complete our communication survey

From the department

Spread the word about the 2026 ECEC staff survey

The 2026 ECEC staff survey is now open, and we're encouraging providers and service leaders to help share it with their staff.

Please share the survey with all staff at your service, including full-time, part-time and casual employees. Feedback from staff working in different roles and settings will help build a better understanding of the ECEC workforce.

You can also help by displaying the survey poster in staff areas and sharing the flyer with your team.

The survey is anonymous, confidential and takes less than 10 minutes to complete. It closes **10 am AEDT 14 December 2026.**

Complete the 2026 ECEC staff survey.

More CBDC and OSHC services can now offer the worker retention payment

Centre Based Day Care (CBDC) and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) providers that are not currently participating in the worker retention payment can now apply to join the program extension.

Before applying, read the grant guidelines and make sure you understand the program requirements.

Assessment can take up to 2 months. If approved, you can generally expect your first payment within 3 to 7 weeks of entering into a grant agreement.

You may also be eligible for backdated payments in certain circumstances.

Free support is available to help you understand the requirements and prepare your application.

Learn more and apply for the worker retention payment.

New In Home Care Quality and Safety Framework launched

A new In Home Care (IHC) Quality and Safety Framework has been launched, providing a nationally consistent approach to strengthening quality, child safety and continuous improvement across the IHC sector.

The framework includes:

- 7 quality and safety areas
- 40 operational requirements.

Implementation will begin with a **voluntary adoption** phase, giving IHC providers, services and educators an opportunity to build capability, test approaches and provide feedback.

A range of practical resources will support the IHC sector to apply the framework in practice.

We encourage the IHC sector to:

- become familiar with the framework and supporting resources
- use the self-assessment tool to reflect on current practice
- start considering how the framework may be applied within their services
- reach out to ACECQA for help, if required.

Learn more and access the framework on ACECQA's website.

Sector spotlight

Children's Week 2026: let's celebrate childhood!



Children's Week runs from 24 October to 1 November. It's a chance to celebrate children's achievements, wellbeing and right to be heard.

This year's theme is based on Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

> *Children have the right to use their own language, celebrate their culture and practice their religion.*

You can help celebrate Children's Week at your service by:

- downloading resources from the Children's Week Council of Australia website
- taking part in Children's Week events and celebrations in your state or territory
- creating opportunities for children to share and celebrate their cultures, languages and traditions.

Learn more about Children's Week and find ideas to make this celebration meaningful for the children in your care.

Facts from FAL

Why WWCC compliance matters for Child Care Subsidy

Working with children checks (WWCCs) play an important role in protecting children and supporting the integrity of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments.

A session of care is only eligible for CCS if it is delivered by an educator who holds a current WWCC.

Sessions of care may not be eligible for CCS if:

- an educator does not have a current WWCC, or
- required WWCC details have not been reported correctly.

Failure to meet WWCC obligations may result in compliance action. This could include infringement notices, debts raised, conditions being placed on approval, or suspension or cancellation of approval.

We encourage providers to regularly review their processes to make sure all checks are current and recorded correctly (and on time).

Thank you for staying compliant. It's an important part of child safety.

Learn more about WWCC requirements on our website.

Shared care arrangements: getting enrolments right

If a child attends your service under a shared care arrangement, you may need more than one enrolment. This helps ensure that CCS is paid correctly, as guardians may have different CCS entitlements.

Where a child attends care under more than one CCS-eligible guardian, a separate enrolment must be created for each guardian. This way you can submit session reports against the enrolment for the guardian responsible on that day.

Example

- Ava attends care under a shared care arrangement.
- Ava's father is responsible for her on Mondays and Tuesdays.
- Ava's mother is responsible for her on Thursdays and Fridays.
- Ava requires two separate enrolments.

- A session of care provided on a Monday would be submitted under Ava's father's enrolment.

Don't forget to check absences across all enrolments linked to a child. The allowable absences count is allocated to the child, not to each individual guardian.

Learn more:

- about how to manage enrolments on our website
- by completing our Enrolments course in Geccko.

21 October 2026

Help shape how we communicate with you

Complete our 2026 communication survey

Your feedback matters. Tell us what we're doing well and where we can improve by taking part in our annual communication survey.

The insights you have shared in previous years have helped shape how we communicate with the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

This year, we've used our channels to keep you informed on various policy and program updates. Now we'd like to hear from you.

Your responses are anonymous, and we don't collect any personal data. It is open to anyone working in ECEC

Complete our communication survey

From the department

Worker retention payment extension offers sent

We have sent extension offers to providers currently participating in the worker retention payment.

To continue receiving funding without disruption, you should:

- accept the extension offer by mid-December
- provide an updated workplace instrument and have it approved by us by 28 February 2027
- continue meeting all grant conditions
- meet a new safety standards condition from 1 July 2027.

We have emailed all providers currently participating in the program with instructions on how to accept the extension offer.

Look for an email from noreply@smartygrants.com.au. If you cannot find it, check your junk or spam folder. If you still cannot locate it, email CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au.

Once you receive the email, log in to the grants portal and follow the instructions. You do not need to submit a new application.

If you do not wish to continue, you do not need to accept the offer. Your current agreement will end in accordance with its existing terms.

Visit our website to learn more about continuing in the program.

Free support is available to help participating providers understand the extension requirements, update workplace instruments and meet ongoing grant obligations.

Search our directory to find support that meets your needs.

Have your say in the 2026 ECEC staff survey

The Australian Government is inviting ECEC staff to take part in the 2026 ECEC staff survey.

Your experiences and perspectives will help us better understand the ECEC workforce and inform policies and decisions that support it.

If you are an educator, teacher, director, manager, coordinator or educational leader working in an approved ECEC service, this survey is for you. You can participate whether you are full-time, part-time or casual.

The survey asks about **your experiences of working in the sector**, including job satisfaction, employment conditions, workplace culture and wellbeing.

The survey builds on information collected in previous years. By collecting data over time, we can get a clearer picture of the ECEC workforce, including the factors affecting workforce attraction and retention.

The survey is being conducted independently by ORIMA Research on our behalf.

Participation is **voluntary, anonymous and confidential**. Individual staff and services will not be identified.

The survey takes **no more than 10 minutes** to complete.

Complete the staff survey by **10am AEDT 14 December 2026** to enter the draw to **win one of 50 x $250 vouchers**.

Which child safety training applies to your role?

All 5 national child safety training courses now available. The courses you need to complete depend on your role.

Here's a quick guide:

- persons with management or control: courses 1, 2 and 5
- nominated supervisors: courses 1 to 5
- persons in day-to-day charge: courses 1 to 5
- staff who work directly with children: courses 1 to 4
- other staff members who do not work directly with children: courses 1 and 2
- volunteers and students: courses 1 and 2.

Learn more about national child safety training.

Sector spotlight

Inclusion as a protective factor

Be You provides tools to help educators notice, inquire about and support children.

A sense of belonging, cultivated by inclusion, is a strong protective factor for the mental health of children and their families.

All children benefit from warm and responsive relationships and opportunities to develop positive friendships.

Inclusive learning communities recognise that each child is unique. They see diversity as an opportunity to learn, to grow and to implement changes that benefit the whole learning community.

To learn more about fostering inclusion in your learning community:

- see a fact sheet on disability inclusion as a protective factor
- visit the Be You website.

Facts from FAL

Financial reporting deadline for some large providers is 1 November

Large providers must report financial information to the department each year.

A large provider is one that currently operates, plans to operate, or shares operation of 25 or more services

If you report on a financial year basis, the deadline is **1 November 2026**.

As this falls on a non-business day, you can submit your report on 2 November 2026.

Complete the 2025-26 Large Provider Financial Input Report and email it to ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au by 2 November 2026.

The information you must report depends on your circumstances. Make sure you include the financial statements and other information outlined in the important information tab of the report.

Learn more about financial reporting obligations for large providers.

Understanding debt notices

We issue debt notices in certain circumstances.

You may receive a debt notice if you:

- update a session of care to fewer hours or days
- withdraw a session report
- act in a non-compliant way
- close or transfer ownership of a service retrospectively
- stop operating your service while offsetting is occurring (where payments are used to reduce debt)
- report an absence before a child's first physical attendance
- report an absence after a child's last physical attendance.

If the debt is due to non-compliance, we may also issue an infringement notice.

Learn more about managing debt on our website.

Record keeping reminder for PMCs: keep, store and record changes

Persons with management or control (PMC) play an important role in helping their service meet its Family Assistance Law (FAL) obligations.

Under FAL, approved providers must keep certain records to maintain their Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approval.

Approved providers must:

- keep the required records for **7 years**
- store them **electronically or as hard copies**
- store the records **safely** and record **any changes** (for example, updates or corrections).

Good record keeping helps show correct administration of CCS. This helps providers respond quickly if the department requests any information for compliance monitoring.

Approved providers that don't meet their record keeping obligations may be subject to compliance action. Learn more about the required records and timeframes on our website.

Learn more about our compliance registers

We regularly publish details of compliance actions against providers and services who do not comply with FAL. These registers offer insights into the actions we have taken to uphold quality, safety and integrity standards.

What are our registers?

The enforcement action register details the enforcement actions we've taken against providers and services.

The infringement notices register shows de-identified information about the types of fines issued to providers.

What are the laws?

To get CCS, providers and services must comply with FAL. One of the requirements of FAL is to follow the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.

More information

You can find guidance on how to improve:

- quality and safety on the ACECQA website
- CCS integrity.

Additional absences from child care

Families can get CCS when their child is absent from a session of care they would normally attend, for up to 42 days a year.

Once these allowable absences have been used, families may be able to get **additional absences** in certain circumstances. A public holiday is **not** an additional absence reason, even if the service is closed.

Additional absences may be claimed when, for example:

- the child or a member of their immediate household is ill
- the child is attending preschool
- the child has alternative arrangements on a pupil-free day.

For some circumstances where evidence is not required, you still need to be reasonably satisfied that the reason applies.

Find the full list of additional absence reasons and any evidence required on our website.



14 October 2026

Help shape how we communicate with you

Help shape the future of our communications

Our annual communication survey is now open, and we would love your feedback.

Take part in our short survey and tell us what you think about:

- our website
- our weekly newsletter
- our Facebook group
- our explainer videos
- Geccko – our online learning platform
- the CCS Provider Helpdesk.

The survey takes less than 10 minutes. You can complete it on a computer, tablet or mobile.

Anyone working in the early childhood sector can take part. Whether you use our channels regularly or only occasionally, your feedback is valuable. We read every comment and use your insights to understand what's working and where we can improve.

Your responses are anonymous, and we don't collect any personal data. You can share the survey with your colleagues as well.

Have your say now

From the department

Expanding early education in Naracoorte, South Australia

Families in Naracoorte will benefit from an expanded early childhood education and care (ECEC) service through the Building Early Education Fund.

The Australian and South Australian Governments are partnering to expand the Naracoorte Child Day Care Centre through a new integrated hub. Once complete, the expanded service will offer 90 ECEC places, creating 55 additional places for local children and families.

The hub will also include allied health and community facilities, helping connect families with a range of services in one location.

The hub is expected to open in early 2029. The existing service will continue operating from its current location until the new centre is completed.

Read our announcement to learn more about this Building Early Education Fund project.

Reminder: complete the National Workforce Census

We encourage all Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers and services, preschools and kindergartens to take part. This will make sure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven’t already, visit our website to complete the census. Further information and regular updates on the census are available on the Social Research Centre website.

Worker retention payment update

Free support available for the worker retention payment extension

If you're considering joining the worker retention payment or continuing in the program, free support is available to help you understand the requirements and participate with confidence.

Support organisations can help you with:

- workplace instruments
- grant applications
- meeting grant conditions
- managing your grant agreement, and more.

Search our directory to find support that meets your needs. We'll continue to update our website as additional support becomes available.

We're processing payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 10 August to 6 September 2026.

We processed this payment on 5 October 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.

To help with planning, estimated payment dates for the remainder of 2026 are now available on the payment schedule.

Learn more about when and how we make worker retention payments.

Accessing your national child safety training certificate

When you complete national child safety training, you can download a completion certificate from Geccko.

Your certificate provides evidence that you have completed the training and includes:

- your name as recorded in Geccko
- the course name
- the date you completed the course
- a unique certificate ID number.

Certificates are not automatically sent to employers, so it is important to download and keep a copy for your records. You should also provide course completion information to your provider.

If you've misplaced your certificate, there's no need to contact us. You can log back in to Geccko and download your certificate at any time.

If you completed training using a work email that you can no longer access, you can:

- create a new Geccko account using an email address that only you can access

- request an account merge between your old and new accounts.

Once the merge is complete, you will be able to view your training history and download your certificate from your new account. Account merges take at least 24 hours to complete.

Tip: To avoid future access issues, use a personal email address when creating your Geccko account.

Visit our website for more information about completion certificates and account merges.

Sector spotlight

Inclusion starts with leadership

The Inclusion Ready Toolkit can help providers and service leaders build the conditions that support inclusion.

The toolkit outlines the important role leaders play in:

- creating a culture of inclusion
- supporting reflective practice
- building educator capability
- providing time for professional learning and improvement.

Using the toolkit at your service can help you:

- understand and meet your existing inclusion obligations
- connect inclusion with existing quality improvement and strategic inclusion plans
- build a shared language for inclusion across your team and your community.

Find out how the Inclusion Ready Toolkit can support your leadership team.

Facts from FAL

Infringements

We can issue infringement notices, or fines, to providers that don't follow the rules under Family Assistance Law.

We publish de-identified information on our infringement notices register to show providers and services our compliance monitoring priorities.

Workforce support

Neuro-affirming practices for children's wellbeing

Join Be You for an online event to learn how social experiences play a significant role in shaping children's social and emotional wellbeing.

This event will explore how neuro-affirming environments can:

- reduce sensory overload
- provide the right conditions for encouraging social interaction.

You will also hear from a service leader on how they plan to create a neuro-affirming environment to encourage positive peer relationships.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEST on 15 October 2026.

Register for the webinar.

7 October 2026

From the department

Worker retention payment extension: updated guidelines now available

Updated grant guidelines for the extended worker retention payment program are now available.

The program has been extended to 30 June 2028. The updated guidelines explain how to:

- join the program
- continue in the program
- meet the grant conditions.

Joining the program

In Home Care (IHC) and Family Day Care (FDC) providers that engage all educators as employees can now apply.

Centre Based Day Care (CBDC) and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) providers that are not current participants can:

- apply now for year 2, if eligible
- apply when year 3 applications open at the end of October.

Before applying, read the grant guidelines to understand the conditions you must meet and the information you need to provide.

Assessment can take up to 2 months. If approved, you can generally expect your first payment within 3 to 7 weeks of entering into a grant agreement.

You may be eligible for backdated payments in certain circumstances.

Visit our website to learn more about joining the program.

Continuing in the program

Current participants **do not** need to submit a new application. Providers will receive an offer to extend their grant agreement in **mid-October 2026.**

To continue receiving funding without disruption:

- accept the extension offer by mid-December
- provide an updated workplace instrument by 28 February 2027
- continue meeting all grant conditions
- meet a new safety standards condition from 1 July 2027.

If you do not wish to continue, you do not need to accept the offer. Your current agreement will end in accordance with its existing terms.

Visit our website to learn more about continuing in the program.

More information and help

Learn more about the worker retention payment and read the grant guidelines.



Free, tailored support is available to help you:

- understand the program
- prepare an application
- develop or update a workplace instrument
- meet your ongoing grant obligations.

Building Early Education Fund supports first 4 large-scale projects

The Australian Government has signed the first 4 agreements under the Building Early Education Fund large-scale grant round.

This grant round supports experienced not-for-profit providers to build and expand early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in areas of need.

Under the first 4 agreements:

- SDN Children's Services will expand its service in Bathurst, New South Wales
- Regional Early Education & Development (REED) will expand its service in Merredin, Western Australia
- Goodstart Early Learning will build new services in Lalor, Victoria and Trevallyn, Tasmania.

Together, these projects will create up to 215 additional ECEC places across Australia.

The large-scale grant round is one stream within the $1 billion Building Early Education Fund. More agreements under the large-scale grant round will be announced in coming months.

Learn more about the Building Early Education Fund.

Advanced child safety training deadlines

All advanced child safety training courses are now available.

The deadline for completing advanced training depends on when you start in a role that requires it.

If you were already in a role requiring advanced training before 30 September 2026, you must complete it by **31 March 2027.**

If you start in a role requiring advanced training on or after 30 September 2026, you must complete it **within 3 months** of your start date.

What you should do now:

- check whether your role requires advanced training
- enrol in the required course(s) through Geccko
- plan time to complete the training before your deadline
- if you're a provider, make sure staff understand their training requirements and completion timeframes.

Learn more about national child safety training.

What happens during and after a spot check?

Spot checks are unannounced in-person visits conducted by authorised officers from the Australian Government Department of Education.

These visits support our work to improve compliance and strengthen the integrity of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

What happens during a spot check?

Officers will:

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

Spot checks usually take around 1 hour.

What are we looking for during a spot check?

During the visit, officers may:

- check your service is meeting Family Assistance Law obligations
- review enrolment, attendance and session reporting records
- confirm CCS is being administered correctly
- assess record-keeping practices
- check processes used to manage fees and payments.

Spot checks are not just about identifying issues. These visits are also an opportunity for you to ask questions, better understand your obligations, and receive guidance on maintaining compliance.

What happens after a spot check?

After the visit, our officers review the information collected. If they need more information, they will contact you.

Services will get an email with the outcome of the spot check. If our officers find compliance issues, we will explain:

- what was identified
- why it does not meet requirements
- what steps your service can take to address the issue.

Many issues can be resolved by updating records, reviewing processes or ensuring information is reported correctly.

For more information about spot checks, visit our website.

For help understanding your obligations under Family Assistance Law, explore the resources available on Geccko.

Sector spotlight

Thriving Kids rollout begins October

Thriving Kids is a new national approach to supporting children aged 8 and under who need extra help with their development. It began rolling out from 1 October 2026 and will grow over time.

Thriving Kids will help:

- identify developmental needs earlier
- connect children and families to the right support.

While all governments agreed on a national model for Thriving Kids, services will look different across communities. Supports will mostly be delivered where children live, learn and play.

State and territory governments will deliver:

- child health and development checks to identify when a child may need extra support
- information to help families find the right supports in their state or territory
- programs for families that help support their child's development
- targeted supports (like allied health, low-cost assistive technology and capacity building) for children and families who need them
- measures to support workforce capability readiness.

Thriving Kids will roll out in stages:

- general information, advice and parenting supports will roll out from October 2026
- more targeted supports will gradually roll out from 2027
- all supports will be available by 1 January 2028.

There are **no changes** to:

- how people access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) until 1 January 2028
- support available to ECEC services through the Inclusion Support Program.

We are working to ensure ECEC services are supported as Thriving Kids rolls out, while maintaining continuity of education and care for children and families.

We will provide more information for the ECEC sector as it becomes available.

Learn more about Thriving Kids.

World Mental Health Day



10 October is World Mental Health Day.

The 2026 theme for World Mental Health Day is **Together We Thrive**.

It recognises that while life can often feel overwhelming, connection remains one of the most powerful ways to support our mental health and wellbeing.

Be You is a free national mental health and wellbeing initiative for ECEC services and schools.

Be You provides educators with knowledge, tools and resources to create positive, inclusive and responsive learning communities.

Go to the Be You website.

Learn more about World Mental Health Day on the Mental Health Australia website.

Facts from FAL

Advertising your service: keep incentives compliant

When promoting your ECEC service, it's important to know that you can't offer certain types of inducements to families. An inducement is any incentive provided to secure a child's enrolment.

You must not offer inducements that are financial or not linked to the quality or delivery of education and care.

Inducements you may not offer 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.

Changing your legal entity? It could affect your CCS approval

Your CCS approval is linked to your legal entity. If your legal entity changes, your current CCS approval may no longer apply.

This can happen when you:

- change your **ABN**
- move from a **sole trader to a company or partnership**
- transfer your service to a **different business entity**.
-

Even if the people managing the service stay the same, a change to your legal entity may require a new **CCS approval.**

Why this matters

If your legal entity changes and you don't tell us:

- your CCS approval may no longer be valid
- CCS payments may be disrupted
- you may be at risk of compliance action.

We have identified cases where providers continued operating for extended periods under approval that is no longer aligned with their legal structure.

Notify us before you make changes

You must notify the department **at least 42 days before** your legal entity changes.

CCS approval cannot be transferred automatically.

Early notification allows us to assess your circumstances and help minimise disruption to your service and families.

What you need to do

If you're planning a change:

- contact the department as early as possible
- tell us if your **ABN or legal structure** will change
- work with us to manage your CCS approval.

Find out more about changing your legal entity on our website.

New ACCS child wellbeing resources

We have updated our Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing pages to help providers prepare and submit applications.

What is ACCS child wellbeing?

ACCS child wellbeing helps families when a child needs extra support. Providers apply on behalf of families.

What's new?

Applications can be delayed when information is incomplete or inaccurate. To help you prepare a complete application, we have added new checklists and guidance covering:

- applying for ACCS child wellbeing
- issuing a child wellbeing certificate
- applying for a child wellbeing determination
- providing third-party evidence checklist to support an application.

Use these checklists when preparing your application or share them with anyone helping you prepare evidence.

You can print them out and keep a copy on hand as you go.

More information

Find out more about the ACCS child wellbeing subsidy.

Share with families

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing

Services Australia is undergoing CCS balancing for the 2025–26 financial year.

You must confirm your family income so Services Australia can balance your CCS.

You can do this by:

- lodging your tax return (and your partner's) with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia you do not need to lodge a tax return (even if you've already told the ATO).

Once Services Australia has balanced your CCS, they will send you the results.

Find out more about CCS balancing on the Services Australia website.

30 September 2026

From the department

Advanced child safety training course 5 now available

The final advanced child safety training course is now available in Geccko.

Strong child safety depends on more than individual knowledge and practice. It also relies on leadership, governance and organisational culture.

Course 5 is for **people in leadership and governance roles**. It supports leaders to:

- build child-safe cultures
- recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns
- support children's safety and wellbeing.

Who needs to complete course 5?

Course 5 is mandatory for:

- persons with management or control (PMCs)
- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge.

When is the advanced training deadline?

There is **plenty of time** to complete advanced training.

The deadline depends on when you started in a role that requires advanced training. If you:

- hold a relevant role before 30 September 2026, you must complete advanced training by **31 March 2027**
- start working in a relevant role on or after 30 September 2026, you must complete advanced training **within 3 months** of your start date.

The full training package is now available

With the release of course 5, the complete national child safety training package is now online.

Together, the 5 courses help people across early childhood education and care (ECEC) strengthen child-safe cultures, respond to safeguarding concerns and support children's safety and wellbeing.

Learn more about national child safety training

Reminder: complete the National Workforce Census

We encourage all Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers and services, preschools and kindergartens to take part. This will make sure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven't already, visit our website to login and complete the census.

Further information and regular updates on the census are available on the Social Research Centre website.



CCS Provider Helpdesk closed Monday

The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed because of the public holiday in some states and territories on Monday 5 October.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 6 October 2026.

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

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.

Sector spotlight

The evidence behind the Inclusion Ready Toolkit

The Inclusion Ready Toolkit is grounded in research, shaped by the sector and tested in real-world settings.

The toolkit helps ECEC services turn inclusive intent into confident everyday practice. It was:

- developed by ACECQA on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education
- informed by an expert consortium of higher education researchers
- shaped by extensive sector consultation.

More than 1,700 educators, leaders and providers contributed to its development. It was also tested with services across Australia to make sure it is practical and relevant for ECEC settings.

Services involved in the trial reported that the toolkit:

- affirmed existing strengths
- deepened their understanding of inclusion
- increased confidence in inclusive practice
- supported meaningful changes in the way they worked.

Participants found the toolkit worked best as a reflective practice resource that supports ongoing improvement and complements existing planning processes.

The result is a practical resource built with the sector, for the sector.

Explore the Inclusion Ready Toolkit on the ACECQA website.

Facts from FAL

Changing session reports from previous financial years

After a financial year ends, the Child Care Subsidy System closes for that period.

In limited circumstances, you may still need to:

- submit a late session report
- update a session report

- withdraw a session report.

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

Learn more about changing session reports from previous financial years on our website.

Workforce support

2026–27 workforce subsidies update

We have notified all applicants of the outcome of their professional development and paid practicum subsidy applications.

Successful applicants can expect payment soon. Payments will be sent to each eligible service's bank account. Please:

- keep records demonstrating the correct use of funding in case of compliance checks
- acquit your funding through the grants portal by 14 July 2027.

Thank you to everyone who applied. Due to high demand and limited funding, we were unable to fund all eligible applications.

Other supports remain available to help staff complete national child safety training.

Keep an eye on our website for information about future rounds.

From the department

Get ready for advanced child safety training course 5

The final advanced child safety training course is just one week away.

Course 5 will be available in Geccko from 30 September 2026 and will complete the national child safety training package.

Course 5 is mandatory for people in **leadership and governance roles**, including:

- persons with management or control (PMCs)
- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge.

Under National Law there is plenty of time to complete advanced training.

The deadline will depend on when you started in a role that requires advanced training. If you:

- hold a relevant role before 30 September 2026, you must complete advanced training by **31 March 2027**
- start working in a relevant role after 30 September 2026, you must complete advanced training **within 3 months** of your start date.

Now is a good time to identify who will need to complete course 5 and plan training over the coming months.

Learn more about national child safety training.

New Child Care Subsidy data: June quarter 2026

We've published data about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in the June quarter 2026.

Each quarter we issue a summary report about CCS-approved care in Australia. The report includes data on child care usage, services, fees and subsidies in Australia.

Key findings from the June quarter 2026 include:

- 1,393,620 children from 989,100 families used CCS-approved care
- 15,438 CCS-approved services operated during the quarter
- on average, children attended 26.8 hours of care per week
- the average hourly fee was $13.90
- the Australian Government paid $3.88 billion in subsidies.

Go to the report.

Sector spotlight

Stay scam aware: don't share your PRODA details

Scammers continue to target PRODA (Provider Digital Access) users in the early childhood education and care sector.

For example, a scammer may send a text message claiming there has been suspicious activity on your PRODA account. They may then call pretending to be from Services Australia and ask you to confirm your password.

Remember:

- Services Australia will **never** ask for your PRODA password.
- Only sign in to PRODA through the official Services Australia website.
- If you're unsure who you're speaking to, hang up and call back using an official Services Australia phone number.

If you receive a suspicious message, report it to reportascam@servicesaustralia.gov.au. For PRODA support, call 1800 700 199.

For more information, go to the Services Australia website and search using the quick code **QC 83329**.

Facts from FAL

Don't miss these WWCC reporting deadlines

Did you know there are strict timeframes for reporting working with children checks (WWCCs)?

Providers must notify WWCC details for:

- all Family Day Care educators
- all In Home Care educators
- PMCs and persons responsible at the service who are required to hold a WWCC.

You must report:

- **new checks** within 7 days of a person starting at your service
- **changes in status** within 24 hours of becoming aware of the change. This includes a renewal, suspension, revocation, expiry or lapse.

When reporting a WWCC, providers need to supply the check identification number, expiry date, issuing state or territory, and details of any changes. Where a person is required to hold more than one WWCC across jurisdictions, each check must be reported.

South Australian providers: a physical or digital WWCC card is not issued in South Australia. Instead, retain a copy of the clearance notice as evidence of a valid WWCC. The expiry date is 5 years from the date the notice is issued and must be recorded in the Child Care Subsidy System. Do **not** leave the date blank!

Learn more about your WWCC reporting requirements.

New ACCS child wellbeing resources

We have updated our Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing pages to help providers prepare and submit applications.

What is ACCS child wellbeing?

ACCS child wellbeing helps families when a child needs extra support. Providers apply on behalf of families.

What's new?

Applications can be delayed when information is incomplete or inaccurate. To help you prepare a complete application, we have added new checklists and guidance covering:

- applying for ACCS child wellbeing
- issuing a child wellbeing certificate
- applying for a child wellbeing determination
- providing third-party evidence checklist to support an application.

Use these checklists when preparing your application or share them with anyone helping you prepare evidence.

You can print them out and keep a copy on hand as you go.

More information

Find out more about the ACCS child wellbeing subsidy.

From the department

National Workforce Census reference week

This week is National Workforce Census (NWC) reference week for Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers and services. It runs from 14 to 20 September 2026.

What you need to do

During the reference week:

- note child attendance and details of your workforce
- start entering data for the NWC from **21 September 2026**.

What's different this time?

We know services already give a lot of information to government. For the 2026 National Workforce Census, we're working to avoid asking for the same information twice.

This includes aligning the NWC with the new National Early Childhood Worker Register.

To help reduce the workload for services, the NWC will no longer ask for information about each individual worker. Instead, it will ask for simple, service level data. This will make the NWC quicker and easier to complete, while still giving us the information we need.

For further information and regular updates on the NWC, visit the Social Research Centre website.

Building early education in the Northern Territory

The Australian and Northern Territory governments are partnering to expand access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the territory through the Building Early Education Fund.

This marks an important milestone for the Building Fund, with agreements now in place across all states and territories.

The Australian Government will provide nearly $9 million to build a new ECEC service at Manunda Terrace Primary School in Karama.

The project will deliver up to 60 new ECEC places for local families when it opens in 2029.

Funding is delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the NT Government.

The $1 billion Building Fund provides capital funding to build new and expand existing ECEC services in areas of need.

Learn more about the Building Early Education Fund.

When is the advanced child safety training deadline?

Advanced child safety training builds on foundation training and supports stronger child safety practice.

If advanced training applies to your role, the deadline depends on when you started working in that role.

- If you hold a relevant role before 30 September 2026, you must complete advanced training by **31 March 2027**.
- If you start working in a relevant role after 30 September 2026, you must complete advanced training **within 3 months** of your start date.

Now is a good time to check which courses apply to each role and plan training for your team.

Visit our website to learn more about advanced child safety training.

Report session fees correctly on StartingBlocks.gov.au

We publish your fees on StartingBlocks.gov.au. This helps parents choose the best ECEC for their family.

You must keep your fee details up to date to ensure they display correctly. You must:

- report your standard fees before any subsidies, discounts or reductions
- ensure you're updating the fees against the correct session type in the CCS System
- report any fee changes within 14 days.

To avoid errors:

- report **detailed** fee information, including the effective date and fee amount
- avoid submitting URLs as they will not be displayed on StartingBlocks.gov.au
- do not enter **full day or session fee** into an **hourly** fee field, and vice versa.

You must report this information in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) through:

- the Provider Entry Point (PEP), or
- your third-party software.

The information then flows through to StartingBlocks.gov.au .

Find out how to update your fees in the PEP.

National Early Childhood Worker Register: are your details up to date?

Providers must maintain accurate information in the National Early Childhood Worker Register.

The register helps keep children safe by ensuring only qualified and checked staff work in the sector.

You must update the register within 14 days when a worker:

- starts
- leaves
- changes roles
- updates their details (including background checks, qualifications, training and contact details)
- works at a service that has changed providers.

This is a **mandatory requirement** under the National Law.

For more information, visit ACECQA's website.

Sector spotlight

New Inclusion Ready Toolkit now available

A new Inclusion Ready Toolkit is now available to help your service turn inclusive intent into everyday practice.

The toolkit supports service leaders and educators to strengthen inclusive practice through continuous quality improvement. It includes:

- a **practice guide** to build a shared understanding of inclusive practice
- a **self-assessment tool** to identify strengths and opportunities for growth
- **professional learning** modules to support individual and team capability uplift.

Services can choose how and when to use it to meet their needs. The toolkit supports existing inclusion obligations and does not introduce new requirements.

The toolkit and supporting resources are:

- free and available to all ECEC services
- aligned with the National Quality Framework.

The toolkit was:

- developed by ACECQA on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education
- informed by an expert consortium of higher education researchers
- shaped by extensive consultation with the sector.

Explore the Inclusion Ready Toolkit on the ACECQA website.

Facts from FAL

Can't find an enrolment in PEP? Here's what to do

Keeping enrolment records up to date is essential for ensuring families can access CCS payments and for maintaining accurate records in the CCSS.

If you're unable to find an enrolment in the PEP, follow these steps before seeking assistance.

Check your search details

Start by confirming you're searching with the correct information, including the:

- CCS enrolment ID
- child or guardian's name
- Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- child's date of birth.

Why an enrolment may not appear

If the enrolment still doesn't show up, it may be because:

- the family rejected the enrolment, or
- the enrolment was ceased more than 12 months ago and has been archived.

Rejected and archived enrolments cannot be reactivated. If the child still requires care, you'll need to create a new enrolment.

Still can't find it? We're here to help

If you've checked the details and still can't find the enrolment, contact the CCS Provider Helpdesk. Email us anytime at CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au and we'll help you resolve the issue.

Infringement notices: what providers need to know

Most providers meet their obligations under Family Assistance Law (FAL). When a provider does not follow the rules, we may issue an infringement notice.

We publish de-identified information about infringement notices so providers and services can see where our compliance monitoring is focused.

What is an infringement notice?

An infringement notice is a fine. We may issue an infringement notice when a provider does not comply with the rules under FAL. Providers are responsible for ensuring they, their employees and educators follow the rules.

Steps to help you stay compliant

- Make sure your contact details are current.
- Check your fee information on StartingBlocks.gov.au is accurate and up to date.
- Submit accurate session reports by the due date.
- Notify us when changes to your business happen.
- Make sure your staff understand record keeping requirements and timeframes.

Read the FAL civil penalty provisions on our website for the types of compliance issues that can attract an infringement notice.

If you receive an infringement notice

- Read the notice carefully.
- Follow the instructions, including payment requirements and timeframes.

Read our guidance on what to do if you receive an infringement notice.

Notify us about changes

You must notify us about fees, vacancies, closures and changes to information.

Overpayments and debt

Sometimes you may receive more CCS than you're entitled to. This is known as an overpayment. If this happens, we'll use your future CCS payment to pay back the difference.

Workforce support

Neuro-affirming practices to support children's peer relationships

Join Be You for an online event to learn how social experiences and peer relationships support children's mental health and wellbeing.

This event will:

- share insights on neurodivergence and neuro-affirming practices that encourage self-determination and recognise diversity
- explore how peer relationships can support children's social and emotional learning and their wellbeing.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEST on 17 September 2026.

Register for the webinar.

9 September 2026

From the department

Who needs to complete advanced child safety training?

Wondering who needs to complete advanced child safety training? Here's a quick guide.

Advanced training is only required for specific roles, and not everyone needs to complete the same advanced courses:

- staff who work directly with children must complete courses 3 and 4
- nominated supervisors and persons in day-to-day charge must complete courses 3, 4 and 5
- persons with management or control (PMCs) must complete course 5 (available from 30 September 2026).

Under National Law, there is plenty of time to complete advanced training.

Now is a good time to identify which advanced courses apply to each role at your service and plan training for your team.

Check the course matrix and learn more about national child safety training on our website.

Sector spotlight

National Child Protection Week 2026



National Child Protection Week reminds us that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

This year's theme encourages us to turn conversations into action. Talking about child safety can build understanding and encourage reflection. But real change happens when we take practical steps to support children and families. This week, take a moment to think about what action you can take, big or small, to help children thrive.

Explore resources from the National Association of Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Facts from FAL

Keep your PMC details current to avoid CCSS access issues

Approved providers must make sure their PMC details are up to date.

This is a condition of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approval. It also helps make sure your organisation can access the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) and continue to submit data and receive CCS payments.

Providers can't choose who to list as a PMC for convenience. Family Assistance Law defines PMCs, and you must list everyone in your organisation who meets that definition.

If your PMC details change and you lose access to the CCSS, the department may need to manually add one PMC so you can continue to submit data. Before this can happen, the department must complete a fit and proper assessment of that person.

The department monitors providers that do not keep their PMCs current.

What you need to do

- Review your current PMC details.
- Update details when people join, leave or change roles.
- Update details if your organisation changes.
- Make sure all required PMCs and persons responsible are identified.
- Act early to avoid issues with CCSS access or CCS payments.

Learn more about PMC obligations on our website.

Providers may offer only certain inducements

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers must not offer some types of inducements. An inducement is an incentive offered to encourage a family to enrol a child at your service.

You must not offer inducements that are financial, or that are unrelated to the quality or delivery of education and care. This can include cash, vouchers, electronic devices, and gifts.

You can:

- offer discounted or free care
- advertise your service and offer free site visits or trial periods
- provide marketing merchandise valued at up to $30 per complying written arrangement
- include extra-curricular activities as part of the session fee
- promote your social impact, such as donations to a charity
- provide transport to or from your service, if this is part of your normal business practice.

Make sure you record and report any fee discounts if you are claiming CCS.

Read more about advertising your service on our website.

Workforce support

A conversation could change a life



Thursday 10 September is R U OK? Day. It is a national day of action to remind us that every day is the day to ask, 'are you OK?'

By starting a simple conversation, we can create a world where everyone feels connected and supported.

Here are some helpful places to find resources and support:

find early education tools and conversation tips on the R U OK? website

find wellbeing resources on the Be You website.

Let's make every day a day to check in and show we care.

We've processed worker retention payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 13 July 2026 to 9 August 2026.

We processed this payment on 7 September 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 CCSS. 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

Foundation training completed: what happens next

Thank you to everyone who completed foundations of child safety training.

More than 390,000 learners completed the training, strengthening child safety knowledge and practice across the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

What providers should do now

With the initial foundation training deadline now passed, providers should:

- confirm all staff have completed foundation training
- follow up any outstanding completions
- maintain records of completed training
- update the national worker register, where required.

New starters

Foundation training remains mandatory for anyone who joins the sector.

New starters must complete foundation training before working directly with children, or within 14 days of being employed, whichever occurs first.

Advanced training is available

Advanced child safety training is available for roles that require it.

Courses 3 and 4 are available now. Course 5 is expected to be available from 30 September 2026.

There is plenty of time to complete advanced training.

Learn more about national child safety training.

Training for early childhood staff on the Disability Standards

Free online training is available to help you understand the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

The Standards explain what education providers need to do under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) to support children with disability.

From 1 August 2026, early childhood services were included in the Standards. Service providers already had responsibilities to children with disability under the DDA. The Standards make these responsibilities clearer.

Training is available for:

- **leaders,** including centre directors, supervisors, and program managers
- **teachers** working in Centre Based Day Care, preschool and kindergarten
- **educators** working in Centre Based Day Care, Family Day Care, In Home Care, preschool and kindergarten
- **Outside School Hours Care** educators, leaders and co-ordinators.

The training was developed in consultation with a steering group comprising early childhood and education experts including representatives from ACECQA. It was tested with educators and staff working in the sector.

The courses feature examples of the Standards in action, helping services to support effective consultation, make reasonable adjustments and eliminate harassment and victimisation.

Each course takes around 90 minutes to complete. You will get a certificate on completion.

Access the free training by registering on the NCCD Portal.

Expanding early education in Devonport, Tasmania

The Australian Government is investing up to $4 million to expand Malangenna Children's Centre in Devonport, giving more local families access to ECEC.

The funding will support Devonport Child Care Centres Inc to create a modern, fit-for-purpose early learning environment.

The expanded centre will:

- provide additional ECEC places for children and families
- support local workforce growth.

The funding is being delivered through the $1 billion Building Early Education Fund, which provides capital funding to build or expand ECEC services in areas of need.

Learn more about the Building Early Education Fund.

Tell us about your Helpdesk experience

We've introduced a short survey (2 quick questions) after you contact the CCS Provider Helpdesk by **email or through our online form**.

You may receive an email inviting you to complete the survey. This is a genuine request, and it should only take a moment to complete.

Your feedback helps us understand:

- what we're doing well
- how we can improve our support to you.

Thanks for taking the time to share your experience.

If you receive the survey email after contacting the Helpdesk, we'd really appreciate your response.



Sector spotlight

Thank you, educators!



Early Childhood Educators' Day is a chance to recognise and celebrate the incredible contribution of ECEC educators across Australia.

Every day, educators help children to thrive. They play an important role in improving children's learning, wellbeing and development.

Thank you to all educators for the valuable work you do and the positive difference you make in children's lives.

We encourage providers to celebrate their educators and show their appreciation today. Visit the Early Childhood Educators' Day website for celebration ideas and resources.

What keeps an educator inspired after more than 30 years in the profession? Read Lisa's story and find out.

Facts from FAL

Family Day Care: caring for relatives

If you operate or work in a Family Day Care (FDC) service, it's important to understand the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) rules when educators provide care to relatives. These rules help ensure CCS is only claimed for eligible care.

Caring for close family

Providers **must not claim CCS** when an educator is caring for a close family member.

Close family includes the educator's, or their partner's:

- child, foster child, adopted child, kinship child, or any child they have legal responsibility for
- brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother or step-sister.

This is because care that would normally be provided by a family is **not eligible** for CCS or Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS).

Even though CCS cannot be claimed, you must keep records of care provided to close family members.

Caring for extended family

In some circumstances, CCS-eligible sessions can be reported when an educator is caring for extended family members.

Extended family members include the educator's, or their partner's:

- niece or nephew
- cousin
- grandchild or great-grandchild

However, educators must follow the **less than 50% rule**. This means they must not provide care to more relatives than non-relatives in a CCS fortnight.

If you do not ensure educators follow this rule, we may **suspend or cancel your provider approval**.

Visit our website or watch this short video to find out more about caring for extended family members.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment and quality area 2 condition

Most services already meet Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard. There are some important changes coming for those that don't.

From July 2027, Centre Based Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care services that do not meet QA2 may have their worker retention payment funding cut or suspended.

If your service is rated below meeting for QA2, your provider should address any finding as soon as possible and seek re-assessment from the state or territory regulator.

Visit our website for more information about the new condition, including arrangements for:

- CBDC services not regulated under the NQF
- services awaiting their first quality rating
- services participating in recognised quality uplift programs
- services acquired by eligible quality providers.

Support for very remote ECEC teachers: HELP debt reduction

ECEC teachers working in very remote communities may be eligible for a Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction.

The HELP Debt Reduction Program for Very Remote Teachers supports eligible teachers working in Centre Based Day Care and preschool settings.

Eligible ECEC teachers can apply for:

- indexation waivers on their outstanding HELP debt
- reductions to their HELP debt.

Staff may be eligible if they:

- have completed an initial teaching qualification
- are working as a teacher in a Centre Based Day Care service or preschool

- are working in a very remote Australian community
- had an outstanding HELP debt when they started working
- have completed the required service days on or after 1 January 2019.

The program aims to:

- increase the number of teachers in very remote communities
- support services to attract, retain and sustain a qualified workforce.

Learn more about the HELP Debt Reduction Program on our website.



26 August 2026

From the department

Complete foundations of child safety training

The deadline to complete foundations of child safety training for most staff is 27 August 2026.

Everyone who works or volunteers in early childhood education and care (ECEC) must complete:

- Course 1: Understanding child safety
- Course 2: Understanding and identifying child abuse and neglect

If you have not yet completed both courses, please do so before the deadline.

Anyone who starts working or volunteering at a service on or after 14 August 2026 must complete foundation training by whichever occurs first:

- before they start working directly with children at the service
- within 14 days of being employed at the service.

Providers are responsible for ensuring all staff, volunteers and students complete the required training.

Providers should:

- check all staff have completed foundation training
- keep certificates as evidence of completion
- update the National Worker Register where required.

Learn more about national child safety training.

National Workforce Census: registration reminder

The 2026 National Workforce Census is coming later this year. If you haven't already registered, now is the time.

The Social Research Centre has emailed you login details. Find that email and get started.

Your registration deadline

13 September if you operate:

- Centre Based Day Care
- In Home Care
- Family Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care services that offer before- and after-school care
- preschool or kindergarten.

27 September if you operate:

- **Vacation care** in Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, or Victoria.

4 October if you operate:

- **Vacation care** in Tasmania or Western Australia.

Need help?

If you require help or have questions, call 1800 800 996 or email nwc@srcentre.com.au.

For further information and updates, visit the Social Research Centre website.

Spot checks: over 1,300 services visited nationwide

We have visited more than 1,300 ECEC services since beginning our spot check program in November 2025.

As part of this program, our authorised officers visited different service types. These included Centre Based Day Care, Outside School Hours Care, and Family Day Care services. We visited metropolitan, regional and remote communities across Australia.

These visits support services to learn more about meeting their legal obligations. They also help identify and address issues early.

What is a spot check?

Spot checks are unannounced, in-person visits by authorised officers from the Australian Government Department of Education.

Officers will:

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

During a visit, authorised officers work with service staff to:

- check that providers are meeting their obligations under Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- confirm enrolment and attendance information is accurate
- assess whether the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is being administered correctly
- review records and processes supporting compliance
- provide information and guidance where needed.

Spot checks are also an opportunity for services to identify and address compliance issues before they become more serious.

Could your service be selected?

Yes. Spot checks can occur at any CCS-approved ECEC service across Australia.

Your service should be prepared for a spot check at any time.

How to stay compliant

You can reduce compliance risks by regularly reviewing your service's practices and records.

Key areas to check include:

- Are Working With Children Check details current and reported through the Provider Entry Point?
- Is your service information (fees, operating hours and contact details) accurate?
- Do your Statements of Entitlement meet FAL requirements?
- Does every child attending your service have an appropriate care arrangement in place?
- Are your enrolment, attendance and session reports accurate and supported by records?

Supporting quality and safety

Spot checks are part of the department's work to improve quality and safety across the sector.

These spot checks do not replace state and territory routine checks. If our officers notice any quality or safety concerns, we will refer these to state or territory regulators.

More information about spot checks is available on our website.

Want to learn more about Family Assistance Law? Geccko is our learning platform for the ECEC sector.

Early Education Service Delivery Prices project: data collection closing soon

Voluntary data collection for the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project closes on 31 August 2026.

The project will help us understand the true costs of delivering safe and quality ECEC across Australia.

Make sure to submit your information in the data portal by 31 August 2026. If you need help, email EESDP@deloitte.com.au or call 1800 371 146.

Thank you to the many providers who contributed. Your input will help inform future reforms on the path to universal ECEC.

Learn more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Building early education in Western Australia

The Australian and Western Australian Governments are partnering to deliver 4 new not-for-profit ECEC services in outer suburban and remote Western Australia.

Through the Building Early Education Fund, the Australian Government will invest up to $27.9 million to build 4 new ECEC services, including:

- services at Maarakool Primary School and Greenmount Primary School
- an early learning and family centre in Derby.

This funding is being delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the WA Government.

The new centre in Derby is being delivered through a partnership with the:

- WA Government
- Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC)
- Minderoo Foundation.

The centre will have capacity to support 48 ECEC places and 35 Outside School Hours Care places for families in Derby, Mowanjum and Pandanus Park.

Together, these projects will support the creation of more than 140 ECEC places.

The fourth project will be announced by both governments in due course.

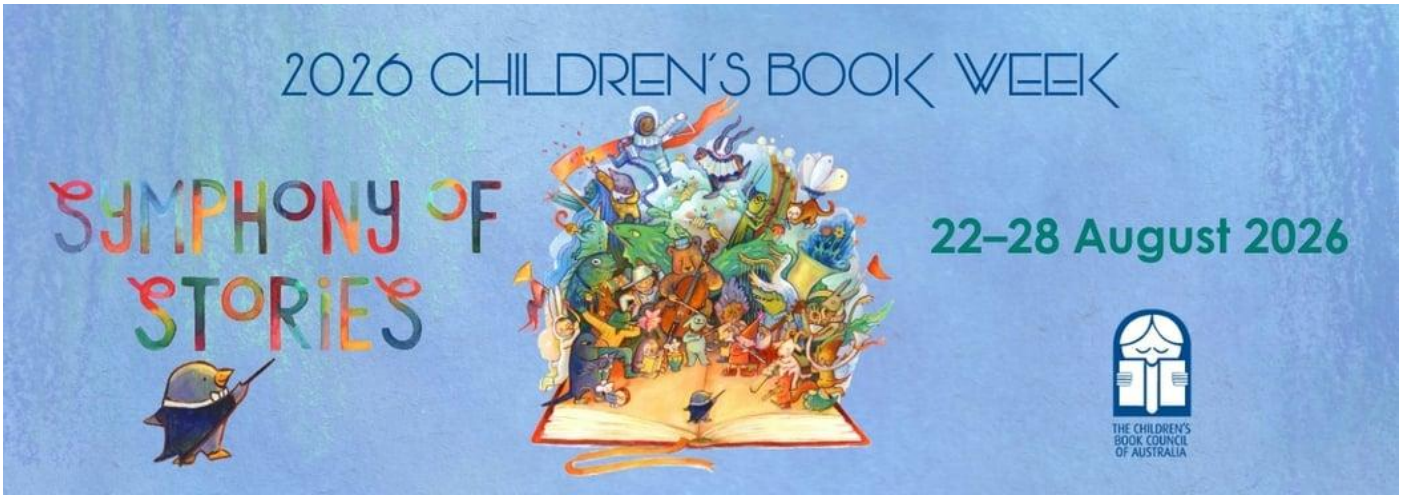
The $1 billion Building Early Education Fund provides capital funding to build or expand ECEC services in areas of need. It is part of a broader commitment to chart the course to universal ECEC.

Learn more about the Building Early Education Fund.



Sector spotlight

Celebrating the love of reading



This week is Children's Book Week. The 2026 theme Symphony of Stories celebrates many different elements coming together to make one harmonious whole, just like a book!

Book Week encourages children to explore various books and enhance their literacy skills.

Your service can celebrate Book Week by:

- having a book parade
- organising book themed crafts and games
- exploring new stories
- inviting families to share their favourite books and more.

Children's Book Week is promoted by the Children's Book Council of Australia. You can learn more on the Children's Book Council of Australia website.

Wear it Purple Day



Wear purple this Friday 28 August!

Wear It Purple strives to foster supportive, safe, empowering, and inclusive environments for LGBTQIA+SB young people.

This year's theme, Colours of Courage, celebrates the many different forms of courage shown by LGBTQIA+SB young people, allies and communities every day.

You can download resources for use in the lead up to Wear it Purple Day.

Learn more about Wear It Purple Day.

Facts from FAL

Absences at the start or end of an enrolment

In some circumstances, families may still receive CCS for absences that occur at the start or end of an enrolment.

This only applies in specific situations during the 6 days before a child's first physical attendance or the 6 days after their last physical attendance. This is known as the extended period.

Families may be eligible for CCS during the extended period if:

- the ECEC service changes ownership
- the child's usual service is closed and the child attends a different service, requiring a new enrolment under the same provider
- a family tragedy occurs within the 28 days before the absence
- the enrolment was ceased incorrectly
- any of the additional absence reasons apply.

Read about absences at the start and end of an enrolment on our website.

Thinking of running your own Family Day Care or In Home Care service?

You cannot use your employer's CCS approval for your own service.

Using someone else's CCS approval to deliver care or accept CCS payments for your independent service is not legal.

We're seeing an increasing number of educators doing this, and it's a serious compliance issue for everyone involved.

You need your own approval

An educator's independent business or service is not automatically approved to deliver care or administer CCS. The CCS approval belongs to the **approved service** – not to the individual educator.

If you deliver or promote care using a different service name while using the approved service's CCS approval, you might be breaking the law.

Steps to run your own service

We provide a step-by-step guide on becoming an approved provider on our website.

Questions? Reach out to us – we can explain what's involved.

Session lengths – what to check

Reported sessions of care must reflect the time a child is physically present and receiving care.

It's important to review your reporting to ensure session reports accurately reflect each child's attendance.

You should check that:

- attendance start and end times match when the child is physically present in care

- charged session lengths reflect the agreed care arrangement with the family
- records support the sessions you report.

Accurate reporting helps ensure CCS payments are correct and reduces the risk of compliance action.

Want to know more?

Watch our short video on reporting actual attendance times.

Share with families

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing has started

Services Australia has started CCS balancing for the 2025–26 financial year.

You must confirm your family income so Services Australia can balance your CCS.

You can do this by:

- lodging your tax return (and your partner's) with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia you do not need to lodge a tax return (even if you've already told the ATO).

Once Services Australia has balanced your CCS, they will send you the results.

Find out more about CCS balancing on the Services Australia website.

From the department

Foundation training deadline approaching

The deadline to complete foundations of child safety training is approaching.

Everyone who works or volunteers in early childhood education and care (ECEC) must complete both foundation courses:

- Course 1: Understanding child safety
- Course 2: Understanding and identifying child abuse and neglect

If you were working or volunteering at a service before 14 August 2026, you must complete foundation training by **27 August 2026**.

If you started working or volunteering at an ECEC service on or after 14 August 2026, you must complete foundation training by the earlier of:

- before you start working directly with children
- within 14 days of starting work at the service.

Check your training status

Now is a good time to:

- check your completion has been recorded correctly in Geccko
- download your completion certificate
- share evidence of completion with your provider.

Provider responsibilities

Providers are responsible for ensuring staff complete training. Providers should:

- ask staff to share their certificate as evidence of completion ahead of the deadline
- record training in the National Worker Register for all staff and volunteers.

Advanced training is available

Advanced child safety training is now available for roles that require it.

Under National Law, staff who are required to complete advanced training have **plenty of time** to do so.

Check the course matrix on our website to find out which training applies to your role.

Find out more about national child safety training.

Community Child Care Fund round 5 outcomes announced

Outcomes for round 5 of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) sustainability and capital support grant have now been announced.

We have offered $106.9 million to support ECEC services in communities experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

A total of 419 applications representing 386 services were successful in securing funding through this round, including:

- $99.5 million in sustainability support funding to help improve financial viability
- $7.3 million in capital support funding for minor works to improve existing facilities.

Initial outcome letters were sent to applicants on 17 July 2026, and successful applicants will soon begin entering into funding agreements.

Funding arrangements are expected to commence from September 2026 and will be supported over 3 years.

Find out more:

- view the list of successful service locations
- read the feedback for applicants
- Learn more about the grant.

Last chance to tell us what it costs to deliver ECEC

Voluntary data collection for the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project closes on 31 August 2026.

Submit your information in the data portal by this date to ensure your context is represented.

Your participation helps ensure:

- the diversity of the sector is accurately represented
- our understanding of service delivery costs is based on evidence from real providers.

If you need help, email EESDP@deloitte.com.au or call 1800 371 146.

Thank you to those who have already participated. Your input will help inform future reforms on the path to universal ECEC.

Learn more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Facts from FAL

Protect your CCS approval: managing educator arrangements

As an approved Family Day Care or In Home Care provider, you must manage Child Care Subsidy (CCS) correctly.

Your educators may have their own ABN or work as contractors. However, any care delivered through your service must be provided under your CCS approval.

We are seeing more cases where educators promote or run their own child care business while providing care through an approved provider.

This can confuse families about:

- who is providing care
- who handles CCS requirements.

What you need to do

To avoid confusion and meet your obligations, make sure families and educators can clearly see that care is provided through your approved service.

- Make sure all documents (including invoices, receipts, statements, and other communications) clearly identify your approved service.
- Use your approved service name and contact details in all advertising and promotions.
- State in all contracts and agreements that care is delivered on behalf of your approved service.

If an educator wants to run their own service, they need to apply for their own regulatory approval and submit a separate CCS application.

Why it matters

Misusing an approved service's CCS approval is illegal. Doing this may cause a compliance breach for both the provider and the educator.

Need help?

- Read about CCS eligibility requirements on our website.
- Contact CCSassessments@education.gov.au for support.

Know your obligations: working with children checks

Working with children checks (WWCCs) are a key child safety requirement. All providers have obligations regarding WWCCs under both state and territory law and Family Assistance Law (FAL).

You must:

- ensure anyone required to hold a WWCC has a current check before starting in their role
- keep records of all checks and provide these to us on request
- notify new checks within 7 days
- notify changes to existing checks within 24 hours.

Each state and territory has different requirements about who must have a WWCC. Find out who needs a WWCC and apply for one via the WWCC regulator in your state or territory.

Note for South Australian providers: a physical or digital WWCC card is not issued in your state. Instead, you should retain a copy of the clearance notice as evidence of a valid WWCC. The expiry date is 5 years from the date this notice is issued and must be recorded in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCCS).

Learn more about how to manage your WWCC obligations on our website.

Reminder: families must pay gap fees by EFT

Last month, we issued a small number of infringement notices to providers who did not have arrangements in place for families to pay gap fees using an electronic funds transfer (EFT) system.



Under FAL, you must have arrangements in place so families can pay gap fees by EFT.

We may issue an infringement notice if you do not meet these requirements.

EFT payment arrangements are just one example of an obligation that may result in an infringement notice.

Other examples include:

- not submitting enrolment notices or session reports on time
- not reporting fee information correctly
- not passing on or remitting a fee reduction amount
- not notifying the correct agency when a child needs wellbeing support.

Learn more:

- about infringement notices
- about the infringement notices register
- about FAL and administering CCS on Geccko.

Keep enrolments up to date in the CCSS

It's important to make sure your service keeps its enrolment information accurate and up to date in the CCSS.

When a child's care arrangements change, you may need to update their enrolment notice.

You must update an enrolment notice in the CCSS **within 7 days** if:

- a family disagrees with enrolment details and you agree an update is needed
- the care arrangement between your service and the family changes
- you identify incorrect information in an enrolment
- the care arrangement ends.

The provider tool kit includes new task cards with step-by-step instructions for updating enrolments in the Provider Entry Point (PEP).

Understanding offsets on your CCS payments

Have you noticed your CCS payment is lower than expected? An offset may have been applied to your service's payments.

Offsets are commonly shown as deductions on your payment advice and may be used to recover previous overpayments. If an offset has been applied, you'll usually see it listed in the **total deductions/offsets** section of your payment advice.

How to check if your service has an offset

Review your payment advice and look for any deductions or offsets.

- Log into the PEP to check the amount, child and weeks affected.
- In PEP, offset transactions will display **$0.00** in the **Total Paid** column.



- If you use third-party software, similar information may be available there. Contact your software provider if you need help locating these details.

Find out more

For more information about overpayments and offsets, visit our website.

Workforce support

Making change happen: a proactive approach to collegial relationships

Join Be You for an online event to learn how respectful and supportive collegial relationships can help create a healthier workplace.

This event will:

- showcase the proactive approach a service leader is taking to minimise workplace conflict
- explore service goals, expected outcomes and the planning involved in managing change.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEST on 20 August 2026.

Register for the webinar.

Share with families

Track your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing online

Services Australia is starting CCS balancing for the 2025–26 financial year.

You can check the progress of your balancing on:

- your Centrelink online account or
- the Express Plus mobile app.

This will show if you still need to confirm your income.

If all the information has been received, your CCS will be balanced automatically.

To learn more, visit the Services Australia website.

From the department

Have you registered for the National Workforce Census?

The 2026 National Workforce Census is coming later this year. If you haven't already registered, now is the time.

The Social Research Centre has emailed you login details. Find the email and get started.

Registration deadlines

13 September if you operate:

- Centre Based Day Care
- In Home Care
- Family Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care that offers before and after school care
- Preschool or kindergarten.

27 September if you operate:

- **Vacation care** in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, or Victoria.

4 October if you operate:

- **Vacation care** in Tasmania or Western Australia.

Need help?

If you require help or have questions, call 1800 800 996 or email nwc@srcentre.com.au.

For further information and updates, visit the Social Research Centre website.

Advanced child safety training is now available

Advanced child safety training is now available in Geccko.

Advanced training builds on foundation training and supports stronger child safety practice across early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Advanced training includes 3 courses:

- Course 3: Creating child safe cultures through everyday practice
- Course 4: Responding to safeguarding concerns
- Course 5: Leading and governing child safety (available from 30 September 2026).

Check what training applies to your role

The courses you need to complete depend on your role.

Courses 3 and 4 are for educators and those in supervisory and day-to-day management roles. This includes:

- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge
- staff members who work directly with children.

Course 5 is for those in leadership and governance roles. This includes:

- persons with management or control of a service
- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge.

Check completion timeframes

Under National Law, you have plenty of time to complete the training.

Anyone who is required to complete advanced training must do so within **6 months** of course 5 being published.

People who start working in the sector after course 5 is published must complete advanced training within **3 months** of their start date.

Take care

Advanced training includes sensitive content. Please take care of yourself as you work through the courses. Take breaks whenever you need and reach out to personal or professional supports if required.

Find out more

Visit the national child safety training webpage for all the details.

Help us understand the costs of delivering ECEC

Data collection for the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project is underway. There is still time to have your say.

Your participation is essential to help us understand the costs of delivering ECEC across different service types and settings. It will also help ensure the data accurately reflects the diversity of the sector across Australia.

The information you provide will help us:

- analyse how and why costs vary
- develop a dataset and model to inform service delivery prices.

Look for your email invitation from Deloitte Access Economics to get involved. If you need help or have questions, email EESDP@deloitte.com.au or call 1800 371 146.

Learn more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Sector spotlight

Culturally responsive learning communities

Last week we celebrated National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.

It was a reminder of the important role learning communities play in building respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Be You's Reflect, Respect, Respond: Protocols for Culturally Respectful Engagement with First Nations Communities helps educators create welcoming, culturally responsive learning communities.

The guide offers practical advice, reflections, case studies and suggested actions to:

- create learning environments that engage respectfully with First Nations communities

- strengthen relationships with children, families and communities
- foster a genuine sense of belonging.

For more resources on engaging with First Nations communities, visit the Be You website.

Facts from FAL

Changed your legal structure? Protect your CCS approval

Did you know that a new legal entity requires a new Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approval?

Changing your legal structure can affect your CCS approval. If you are changing your ABN, business structure or ownership arrangements, you must contact us early. This will help avoid compliance issues and disruptions to CCS payments.

The following changes may create a new legal entity:

- moving from a sole trader to a company
- registering a new ABN
- transferring ownership.

Your CCS approval cannot be transferred to a new legal entity, even if the same people continue to operate the service. A new CCS approval application is required.

What you need to do

To help avoid gaps in approval and CCS payments, you should:

- notify the department at least 42 days before changing your legal structure or ABN
- notify us of significant changes to ownership or management arrangements
- apply for a new CCS approval where required.

ECEC providers must comply with two separate legal frameworks:

- **National Law** manages your overall regulatory approval and daily operations. Contact your state or territory regulatory authority for advice.
- **Family Assistance Law (FAL)** covers your CCS approval and obligations under Australian Government law. Contact our department for assistance.

Being compliant with **both** laws ensures your operations continue smoothly.

Need help?

If you are planning changes to your business structure, or have already made changes, contact us as soon as possible.

Read about notification and reporting timeframes on our website.

Email CCSassessments@education.gov.au.

CCS reporting: sessions must not overlap school hours

We check services to make sure providers meet their obligations under FAL. This includes accurate CCS reporting.

Our monitoring continues to identify a recurring issue: sessions of care overlapping a child's school hours.



Under FAL, **CCS-eligible sessions of care times must not overlap a child's formal schooling hours**. Services must accurately report sessions and take steps to prevent recurring errors.

The following example shows how unchecked errors in reporting can lead to compliance action.

Example

Tiny Toons Community Child Care provides regular before- and after-school care for school-aged children. To save time, staff members enter the same before-school session time in the Provider Entry Point (PEP) each day, using a previous entry as a guide.

The local school's hours are **8:25 am** to **3:25 pm**. However, Tiny Toons reported its before-school session in PEP as ending at **8:30 am**. This means the CCS-eligible session overlaps the actual school hours by **5 minutes**.

Staff continue to enter the same end time, so the overlap repeats across many children and days.

What went wrong

The session end time entered in PEP was within school hours, making the entire session not eligible for CCS.

What we did

When the issue was identified, we reminded Tiny Toons that CCS-eligible sessions must not overlap school hours. We asked the service to correct session times going forward and to check other reported sessions for similar overlaps.

The outcome

Tiny Toons continued to report CCS-eligible sessions that overlap school hours. Following investigation, they received an **infringement notice valued at $18,200 and a debt was raised for the CCS that should not have been paid**.

Find out more about notifications and reporting, including:

- the activities that you must report
- when you must report
- who can report
- how to report.

Public holidays: are your absences reported correctly?

Absences can only be claimed on public holidays if a child would normally attend care on that day.

Example: absence can be claimed

- A child is enrolled to attend on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
- A public holiday falls on a Monday.
- As the child would normally attend on that day, you can record an absence.

Example: absence cannot be claimed

- A child is enrolled to attend on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
- A public holiday falls on a Friday.
- As the child does not usually attend on Fridays, you should not record an absence.

Claiming absences for days a child would not normally attend may result in compliance action.
Regularly reviewing attendance and absence records can help ensure your reporting is accurate and CCS is paid correctly.
Learn more about reporting absences on our website.

Submitting accurate session reports

ECEC providers must submit accurate session reports on time – it's the law. Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process CCS payments.

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided. To support you, we've developed web content covering:

- what a session of care is
- why session reports must be accurate and submitted on time
- how to submit session reports and what to include
- how and when to update session reports.

Learn about managing session reports on our website.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment update

Fee growth cap now 5.8%

The fee growth cap is now 5.8% for services currently receiving the worker retention payment.

Newly eligible services, including Family Day Care and In Home Care, have been subject to a 5.8% fee growth cap since 17 June 2026.

This cap will remain in place until 7 August 2027.

Visit the eligibility and conditions page for detailed guidance and examples.

We've processed payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 15 June 2026 to 12 July 2026.

We processed this payment on 7 August 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.

Share with families

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing has started

Services Australia has started balancing CCS for the 2025–26 financial year.

If you get CCS, you need to confirm your family income so your payments can be balanced.

You can confirm your 2025–26 income by:

- lodging your tax return (and your partner's) with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia you do not need to lodge a tax return (even if you have already told the ATO).

Once your CCS has been balanced, Services Australia will send you the result.

For more information, visit the Services Australia website.

5 August 2026

From the department

Disability standards expanded to include early childhood

From 1 August 2026, the Disability Standards for Education include ECEC services.

Children with disability have the right to access and take part in education on the same basis as children without disability. The Standards make it clear what all education providers need to do to support children with disability.

The Standards now apply to ECEC services that are approved to administer Child Care Subsidy (CCS) or are legally required to deliver an education program based on an approved learning framework. This includes:

- Centre Based Day Care
- Family Day Care
- In Home Care
- Outside School Hours Care, including Vacation Care.

The Standards continue to cover preschool and kindergarten.

Under the Standards, children with disability have the right to:

- access and participate in education services on the same basis as children without disability
- receive reasonable adjustments
- be protected from mistreatment.

Visit the ACECQA and Education websites to find out more.

Sector spotlight

Keep your details up to date on StartingBlocks.gov.au

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 standard 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.

You must ensure that you update the fees against the **correct session type** in the Child Care Subsidy System.

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.

Early Learning Matters Week 2026



Celebrating the importance of early learning for every child's development and wellbeing.

Early Learning Matters Week is an annual event led by Early Childhood Australia, shining a spotlight on how high-quality early education and care helps children become confident, enthusiastic learners.

This year's theme reminds us that early learning lays the foundation for lifelong success, and you can help spread the message!

You can play an active role by:

- hosting an event
- participating in activities
- spreading the word and more.

Explore resources and learn more on the Early Learning Matters Week website.

Facts from FAL

Accurate attendance reporting – key reminders

Providers and services must ensure their attendance reporting is accurate and meets CCS requirements.

Our monitoring has identified attendance reporting patterns that may not reflect a child's actual attendance.

This includes:

- higher-than-usual absences
- absences claimed on public holidays for children who do not usually attend on that day
- sessions recorded at or near approved hour limits.

These reporting patterns may indicate that attendance records and sessions reports are not accurately reflecting the care provided.

To meet your obligations under Family Assistance Law, you must:

- report sessions that reflect when a child is physically present and receiving care
- record absences only when a child is not in care
- ensure absences reported on public holidays align with a child's usual attendance pattern
- maintain accurate sign-in and sign-out records to support attendance reporting.

Please review your service's attendance reporting practices and records to ensure they accurately reflect the care provided.

We will continue to monitor attendance reporting. We may take compliance action where services do not meet their obligations under Family Assistance Law.

Need a refresher?

Learn more about reporting absences on our website.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment update

Fee growth cap from 8 August

On Saturday, services currently receiving the worker retention payment will move to the next fee growth cap period of 5.8% from 8 August 2026 to 7 August 2027.

Newly eligible services, including Family Day Care and In Home Care services, are already subject to a 5.8% fee growth cap from 17 June 2026 to 7 August 2027.

The fee growth cap is a key funding condition that:

- supports affordable ECEC
- helps ensure the cost of a wage increase is not passed on to families.

Providers should review the fee growth cap that applies to their circumstances before making any fee changes.

Visit the eligibility and conditions page for detailed guidance and examples.

Updated minimum rates guidance

We've simplified the information on our website about the minimum rates you must pay eligible workers if you receive the worker retention payment.

Visit the worker retention payment minimum rates page to see:

- a simple guide to the rates that apply from **1 July 2026**
- examples to help you understand how to use them.

Refer to the grant guidelines for more details, including:

- how the rates are calculated and applied
- previous rates.

All grantees **must** read and become familiar with the grant guidelines.

18 of 21 national workforce actions now complete

18 of the 21 national actions under the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy have now been completed.

The milestone is highlighted in ACECQA's latest update to the strategy dashboard, which tracks progress towards a more sustainable ECEC workforce.

The 10-year strategy, *Shaping our Future*, outlines 21 actions across 6 focus areas:

- professional recognition
- attraction and retention
- leadership and capability
- wellbeing
- qualifications and career pathways
- data and evidence.

The dashboard tracks:

- progress against all 21 national actions
- initiatives supporting the 6 focus areas
- indicators used to measure the strategy's long-term impact.

Explore the dashboard on ACECQA's website.

Share with families

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing starts soon

Services Australia will start balancing CCS for the 2025–26 year this week.

If you get CCS, you need to confirm your family income so your payments can be balanced. Balancing checks you were paid the right amount. It helps avoid over or underpayments.

You can confirm your 2025–26 income by:

- lodging a tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia you do not need to lodge a tax return (even if you have already told the ATO).

If you had a partner at any time during 2025-26, they must also confirm their income.

For more information, visit the Services Australia website.

From the department

Advanced child safety training launches Friday

Advanced child safety training will be available in Geccko from 31 July 2026.

Advanced training builds on foundation training and supports stronger child safety practice across early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Advanced training is only required for specific roles, and not everyone needs to complete the same advanced courses.

What does advanced training include?

Advanced training includes 3 courses:

- Course 3: Creating child safe cultures through everyday practice
- Course 4: Responding to safeguarding concerns
- Course 5: Leading and governing child safety.

Courses 3 and 4 will be available from **31 July 2026**. Course 5 is expected to be available from **30 September 2026.**

Who needs to complete advanced training?

The courses you need to complete depend on your role.

Courses 3 and 4 are for educators and those in supervisory and day-to-day management roles. This includes:

- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge
- staff members who work directly with children.

Course 5 is for those in leadership and governance roles. This includes:

- persons with management or control of a service
- nominated supervisors
- persons in day-to-day charge.

When does advanced training need to be completed?

You do not need to complete advanced training on launch day. Under National Law, you have plenty of time to complete the training.

Anyone who is required to complete advanced training must do so within 6 months of course 5 being published.

People who start working in the sector after course 5 is published must complete advanced training within 3 months of their start date.

If you experience technical issues

We expect strong interest when advanced training launches.

If you experience technical issues:

- allow time for system performance to stabilise
- try again later
- follow any updates or advice shared through official channels.

Visit the national child safety training webpage for all the details.

Expanding early education in Davoren Park, South Australia

The Australian and South Australian Governments and Minderoo Foundation, brought together by the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC), are partnering to deliver an integrated early years hub in Davoren Park, South Australia.

The project is supported by the Australian Government through the Building Early Education Fund's $100 million partnership with IDAC, which helps deliver integrated early years hubs that bring together early learning and family support services in one location.

The hub will expand the existing services provided by the Northern Area Community and Youth Services, which is part of the Swallowcliffe Children's Precinct.

The centre will expand to 100 ECEC places, creating 45 additional places for local children and families.

Integrated Hubs bring together preschool, health and wellbeing services, and other tailored supports, helping families and children most at risk to access the help they need in one place.

The existing ECEC service will remain open during construction. The new hub is expected to open by early 2029.

The $16.3 million partnership combines:

- $5.5 million from the Australian Government through the Building Early Education Fund's partnership with IDAC
- $7.8 million from the South Australian Government
- $3.0 million from Minderoo Foundation.

Learn more about the Building Early Education Fund.

Sector spotlight

Celebrating Out of School Hours Care educators

Wednesday 29 July is National Out of School Hours Care Educators Day.

We encourage all services to recognise the positive impact these educators have on our children. Thank you educators, for the important work you do.

The 2026 theme asks us to value every educator, every day. It recognises the impact of the educators supporting children before school, after school and during vacation care.

This day is coordinated by the Network of Community Activities and member organisations of the National Alliance for Out of School Hours Care in Australia.

Visit their website to learn more.

Facts from FAL

Changes to CCS provider approval requirements: what you need to know

New Child Care Subsidy (CCS) provider approval requirements started this month. If you are applying for CCS approval or managing your existing service, it's important you understand these changes.

Declare your service model

If you plan to operate a preschool that also provides Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), you must declare this in your CCS approval application.

Stronger governance requirements

All new provider applications must include governance evidence using the governance statement template available on our website.

You should familiarise yourself with the template and requirements before applying.

The application exclusion period now also applies where a provider approval application is refused, or provider approval is cancelled, due to governance concerns.

Changes to background checks

New requirements apply to background checks for persons involved in approved providers.

Background checks submitted with a CCS application must be completed within 60 days before the application is lodged.

For personnel added after CCS approval, background checks must be completed 60 days before the person starts in the role.

All Persons with Management or Control (PMCs) must now:

- hold a valid working with children check (WWCC), regardless of state or territory requirements
- have an ASIC banned and disqualified person check completed
- hold a police check that can be digitally verifiable by the provider and/or the department.

What you should do now

To prepare for these changes:

- review your current PMCs to ensure they hold valid WWCCs and digitally verifiable police checks
- update your onboarding processes to meet the 60-day background check requirement
- familiarise yourself with the governance statement template
- ensure you can declare your service model if applying to operate a preschool OSHC service.

Find out more about becoming an approved provider on our website.



Submit all 2025–26 session reports by this Sunday 2 August

Don’t miss the cut-off date to submit all session reports for the 2025–26 financial year.

You must submit session reports in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) by 11.59 pm AEST this Sunday 2 August 2026. After this date, you will not be able to submit, vary or withdraw session reports for any sessions of care between 7 July 2025 and 5 July 2026.

Access the CCSS via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Submitting your session reports by this deadline is essential so Services Australia can balance family payments.

Submitting accurate session reports on time is required under Family Assistance Law. Failure to comply with your obligations may result in compliance action.

Learn more about submitting session reports on our website.

Make sure every child is enrolled correctly

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

Correct enrolments are essential for families to receive CCS.

An enrolment links:

- the child
- the person claiming CCS (usually a parent or carer)
- the service.

Learn more about the steps required in the enrolment process on our website.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment annual declaration

The 2025–26 annual declaration form is now available for providers who received the worker retention payment between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026.

The form:

- confirms you used funding correctly
- is based on funding paid to providers during the 2025–26 financial year
- will show in the grants portal if you need to complete it.

You must submit the form by **9 October 2026**.

Contact CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au if you have questions or need to make changes after submitting.

Learn more and see our tips for completing the annual declaration.

From the department

ECEC actions from July 2026 Education Ministers Meeting

Education Ministers met last week to discuss major reforms across the education sector.

Ministers discussed several key reforms for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector including:

- exploring the establishment of a national early education and care commission, including potential reform of ACECQA
- continuing the rollout of the National Early Childhood Worker Register and National Child Safety Training
- progressing a second tranche of quality and safety reforms focused on supervision, transparency and fencing safety
- progressing legislative amendments to support these reforms, with introduction planned as soon as possible in 2027.

For more information, read the Education Ministers Meeting communiqué.

Get ready for advanced child safety training

Advanced child safety training will be available from 31 July 2026.

Building on the foundations of child safety training, the advanced courses focus on:

- **prevention** – creating child safe cultures through everyday practice
- **response** – recognising, assessing and responding to safeguarding concerns when they arise.

Advanced training will be mandatory for:

- people with management or control of a service
- nominated supervisors
- people in day-to-day charge
- staff who work directly with children.

The courses will help people in these roles create environments where children:

- are safe
- feel safe
- can speak up
- get support when concerns emerge.

Learn more about national child safety training. We'll share more information about advanced training soon.

Vacation care services – Census registration alert

Make sure to register for the National Workforce Census (NWC).

Registration closing dates

Sunday 27 September 2026 for services in:

- Victoria
- Queensland
- South Australia
- New South Wales
- Australian Capital Territory
- Northern Territory.

Sunday 4 October 2026 for services in:

- Tasmania
- Western Australia.

Get started now

The Social Research Centre has emailed your login details. Check your inbox and spam folder for the email containing your username and password.

If you need support

Call the NWC helpline 1800 800 996 or email nwc@srcentre.com.au.

More information

Visit the Social Research Centre website for further information and updates.

Tell us what it costs to deliver ECEC

It's not too late to have your say and make sure your context is represented.

The Early Education Service Delivery Prices project will help us understand the true costs of delivering safe and quality ECEC across Australia. Findings will help shape future ECEC policy.

ECEC services are diverse and costs can vary significantly across service types and settings. The more providers that take part, the stronger and more reliable the findings will be. That's why your participation is essential.

To get started, respond to the invite email from Deloitte Access Economics.

There are a range of supports available for participating providers.

Learn more about the project on our website.

If you need help, email EESDP@deloitte.com.au or call 1800 371 146.

Be alert: Scammers are impersonating PRODA to steal sign-in details

Services Australia is warning providers to stay vigilant, with scammers impersonating online accounts, including PRODA (Provider Digital Access) and myGov, to steal personal information and sign-in details.



How the scam works

Scammers may contact you by email, text message, social media or phone. These messages often include a link to fake websites designed to look like legitimate government services, such as PRODA or myGov.

To appear genuine, scammers may send a message before calling. They may claim:

- there is a problem with your PRODA account
- suspicious activity has been detected
- changes have been made to your account
- payments or refunds are available
- you have tasks requiring action
- your device needs to be authenticated.

They may then ask for personal information, including your PRODA password or other details.

How to protect yourself

To help keep your account secure:

- only sign in to PRODA through the official Services Australia website
- do not click links in emails, texts or social media messages claiming to be from Services Australia
- if you are unsure who is calling, hang up and call back using a phone number listed on the official Services Australia website
- never share your PRODA password with anyone or write it down.

Please share this alert with your colleagues to help protect everyone from scams.

Report a scam

If you receive a suspicious message claiming to be from PRODA, report it to reportascam@servicesaustralia.gov.au.

More support

Contact PRODA Support on 1800 700 199.

For more information, go to the Services Australia website and search using the quick code **QC 83329**.

Facts from FAL

2025–26 session reports close on Sunday 2 August

Please submit all session reports for the 2025–26 financial year on 2 August 2026 by 11.59 pm AEST.

You must submit session reports in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS). Access the CCSS via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

The CCSS will close for the 2025–26 financial year from 2 August 2026. After this date, you will not be able to submit, vary or withdraw session reports for any sessions of care between 7 July 2025 and 5 July 2026.

Submitting your session reports by this deadline is essential so Services Australia can balance family payments.

Find guidance on submitting session reports on our website.

Learn about reporting sessions of care in our Geccko course.

What happens if you receive an infringement notice?

We issue infringement notices when providers do not comply with Family Assistance Law. Providers are responsible for making sure that their employees and educators also follow the rules.

An infringement notice is a financial penalty and can be costly. In some cases, penalties can exceed $15,000.

We send infringement notices by email and by post. Emails will come from ccinfringements@education.gov.au. Add it to your safe senders list to ensure emails come through.

We have resources to help you understand your obligations and avoid an infringement notice. This includes:

- a free online learning module on Geccko, our online learning platform
- guidance on administering the Child Care Subsidy (CCS)
- a comprehensive list of notification and reporting obligations, tasks and timeframes
- short videos covering common compliance issues
- handbooks, guides and task cards for key programs.

Absences

You must report when a child was absent and the family was charged. You must report absences in session reports.

Submit a tip-off if you suspect CCS fraud

If you think an ECEC provider or service is not following the rules, you can let us know.

We all play a part in keeping the ECEC system strong and fair. This includes using public funds correctly, so they support the best outcomes for children and families.

Preventing and responding to fraud is part of this shared responsibility. By staying aware and doing the right thing, you help protect the integrity of the sector.

Examples of suspected CCS fraud include:

- claiming absences or attendances that did not occur
- offering prohibited incentives to attract enrolments
- accepting cash payments to avoid proper reporting
- claiming CCS for care that is not eligible
- waiving gap fees or offering free care (except during a declared CCS emergency or where no CCS is claimed).

You can submit a tip-off using our online CCS fraud tip-off form.

It is anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete.



Workforce support

We've processed worker retention payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 18 May 2026 to 14 June 2026.

We processed this payment on 13 July 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 CCSS. We send payments to the same bank account as your CCS payments.

Learn more about when and how we make worker retention payments.

15 July 2026

From the department

Advanced child safety training coming soon

Advanced child safety training will be available from 31 July 2026.

Advanced training builds on foundation training and will be mandatory for:

- people with management or control of a service
- nominated supervisors
- people in day-to-day charge
- staff who work directly with children.

Existing staff who are required to complete the training will have **6 months** from its release to do so.

Staff employed after the training is released must complete it within **3 months** of their start date.

Learn more about national child safety training. We'll share more information soon.

Your voice matters: shape the future of ECEC

All providers will have received an invite to participate in the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Your experience matters – don't miss the chance to have your say on the costs of delivering safe and quality **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** across Australia.

There's still time to make sure your context and experience is included. Thank you to the many providers who have already contributed.

We also have a range of supports available for participating providers, including:

- a grant payment for small providers participating in detailed data collection
- general and one-on-one support from Deloitte Access Economics.

Take your first step towards participating by replying to the invitation email from Deloitte Access Economics.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Facts from FAL

Claiming CCS during service closures

When claiming Child Care Subsidy (CCS), it's important to ensure claims reflect when care is actually provided.

You can usually only claim CCS when your service is open and delivering care to children. If your service closes for a full day, you must not claim absences for that day.

There are limited exceptions. You may still claim CCS during certain closure periods, including:

- public holidays

- CCS periods of emergency
- mandatory national child safety training closures.

You must report all closures through the Provider Entry Point or your approved third-party software. You should also notify your state or territory regulatory authority.

Staying compliant helps avoid incorrect payments and reduces the need for adjustments later.

For more information, visit our website or contact the CCS Provider Helpdesk at ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au.

How to report concerns about prohibited inducements

If you become aware that a service may be offering prohibited inducements, you can report it to us.

You can submit information through the CCS fraud tip-off form, which is anonymous and takes only a few minutes to complete.

For more information about advertising and inducements, visit our website.

Workforce support

Discount for early childhood workforce

Did you know you can offer discounted care to some staff without reducing their CCS?

The workforce discount is an optional incentive to help you attract and retain qualified staff.

You can offer the workforce discount to:

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

The employee must:

- 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.

The workforce discount:

- is a prescribed discount
- is applied after CCS calculation
- will not reduce a family's CCS entitlement
- requires the employee to pay at least 5% of the gap fee.

Learn more about the workforce discount.

From the department

Register for the 2026 National Workforce Census

It's time to register

An email from the Social Research Centre is on its way. It contains important information about the census and how to register.

The National Workforce Census (NWC) helps us develop and measure policies and programs for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

The census is:

- mandatory for all Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers under Family Assistance Law
- the only large-scale collection of ECEC services that includes preschools and kindergartens.

We strongly encourage preschools and kindergartens to take part, so we can build an accurate picture of the sector.

What's different this time?

We know services already share a lot of information with government. For the 2026 NWC, we're working to avoid asking for the same information twice.

This includes aligning the census with the new National Early Childhood Worker Register.

To reduce the workload for services, the census will no longer collect information about individual workers. Instead, it will collect simple, service-level data. This will make the census quicker and easier to complete, while still providing the information needed to support the sector.

What you need to do

If you haven't received an email from the Social Research Centre, check your junk or spam folder.

If you still can't find the email, call 1800 800 996 or email nwc@srcentre.com.au.

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the Social Research Centre website .

Get paid to participate in the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project

We've expanded the small provider relief payment to help more providers take part in the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

The project is building a clear picture of what it costs to deliver safe and quality ECEC.

The payment is now available to providers who operate up to **10 services** (including related entities).

Eligible providers can get a fixed payment of:

- $834.90 per service for online consultations
- $1,216.60 per service for in-person consultations.

You don't need to apply. Simply take part in the detailed data collection and we'll assess your eligibility based on the information you submit during data collection.

Payments will be made after the consultation has taken place.

The payment is one of the ways we're supporting providers to participate. General and one-on-one support from Deloitte Access Economics is also available.

There's still time to make sure your context and experience is included. Thank you to the many providers who have already contributed.

To get started, reply to your invitation email from Deloitte Access Economics.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

New CCS data: March quarter 2026

We've published data about the CCS in the March quarter 2026.

Each quarter we issue a summary report about CCS-approved care in Australia. The report includes data on child care usage, services, fees and subsidies in Australia.

Key findings from the March quarter 2026 include:

- 1,413,870 children from 998,500 families used CCS-approved care
- 15,393 CCS-approved services operated during the quarter
- on average, children attended 27.8 hours of care per week
- the average hourly fee was $13.75
- the Australian Government paid $3.59 billion in subsidies.

Read the report, view summaries and detailed findings, and download full data tables on our website.

Checking national child safety training completion

As more learners complete foundations of child safety training, providers may be reviewing their records and confirming that staff have met the training requirements.

Providers are responsible for:

- ensuring their staff complete the training
- keeping evidence of completion on file.

Providers should ask staff to share their certificate as evidence of completion.

If staff need help downloading their certificate, direct them to the instructions on our website.

If additional evidence is required, you may ask learners to provide a screenshot or download of their training history from Geccko. To access this information, learners should:

- log in to Geccko
- go to the **My Learning tab**
- select **Training history**

- select Completions
- take a screenshot of the page or download their training history summary.

For more information, visit the national child safety training webpage.

New Social Cohesion Education Hub now available

The Australian Government has launched the Social Cohesion Education Hub, a new online resource for schools and ECEC services.

The Hub offers free, quality-assured resources to help educators:

- prevent and respond to antisemitism, racism and discrimination
- foster inclusive, respectful and welcoming learning environments
- help children understand and value Australia's diversity.

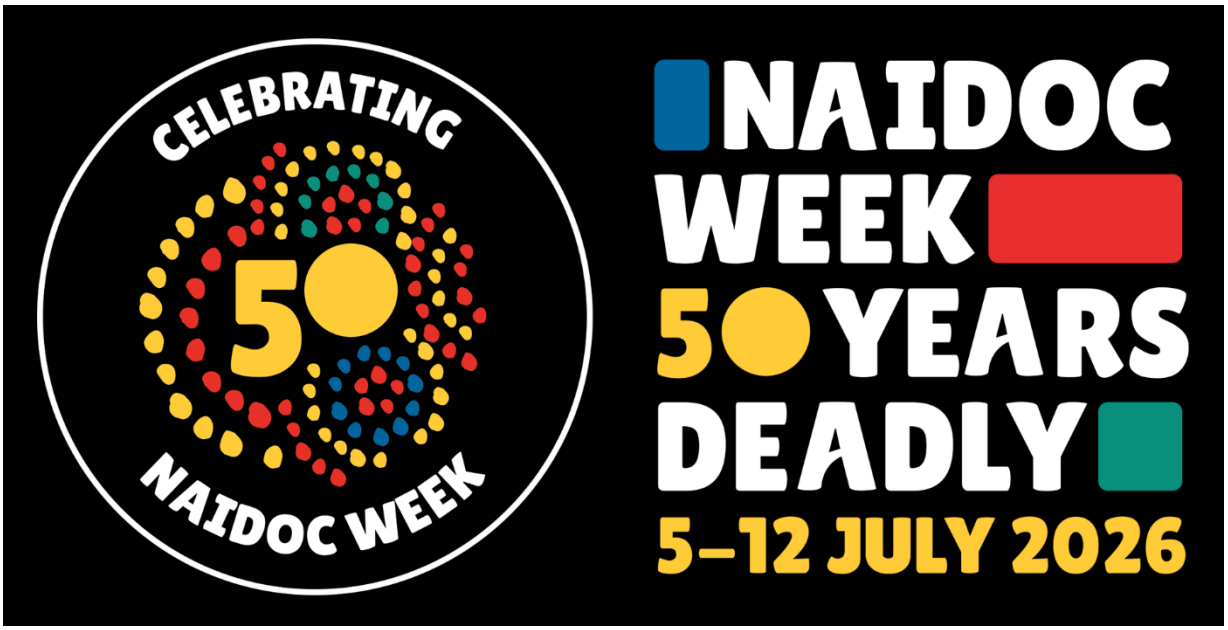
We will add more resources over time.

We encourage educators and ECEC communities to use these resources in everyday practice.

To find out more, visit the Social Cohesion Education Hub.

Sector spotlight

It's NAIDOC Week



The 2026 NAIDOC theme is '50 Years of Deadly'.

For 50 years, NAIDOC has honoured culture, resistance, and community-led change. Built by Elders, sustained by generations, alive in today's leadership, and carried forward by young people shaping the future on their own terms.

Still deadly. Always.

Download the 2026 National NAIDOC poster to display at your service. The poster is by Zaachariaha Fielding.

Facts from FAL

Caring for an educator's child in Family Day Care

If a child enrolled at your Family Day Care (FDC) service is the child of an FDC educator, there are specific CCS rules to be aware of.

In most cases, CCS cannot be claimed for an educator's own child on any day the educator is working and providing care. This applies even if the child is attending a different service on that day.

There are limited exceptions to this rule, so it's important to understand how the rules apply to your service and educators.

Learn more about caring for an educator's child in FDC on our website.

2025–26 session reports close soon

You must submit all session reports for the 2025–26 financial year by 11.59 pm AEST on 2 August 2026.

The Child Care Subsidy System will close for the 2025–26 financial year from Sunday 2 August 2026. After this date you will not be able to submit, vary or withdraw session reports for any sessions of care between 7 July 2025 and 5 July 2026.

Submitting your session reports by this deadline is essential so Services Australia can balance family payments.

Submitting accurate session reports on time is required under Family Assistance Law. Failure to comply with your obligations may result in compliance action.

Learn more about submitting session reports on our website.

Claiming CCS when closed

Families can usually only get CCS when your service is open and providing care. If your service closes, there are specific rules about what can be reported.

You cannot report absences or claim CCS when your service is closed, unless:

- the closure is due to a public holiday
- the service is closed during a CCS period of emergency
- the service closes for a limited time to undertake mandatory national child safety training.

If you close your service, you must let us know via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

You must also tell your state or territory regulatory authority.

Read more about the rules about claiming CCS during service closures on our website.

Workforce support

Acquit your 2025–26 workforce subsidies by 14 July

The deadline to acquit funding received under the professional development and paid practicum subsidies in 2025–26 is next week.

You must acquit all funds via the grants portal by 14 July 2026.

If you need help, contact ececgrants@deloitte.com.au.

This acquittal process is separate from the 2026–27 workforce subsidies, which closed for applications on 3 July 2026.

Respectful collegial relationships that support educator wellbeing

Join Be You for an online event on how promoting respectful collegial relationships can guide a positive organisational culture.

This event will also explore ways for service to navigate conflict if it arises.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEST on 16 July 2026.

Register for the webinar.

Share with families

Finding alternative care options

Looking for a short or long terms care option? Head to StartingBlocks.gov.au to find and compare ECEC services.

On StartingBlocks.gov.au, you can:

- find local services
- view fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- compare services side-by-side
- see when a service was last visited by a regulator
- see any conditions imposed or enforcement actions issued by the regulator
- explore provider profiles
- get information and advice about education, quality and safety, children's development and parenting.

Visit StartingBlocks.gov.au to start searching.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing: what you need to know

If you get CCS, you need to confirm your family income with Services Australia each year. This allows your payments to be balanced.

Balancing checks that you were paid the right amount of CCS. It helps avoid overpayments or underpayments.

If you had a partner at any time during 2025–26, you both need to confirm your income.

You can do this by:

- lodging your (and your partner's) tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia you do not need to lodge a tax return (even if you have already told the ATO).

For more information about balancing and what you need to do, visit the Services Australia website.

From the department

Changes to legislation to strengthen child safety in early education

Amendments to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Minister's Rules have been introduced as part of the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to improving child safety. The amendments will implement a package of time-critical measures from 1 July 2026.

The updates aim to remove stigma from Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing support, strengthen child safety by extending mandatory child safety training to In Home Care (IHC) and Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) Grant funded services, and make it easier for preschools to deliver outside school hours care.

For more information, read the announcement.

Worker retention payment update

Minimum rates you must pay workers updated

The minimum rates you must pay eligible workers from 30 June and 1 July 2026 are now available.

The updated rates reflect:

- changes to the *Children's Services Award 2010* from 30 June 2026
- the minimum wages increase from 1 July 2026.

View the updated worker retention payment minimum rates on our website and in the grant guidelines.

What the extension means for you

Last month we announced the worker retention payment will continue to 30 June 2028, with expanded eligibility and updated conditions.

This includes making the payment available to Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) services that engage all educators as employees.

IHC and FDC services are not required to apply or have workplace instruments in place by July 2026. More information on applications will be available soon.

IHC and FDC services will be able to apply for back-dated payments to 1 July, if employee's workplace instruments also cover them back to 1 July.

Thinking about joining?

If you're considering applying, now is a good time to review the program requirements.

A key condition is the fee growth cap, which helps ensure the cost of wage increases is not passed on to families. For newly eligible services, this means you cannot increase fees by more than 5.8% between 17 June 2026 and 7 August 2027.

If you've already announced a higher increase, you may need to adjust it to remain eligible. Eligibility is assessed based on when families are first charged the higher fee, not when the increase was announced.

We'll provide more information for newly eligible services soon. In the meantime, visit our website to learn more about the program.

Already participating?

If your service currently gets the worker retention payment, you don't need to do anything right now. You should continue to meet the obligations set out in your grant agreement.

We'll provide more information before current grant agreements end and let participating providers know if any action is required.

Tell us what it costs to deliver quality ECEC

Share your insights to help build a clearer picture of the real costs of delivering quality early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Through the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project, you can tell us:

- what it really costs to run your ECEC service
- how staffing, property costs, consumables and other components affect your costs.

Take your first step towards participating by replying to the invite email from Deloitte Access Economics. Your input will help ensure future reforms are based on evidence from real providers.

If you are unsure about taking part or have questions, you can:

- email EESDP@deloitte.com.au
- call 1800 371 146.

Learn more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Facts from FAL

Reminder: fee reporting due 14 July

You must notify us of fees at least twice a year to ensure they remain accurate.

You need to notify us of your fees 14 days after the end of:

- the financial year – due 14 July
- the calendar year – due 14 January.

You still need to notify us even if there has been **no change** to your fees.

To report no change, update the date of event on the *Fees and inclusions* screen via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

These reporting requirements are in addition to existing notification obligations, which require you to notify us of your fees within 14 days of:

- receiving CCS approval
- starting your CCS approved service
- changing your fees.

This change supports the government's commitment to improving the transparency of child care fees and helps families make informed financial decisions about ECEC.

Find out more about notifications and reporting on our website.

What triggers a debt notice?

Keeping on top of your CCS obligations is the best way to avoid debt notices and compliance action.

You may receive a debt notice if you:

- change a session report in a way that reduces hours or days of care
- withdraw a session report
- act in a non-compliant way
- close or transfer ownership of your service **after** the fact
- cease operations while offsetting is underway
- report an absence before a child's first physical attendance or after their last physical attendance.

Learn more about managing overpayments and debt on our website.

Collecting gap fees

Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees from families electronically.

Workforce support

Workforce subsidies: applications close this week

Applications for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies close at 5 pm AEST on 3 July 2026.

Due to high application volumes, we are encouraging applications only from:

- small and medium providers for professional development subsidies
- First Nations educators, educators from regional and remote locations and small providers for paid practicum subsidies.

Make sure to submit your application by this time to be considered.

Due to limited funding availability:

- we cannot fund all the applications that we receive
- there **will not be** a second round of subsidies in 2026–27.

Please note that other supports remain available to help staff complete national child safety training.

Learn more about the professional development opportunities on our website.

Share with families

Help families get their CCS balancing right



At the end of the financial year, families who get CCS need to confirm their income. This process – known as balancing – helps make sure families are receiving the correct amount of CCS.

Balancing is managed between families and Services Australia. But as a provider, you can help support your families.

You might like to share these resources with your families through your family channels.

If families at your service want more information, direct them to the Services Australia website.National AusAlert test – 27 July 2026

A national test of the new AusAlert emergency warning system will take place at **2 pm AEST on Monday 27 July 2026.** Compatible mobile devices may receive a loud test alert message – even if the mobile is on silent or do-not-disturb.

Families, particularly those who use a hidden or safety phone as part of a family violence safety plan, can find information on staying safe and what to expect at www.ausalert.gov.au/community-resources/staying-safe-ausalert.

24 June 2026

From the department

National child safety training: 2 months to go

With the 27 August 2026 foundation training deadline approaching, now is a good opportunity for providers to check how things are tracking across their service.

You might like to:

- check who still needs to complete foundation training
- confirm that all required staff, volunteers and students can access Geccko
- identify any access or account issues early, so they can be resolved before the deadline
- plan how remaining staff will complete the training over July and August.

Foundation training does not need to be completed in one sitting.

Support is available to help providers plan training in a way that works for their service.

Log in to Geccko to start or continue your training today.

Visit our website for:

- more information about the training and support
- help with Geccko accounts.

We've processed worker retention payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 20 April 2026 to 17 May 2026.

We processed this payment on 15 June 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 Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments.

Learn more about when and how we make worker retention payments.

Last week, the Australian Government announced an extension to the worker retention payment, with expanded eligibility and updated conditions.

Read our announcement to find out more. We will provide more details over the coming weeks.

2026–27 hourly rate caps

The CCS hourly rate caps and family income thresholds will go up from 6 July.

The hourly rate caps and income thresholds are adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

See the 2026–27 hourly rate caps and new income thresholds on our website.

Preschool Outcomes Measure pilot starting soon

A pilot for the Preschool Outcomes Measure will begin soon.

The Preschool Outcomes Measure (POM) is a national formative assessment tool to help teachers and educators support children's learning and development in the year before full-time school.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is delivering the 2-year pilot, funded by the Australian Government. The 2026–27 pilot will test:

- the national tool's usability for teachers and educators
- how the tool works when applied multiple times a year.

A prototype version of the POM national tool was trialled in 2025. Findings from the trial and evaluation will inform further refinements for use in the 2026–27 pilot.

Expressions of interest for the pilot will open soon and will be managed by participating states and territories.

To find out more about how you can participate in the pilot, contact your local education department.

Help shape the future of ECEC

The way early childhood education and care (ECEC) costs are understood will help shape future policy and reform. To make sure this reflects real services, we need input from providers.

If you haven't yet registered for the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project, we encourage you to do so now.

Your input will help ensure:

- the real costs of delivering safe, quality care are understood
- our understanding of pricing reflects how services actually operate across different locations, age groups and with different characteristics
- future reforms are based on evidence from providers.

How you can participate

To register, respond to the invitation email from **Deloitte Access Economics**.

If you can't find the email:

- check your provider-level email address as recorded in the Child Care Subsidy System
- check your spam or junk folder
- contact EESDP@deloitte.com.au for help.

If you are unsure about taking part or need help, you can:

- email EESDP@deloitte.com.au
- call1800 371 146.

We also have a range of supports available for participating providers, including:

- general and one-on-one support from Deloitte Access Economics
- a grant payment for small providers participating in detailed data collection.

Learn more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Facts from FAL

Changes to language around Additional Child Care Subsidy child wellbeing

The Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing subsidy provides extra help with the cost of ECEC. It's for families who care for children who need extra support.

From 1 July 2026, we are updating the language we use to describe children who may be eligible for ACCS child wellbeing.

We have heard that terminology such as 'risk of serious abuse or neglect' can be stigmatising and may discourage families from accessing support. Our updated language:

- focuses on children's wellbeing needs
- makes it easier to start supportive conversations with families.

Providers play an important role in this process, as they apply for ACCS child wellbeing on behalf of families.

You will now see the term **'a child in need of wellbeing support'** being used in some places instead of previous terminology.

The criteria to access ACCS child wellbeing is not changing. Evidence supporting ACCS child wellbeing applications must clearly demonstrate that the child needs additional wellbeing support because they are facing harm from serious abuse or neglect.

Find out more about ACCS child wellbeing and the important role providers play.

CCS: what families need to be eligible

Understanding CCS eligibility can help providers support families to enrol and maintain access to approved child care. Share this summary with families or when answering common questions.

To be eligible for CCS, families must meet all relevant criteria.

Parent eligibility

At least one parent or carer must:

- care for the child at least 2 nights per fortnight (or have at least 14% shared care)
- be liable for child care fees at an approved ECEC service
- meet Australian residency requirements.

Child eligibility

The child must:

- meet immunisation requirements
- be 13 or under (except in certain circumstances)
- not be attending secondary school (unless an exemption applies).

Ongoing attendance requirement

If a child does not attend at least one session of care within a 26-week period, they will stop being eligible for CCS. If the child returns to care after this time, the family must submit a new CCS claim.

Have a question?

Read more about CCS eligibility and entitlement on our website.

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

Allowable absences

Allowable absences will reset on 1 July 2026.

Families can find out more about absences on Services Australia's website and check their year-to-date absence count:

- in their Centrelink online account via myGov
- on the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app.

Workforce support

Deadline approaching: 2025–26 workforce subsidies acquittals

Providers must acquit all funds received under the 2025–26 professional development and paid practicum subsidies by 14 July 2026.

You can acquit funding for both subsidies through the grants portal.

You don't need to attach evidence when submitting your acquittal. However, you must keep records for 24 months demonstrating how you used the funding in case of compliance checks.

If you need help, contact ececgrants@deloitte.com.au.

This acquittal process is separate from the 2026–27 workforce subsidies, which are currently open for applications.

HELP debt reduction for very remote teachers

Is your ECEC service located in a very remote area? Your staff may be eligible for a Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt reduction.

The HELP Debt Reduction Program for Very Remote Teachers offers meaningful financial support for eligible teachers working in very remote communities.

Eligible ECEC teachers can apply for:

- indexation waivers on their outstanding HELP debt
- reductions to their HELP debt.

Staff may be eligible if they:

- have completed an initial teaching qualification
- are working as a teacher in a Centre Based Day Care or preschool
- are working in a very remote Australian community
- had an outstanding HELP debt when they started working
- have completed the required service days on or after 1 January 2019.

The program aims to:

- increase the number of teachers in very remote communities
- support services to attract, retain and sustain a qualified workforce.



From the department

Worker retention payment extended to 30 June 2028

The Australian Government is committing $3.6 billion to extend the worker retention payment, supporting a wage increase for early childhood education and care (ECEC) workers through to 30 June 2028.

Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) services will also become eligible if they engage their educators as employees.

The worker retention payment was introduced in 2024 to attract and retain high-quality ECEC educators.

The Family Day Care and In Home Care

FDC and IHC services that engage all their educators as employees will be eligible for the worker retention payment.

These services must meet the grant conditions, including:

- limiting fee growth by a set percentage
- engaging workers under an eligible workplace instrument.

Eligible services may seek payments backdated to July 2026.

We will provide more information on applications for FDC and IHC services soon.

Fee growth cap

To get the worker retention payment, services must limit fee growth by a set percentage. The fee growth cap will continue under the extension to support affordability for families.

Services that already get the worker retention payment must not increase their fees by more than 5.8% between 8 August 2026 and 7 August 2027.

Services that wish to join the program, including FDC and IHC services, must not increase their fees by more than 5.8% between 17 June 2026 and 7 August 2027.

Strengthening quality and safety

We are also strengthening child safety through the worker retention payment.

From July 2027, services that are not ‘Meeting’ Quality Area 2 relating to child health and safety under the National Quality Standard may have their funding cut or suspended.

Existing workplace instruments

To get the worker retention payment, you must engage workers through a workplace instrument that meets grant conditions.

We understand that you may need time to update your workplace arrangements to stay compliant under a program extension. More information on this will be available soon.



More information

We will provide more details over the coming weeks. To get the latest updates:

- keep an eye on our website
- subscribe to our weekly newsletter
- join our Facebook group.

Annual Wage Review and the worker retention payment

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has announced a 4.75% increase to minimum award wages from 1 July 2026, following its Annual Wage Review (AWR).

The FWC is yet to confirm the exact new rates from 1 July. Once confirmed, we will update the minimum rates that you must pass on to workers under the worker retention payment.

The AWR increase will change how the worker retention payment interacts with updated minimum award rates. As a result:

- workers who were previously paid at the minimum award rate will receive a wage increase in line with the 4.75% increase
- workers paid above award may receive an increase, depending on how close their current pay is to the new award rate.

What this means for your service

Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020

- Both award wages and worker retention payment amounts will increase in line with the 4.75% decision.
- This ensures eligible workers will continue to be paid at least 15% above the award.

Children's Services Award 2010

- The minimum hourly rate that each eligible worker must be paid will increase to maintain a total of 15% above what the 1 December 2025 award rate would have been *had it continued and increased by 4.75%.* This means that the worker retention payment absorbs the increases of the gender-based undervaluation – priority awards review decisions.
- The increase will be applied following the next gender-based undervaluation increase on 30 June 2026.
- The minimum worker retention payment amount that must be passed on to eligible workers, regardless of what they are paid relative to the award, will also increase due to the AWR decision.

We will update the worker retention payment minimum rates and grant guidelines to reflect these changes shortly.

Tell us what it costs to deliver ECEC

The Early Education Service Delivery Prices project will help us understand the costs of delivering safe and quality ECEC across Australia.

Provider participation

We have invited all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers to take part in the project. To participate, you must respond to the email from Deloitte Access Economics. If you are unsure about taking part or need help, you can:

- email EESDP@deloitte.com.au

- call 1800 371 146.

Staff participation

The workforce survey will close this Friday. Encourage your staff to complete the survey before this date. This survey is for all ECEC staff working in CCS-approved services.

All responses will be recorded anonymously and not linked to the services. Feedback from the survey will help us better understand what it takes to deliver safe and quality ECEC.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Final call: CCTV survey closes on 18 June

This is your final opportunity to contribute to our evaluation of CCTV in ECEC settings. If you haven't yet completed the survey, we encourage you to take part before it closes on, 18 June at 6 pm AEST.

Your feedback will help capture a broad range of perspectives and ensure your voice is heard.

Complete the service provider and educator survey.

More information on the national CCTV assessment is available on our website.

Facts from FAL

Making a reasonable estimate when reporting prescribed discounts

When reporting prescribed discounts, you're expected to use accurate information. However, there may be times when you don't yet have all the details you need.

If this happens, you may need to make a reasonable estimate. Any estimate should be based on the most accurate information you have available at the time you submit the session report.

Family's first session report

A family's CCS entitlement is only determined after their first session report has been processed. When submitting this initial session report, you may not yet know the family's gap fee.

If you know a child is eligible for a prescribed discount, enter a nominal amount of $0.01 when reporting the prescribed discount amount in the session report.

State and territory preschool payments

Each state and territory decides how they pay prescribed preschool payments to providers. Read examples for the 3 main types of payments and how to estimate the prescribed discount on our website.

For more detailed guidance and examples, read more about making a reasonable estimate on our website.

Updating enrolments and care arrangements

Approved providers must ensure enrolment information is accurate and kept up to date. Any changes to a child's care arrangements must be recorded in writing and updated in the Child Care Subsidy System.

You must update an enrolment notice when:



- the care arrangement between the service and the family changes
- you identify that enrolment information is incorrect
- a family disagrees with enrolment details and you agree that an update is required
- the care arrangement ends.

In each case, you must update the enrolment notice within 7 days of the change occurring.

Find out more about enrolments and how to update them on our website.

Workforce support

Final weeks to apply for the workforce subsidies

Applications for the professional development and paid practicum subsidy close in 2 weeks.

The **professional development subsidy** supports completion of national child safety training.

The **paid practicum subsidy** supports early childhood teachers- and educators-in-training to complete the practicum components of their degree.

Due to high application volumes, we are encouraging applications only from:

- small and medium providers for professional development subsidies
- First Nations educators, educators from regional and remote locations and small providers for paid practicum subsidies.

Due to limited funding availability:

- we cannot fund all the applications that we receive
- there **will not be** a second round of subsidies in 2026–27.

Please note that other supports remain available to help staff complete national child safety training.

Learn more about the professional development subsidy and paid practicum subsidy.

How to acquit 2025–26 workforce subsidies

All providers who got a workforce subsidy in the 2025–26 financial year must acquit funding by 14 July 2026.

An acquittal is how you report what you've spent your funding. It helps us confirm you've used the funding correctly.

You must acquit **all funding** received under the 2025–26 professional development and paid practicum subsidies, even if your service has:

- closed
- transferred to a new provider
- had its CCS approval cancelled.

You can acquit your funding through the grants portal.

If you need help, contact ececgrants@deloitte.com.au.

This acquittal process is separate from the 2026–27 workforce subsidies, which are currently open for applications.

Workforce Reference Group meets to progress key workforce priorities

The Early Childhood Workforce Reference Group met in May 2026 to discuss workforce and child safety.

The group includes frontline educators, peak bodies, unions and sector representatives.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) provided members with an update on the National Early Childhood Worker Register, noting:

- strong national uptake
- future implementation considerations.

Discussions focussed on:

- impacts on casual workforce arrangements
- privacy and data security
- links with Working With Children Check systems.

Members also highlighted the need for clear communication to support:

- parent confidence
- sector understanding of child safety reforms.

The group will meet again in August 2026.

News for families

If you got Child Care Subsidy in 2024–25, confirm your family income now

You need to confirm your family income for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) before 30 June 2026.

Read more on the Services Australia website.

From the department

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) hourly rate caps are changing soon

The CCS hourly rate caps and family income thresholds will go up from 6 July 2026.

The hourly rate caps and income thresholds are adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The maximum hourly rate we subsidise depends on the type of care you provide. The 2026–27 hourly rate caps for each care type are outlined below.

Care type	Hourly rate cap for children below school age	Hourly rate cap for school-age children
Centre Based Day Care	$15.19	$13.30
Outside School Hours Care	$15.19	$13.30
Family Day Care	$14.08	$14.08
In Home Care (per family)	$41.31	$41.31

Learn more about hourly rate caps and see the rates for second and younger children on our website.

The family income thresholds have also changed in line with CPI, as outlined below:

Family income	Subsidy rate
Up to $88,520	90%
More than $88,520 to below $538,520	Between 90% and 0% The percentage decreases by 1% for every $5,000 of income a family earns
$538,520 or more	0%

A family's CCS subsidy rate is the percentage of the hourly rate the government will subsidise.

Read more about how much CCS a family can get on our website.

After you complete national child safety training: certificates and evidence

Staff, volunteers and students across the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector are now completing foundations of national child safety training.

If your team is starting to finish foundation training, here's what you need to know about **completion certificates** and how they're used.

Completion certificates

Once a learner has completed **both courses** in foundation training, a completion certificate is available to download in Geccko.

Each certificate includes a unique certificate number and can be saved or printed for records.

For instructions on downloading your completion certificate, visit our Geccko page.

Evidence of completion

Completion certificates are used as **evidence that foundation training has been completed.**

Providers are responsible for ensuring that staff, volunteers and students at their service have completed the required training within the set timeframes. This includes:

- asking learners to provide their completion certificate as evidence of completion
- keeping certificates on your records.

State and territory regulatory authorities, supported by ACECQA, are responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance. For more information, visit ACECQA's website or contact your regulatory authority.

Log in to Geccko to complete your training and access your certificate.

CCTV survey is closing soon

A reminder to provide your feedback on the use of CCTV in ECEC settings. The survey will close 6 pm AEST on 18 June.

- Complete the service provider and educator survey.
- Share the parent and carer survey with families at your service. We have a flyer for you to print and display in reception areas.

More information on the national CCTV assessment is available on our website.

Get involved in the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project

The Early Education Service Delivery Prices project is an important step in understanding the costs to deliver safe and quality ECEC.

How providers can participate

We have invited all CCS-approved providers to take part.

Look for your invite email from Deloitte Access Economics to get involved.

If you are unsure about taking part or need help, you can:



- email EESDP@deloitte.com.au
- call 1800 371 146.

How ECEC staff can participate

Encourage your staff to complete the workforce survey and tell us what it costs to deliver safe and quality ECEC. This survey is for all ECEC staff working in CCS-approved services.

You can:

- ask staff to complete the survey
- display a poster at your service to encourage participation.

All responses will be recorded anonymously and not linked to the services.

The survey closes on 19 June 2026.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Inclusion Support Program – Inclusion Agency update

Inclusion Agencies have been confirmed for the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) from 1 July 2026.

Inclusion Agencies work with ECEC services to identify and address barriers to inclusion.

From 1 July 2026, the Inclusion Agency in each state and territory will be:

- KU Children's Services – NSW, ACT and QLD
- Gowrie South Australia – SA
- It Takes a Village (ITAV) – VIC
- One Tree (Inclusion Support West) – WA
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) – NT
- Lady Gowrie Tasmania – TAS

These providers were selected through a competitive process.

The updated approach strengthens how Inclusion Agencies work with services, while maintaining continuity across the sector.

Services will continue to receive support, with a greater focus on:

- targeted assistance for services that need it most
- building capability and confidence in inclusive practice
- more flexible ways of delivering support.

Sector spotlight

Update your details for the National Workforce Census

The sixth ECEC National Workforce Census (NWC) will take place this year. Update your contact details now.

The NWC helps us develop and measure policies and programs for the ECEC sector. Participation is **compulsory** for all CCS-approved providers and services.

It is important that your contact details are up to date in the CCS System so you can participate.

You need to do the following as soon as possible:

- check your provider and service contact details
- check contact details for all persons with management or control (PMCs)
- add any new or missing PMCs
- remove anyone who no longer has management or control.

You can check and update these details via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Find out more about the National Workforce Census on our website.

To receive updates and alerts about the census, subscribe to this weekly newsletter and join our Facebook group.

Facts from FAL

Additional absences from child care

Families can get CCS when their child is absent from a session of care they would normally attend, for up to 42 days each year.

Families may be able to get additional absences once they have used all their allowable absence days, in certain circumstances. A public holiday is **not** considered an additional absence reason.

Allowable absence reasons include:

- the child, or a member of the immediate household, is ill
- the child is spending time with another carer under a court order or parenting plan
- alternative arrangements have been made for the child on a pupil-free day.

Evidence is required for some absence reasons. Where formal evidence is not required, you must be reasonably satisfied the reason has been met.

Find a list of additional absence reasons including evidence required, on our website.

How to manage session reports

You must submit accurate session reports on time. Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process CCS payments.

Visit our website to learn about:

- how to submit session reports in the CCS System, via the PEP or your third-party software
- what information you must include in session reports
- how to update a session report if the details are incorrect.



You can learn more about submitting accurate session reports by:

- reading how to manage session reports on our website
- completing the ***Session reports*** course in Geccko.

Workforce support

Be You resources – strong relationships for child development

Relationships with families, communities, and educators shape children's development and learning.

Starting from birth, children rely on the adults around them to meet their physical and emotional needs. When caregivers provide nurturing care, children learn that their actions lead to a response.

These everyday serve and return interactions:

- form the foundation for healthy brain development
- strengthen the neural pathways responsible for communication and social skills.

When children feel safe in their relationships, they are more likely to explore, try new things, and develop new skills.

To learn more about what educators can do to support children's development:

- see a fact sheet on child development
- visit the Be You website.

Share with families

Did you receive an invitation to have your say on child care?

The Australian Government is conducting a national survey about family, work and child care arrangements.

Parents who used paid child care in 2026 may be randomly selected to take part. If you've been invited, you can access the survey using the QR code in your letter or the link sent via SMS or email.

By participating, you can enter a draw to win one of fifty $200 gift vouchers.

Please complete the survey by 10 am AEST on Tuesday 30 June 2026. It should take around 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Your feedback will help improve child care quality, availability and affordability across Australia.

3 June 2026

From the department

2026–27 workforce subsidies update

We have received a high volume of applications for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies.

Applications close on **3 July 2026**, or earlier if funding is fully allocated.

To support those most in need, we are prioritising:

- small and medium providers for professional development subsidies
- First Nations educators, educators from regional and remote locations and small providers for paid practicum subsidies.

Due to high demand and limited funding:

- we cannot fund all applications
- we will not proceed with round 2 in 2026–27.

Providers can access service closures to help staff complete national child safety training.

Learn more about the professional development opportunities.

Reminder: complete the CCTV survey

We are conducting an evaluation on the use of CCTV in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. Service providers, educators, parents and carers are invited to share their views.

Your feedback will help capture a broad range of perspectives and ensure your voice is heard.

How to participate

Complete the service provider and educator survey. The survey will close 18 June.

Help us support family participation

To help ensure parent and carer voices are included, please share the below information through your family communication channels.

Have your say on CCTV in child care services

Governments across Australia are working to keep children safe and improve quality in early childhood education and care.

CCTV can help with safety, but there are important questions about how it should be used.

Families are invited to share their views.

- Click the link to complete the parent and carer survey.
- It takes less than 15 minutes.

- Your answers are anonymous.
- The survey closes at 6 pm AEST, 18 June.

If you have any questions, email cctvevaluation@kpmg.com.au

More information on the national CCTV assessment is available on our website.

Help us understand the costs of early childhood service delivery

Data collection is underway for the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project. Your participation is vital to understanding the costs of delivering ECEC in diverse settings.

The project will help to:

- identify the cost drivers of safe and quality ECEC
- quantify reasonable costs
- inform future reforms on the pathway to universal ECEC.

Your data will be used to:

- analyse how and why costs vary
- develop a dataset and model that informs the development of service delivery prices.

How to get involved – providers and services

Look for your invite email from Deloitte Access Economics to get involved.

If you are unsure about taking part or need help, you can:

- email EESDP@deloitte.com.au
- call 1800 371 146.

How to get involved – staff

All ECEC staff working in Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved services are invited to take part in a workforce survey as part of the project.

The survey is open to ECEC staff working in:

- Centre Based Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Family Day Care
- In Home Care.

Complete the survey and tell us about:

- your work
- the time and care you provide
- professional development
- what it takes to deliver safe, quality ECEC.

All responses will be recorded anonymously and not linked to the services. The survey closes on 19 June 2026.

Providers should:

- share the survey link with staff
- display a poster in staff rooms.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

CCS Provider Helpdesk closed Monday 8 June

The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed on Monday 8 June for the public holiday.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Tuesday 9 June.

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.

Report session fees correctly on StartingBlocks.gov.au

We publish your fees on StartingBlocks.gov.au. This helps parents choose the best ECEC for their family.

You must keep your **fee details** up to date to ensure they display correctly. This includes:

- ensuring you update the fees against the correct session type in the CCS System
- reporting your standard fees before any subsidies, discounts or reductions
- reporting any fee changes within 14 days.

To avoid errors:

- report **detailed** fee information, including the effective date and fee amount
- avoid submitting URLs as they will not be displayed on StartingBlocks.gov.au
- do not enter **full day or session fee** into an **hourly** fee field, and vice versa.

You must report this information in the Child Care Subsidy System through:

- the Provider Entry Point (PEP), or
- your third-party software.

The information then flows through to StartingBlocks.gov.au.

Find out how to update your fees in the PEP.

Facts from FAL

How to streamline your CCS application process

Planning to buy or add a new child care service? There is important evidence you must provide to administer the CCS.

To offer CCS, you'll need two types of approvals:

National Law (state or regulatory approval)

This confirms you're suitable to ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.

Australian Government approval (CCS approval)

This confirms you're suitable to administer CCS.

The good news? You can apply for both approvals at the same time through the National Quality Agenda IT System. CCS approval can't be finalised until National Law approval is granted.

Visit our website for detailed guidance and resources.

Helpful tips for advertising your service

There are many ways to promote your service while meeting your obligations. Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when advertising.

Promote discounts carefully

You can offer and advertise discounted or free care. If families claim CCS, make sure all fee discounts are reported correctly.

Invite families to learn more

You can advertise your service to prospective families and offer free site visits or trial periods.

Use promotional merchandise appropriately

You can provide marketing merchandise valued up to $30 per complying written arrangement.

Include transport where it's part of your service

You can advertise transport to or from your service if this is part of your normal business practice.

Offer extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities can be included as part of the session fee, provided correct billing practices are used.

Share your social impact

You can promote your service's social impact, such as charitable donations or community initiatives.

Learn more about advertising or inducements on our website. If you have any questions, contact the CCS Provider Helpdesk at CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au.

From the department

Have your say on the cost of delivering ECEC

The Early Education Service Delivery Prices project is an important step in understanding the costs to deliver safe and quality early childhood education and care (ECEC). This includes where costs vary meaningfully by location and cohort.

To participate, you should:

- locate your email from Deloitte Access Economics
- confirm your intention to participate by responding
- set up your account in the secure online portal.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project. If you have questions, contact EESDP@deloitte.com.au.

Workforce survey

All ECEC staff can now have their say on the cost of delivering quality ECEC through a survey.

The survey is open to ECEC staff working in:

- Centre Based Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Family Day Care
- In Home Care.

Take part in the survey and tell us about:

- your work
- the time and care you provide
- professional development
- what it takes to deliver safe, quality ECEC.

All responses will be recorded anonymously and not linked to the services. The survey closes on 19 June 2026.

Providers can also display a poster at their service to encourage participation.

Building early education in New South Wales

The Australian Government, in partnership with the New South Wales Government, will deliver 9 new ECEC services in areas of need across the state.

Through the Building Early Education Fund, the Australian Government is providing $59 million to support the new ECEC services in the following regions:

- Northern New England

- Hunter Valley
- Greater Sydney
- Southern Tablelands
- South Coast.

Together, these projects will create around 400 new ECEC places for children and families. Services in Calderwood and Googong are expected to open in early 2028, following completion of construction. Construction of the remaining 7 is scheduled to be completed from late 2028.

Funding is being delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the NSW 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.

Professional development subsidy: before you apply

Applications for the professional development subsidy are currently open.

The subsidy is designed to help cover wages while staff complete national child safety training. It will cover 5 hours per eligible staff member.

If you are applying, remember:

- the subsidy is for staff who provide direct ECEC or supervise children
- you can only apply for staff who don't complete the training during service closure periods
- you can apply for staff who have received the subsidy before
- you can apply for staff who have already completed the training
- you should apply as soon as possible, as applications are first come first served
- we are prioritising applications from providers who operate fewer than 25 services.

We have already received a high volume of applications, and not all eligible applicants may receive funding. Applications close on 3 July 2026 or earlier if funding is fully allocated.

Learn more about the professional development subsidy.

Have your say on CCTV in ECEC

We are conducting an evaluation on the use of CCTV in ECEC settings. Service providers, educators, parents and carers are invited to share their views.

Your feedback will help capture a broad range of perspectives and ensure your voice is heard.

KPMG is leading the survey on behalf of the department.

How to participate

Complete the service provider and educator survey. The survey will close 18 June.

Help us support family participation

To help ensure parent and carer voices are included, please share the below information through your family communication channels.

Have your say on CCTV in child care services

Governments across Australia are working to keep children safe and improve quality in early childhood education and care.

CCTV can help with safety, but there are important questions about how it should be used.

Families are invited to share their views.

- Click the link to complete the parent and carer survey.
- It takes less than 15 minutes.
- Your answers are anonymous.
- The survey closes at 6 pm AEST, 18 June.

If you have any questions, email cctvevaluation@kpmg.com.au

More information on the national CCTV assessment is available on our website

National child safety training update

Thank you to everyone across the ECEC sector for the strong engagement with national child safety training so far. Many staff, volunteers and students have already completed the foundation training.

We also know that some services are still planning when and how their teams will complete the training. Support is available to help you plan in a way that works for your service.

To complete the training, staff must:

- register on Geccko and create their account
- enrol in the foundation training
- complete both foundation training courses by 27 August, at a time and pace that suits them.

If you haven't already, you may wish to:

- check that all staff who need to complete the training can access Geccko
- encourage staff to log in early, so any account or access issues can be resolved before the deadline
- plan how your team will complete the training over the coming months, including use of available supports.

Advanced training coming soon

Advanced training will be available from 31 July 2026. It will build on foundation training and must be completed by certain people. We'll share more information about advanced training ahead of its release.

Visit our website for:

- more information about the training
- help with Geccko accounts.

Service closures for national training

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved services can use up to 5 hours per year to close so staff can complete the new national child safety training.

CCS can still be claimed during this time, and closures must start no earlier than 5 pm.

Remember to notify families early and keep the required records.

Find out more on our website.

CCS Provider Helpdesk closed Monday 1 June

The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed on Monday 1 June for an ACT public holiday.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Tuesday 2 June.

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.

Sector spotlight

It's National Reconciliation Week



National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about shared histories, cultures, and achievements.

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2026 is **All In**. It reminds us that reconciliation and improving the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples needs action. It is not a passive task. It should not rest only with First Nations people, who have carried this work for too long.

You can learn more about what you can do on the National Reconciliation Week website.

Closing the Gap

The Australian Government is investing in targeted measures to improve the lives of First Nations children through better access to quality ECEC.

Read more about Closing the Gap in ECEC.

The National Workforce Census is coming

We're conducting the ECEC National Workforce Census from September to November this year.

The National Workforce Census helps us develop and measure policies and programs for the ECEC sector. It is **compulsory** for all CCS-approved providers and services.

We'll send you a letter with more details, including how to register, in July.

In the meantime, please ensure your contact details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System. Check your details via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Find out more about the National Workforce Census on our website.

To get alerts, subscribe to this weekly newsletter and join our Facebook group.

Facts from FAL

Keep your fee information up to date

It is important that families can easily find accurate information about fees. We publish this information on StartingBlocks.gov.au.

You must tell us:

- your current hourly or session fees before CCS, discounts or reductions are applied
- any changes to your fees, within 14 days of the change
- your fees twice a year – after the end of the financial year and calendar year (including reporting that there has been no change in fees).

Update your current fees in the Child Care Subsidy System using PEP or your third-party software.

Learn more about keeping fee information up to date by:

- reading notify us of fees on our website
- completing the *Fee Reporting* course in Geccko.

Avoiding an infringement notice

Under Family Assistance Law, providers must meet all their obligations. This includes making sure they, their employees and their educators follow the rules at all times.

Most providers do the right thing and comply with the law. When obligations are not met, however, we may issue an infringement notice.

What is an infringement notice?

An infringement notice is a financial penalty. It is used to address non-compliance and encourage changes in behaviour.

These penalties can be significant. For example, if a provider fails to pass on or remit fee reduction amounts, the fine can be up to $19,800.

Infringement notices are intended to help providers avoid more serious penalties. They give providers the option to pay a smaller fine instead of going to court, where much higher penalties may apply.

You can read more about infringement notices on our website.



Workforce support

We've processed worker retention payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 23 March to 19 April 2026.

We processed this payment on 18 May 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.

News for families

It’s time to estimate your 2026–27 family income

You need to estimate your family income, so we pay you the right amount of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) and Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

Read more on the Services Australia website.

From the department

Get involved in the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project

We have started collecting data for the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project. The project looks at what it really costs to deliver safe, high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) across Australia.

Deloitte Access Economics is supporting us to conduct this research. We have invited all Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers to participate in the project.

You should have received an email from Deloitte Access Economics with instructions on how to take part. If you'd like to participate, you must confirm your intention by responding to the email.

If you haven't received an invitation yet, you will need to:

- check your provider-level email address as recorded in the CCS System
- check your spam or junk folder
- contact EESDP@deloitte.com.au for help.

Your input matters. The data you provide will be used to:

- analyse how and why costs vary
- develop a dataset and model that informs the development of service delivery prices.

Register for an upcoming webinar

Deloitte Access Economics will host webinars about the project, with the opportunity to ask questions.

You can find out more about:

- the data collection process
- how providers can take part
- the available support measures for providers and services.

You can register for any of the sessions that best suit you by clicking on the links below.

Centre Based Day Care

- Tuesday 26 May, 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm AEST
- Tuesday 2 June, 11 am to 12 pm AEST

Outside School Hours Care

- Thursday 28 May, 10 am to 11 am AEST
- Thursday 4 June, 4 pm to 5 pm AEST

Family Day Care

- Wednesday 27 May, 3 pm to 4 pm AEST

- Wednesday 3 June, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm AEST

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children will:

- hold separate information sessions for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- share more details on this over the coming weeks.

For questions on the webinar, contact EESDP@deloitte.com.au or 1800 371 146.

Find out more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project.

Support your staff with workforce subsidies

Applications are open for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies.

The professional development subsidy supports staff to complete national child safety training.

The paid practicum subsidy supports early childhood teachers and educators-in-training to complete the practicum components of their degree.

Providers should:

- read the grant guidelines to confirm eligibility
- apply on behalf of eligible staff
- contact ececgrants@deloitte.com.au for help.

We have already received a high volume of applications, and not all eligible applicants may receive funding. Applications close on 3 July 2026 or earlier if funding is fully allocated.

Learn more about the workforce subsidies.

Families can have their say about work and child care

We're inviting parents and carers to have their say about child care.

Parents who used paid child care in 2026 may be randomly selected to take part in a national survey.

Selected parents will receive a letter over the next week with a QR code linking to the survey, and a link via SMS or email. The letter will come from ORIMA, who are conducting the research on our behalf.

The survey will start on 2 June and close at 10 am AEST on Tuesday 30 June 2026.

The survey takes around 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Participants can enter a draw to win one of fifty $200 gift vouchers.

What providers can do to help

Please encourage parents and carers at your service to complete the survey. Parents can find out more about the survey on ORIMA's website.

The survey will help us better understand families' experiences of work and child care, and evaluate child care policies. This includes how policies impact quality, availability and affordability.

If you have any questions about the survey, email the department at ECECSurveys@education.gov.au. You can read our privacy policy on our website.

For technical questions, contact ORIMA on (02) 6109 6355 or surveys@orima.com. You can read ORIMA's privacy policy on their website.

Sector spotlight

Latest National Quality Framework Snapshot out now

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

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 April 2026, there were 18,207 NQF-approved children's education and care services operating across Australia.

You can read the latest Q1 2026 snapshot on ACECQA's website.

Facts from FAL

Ready to become an approved provider?

Thinking about running a child care service and offering the CCS? Before you start, you'll need approval from both the Australian Government and your state or territory authority.

We've made the process easier with step-by-step guidance on our website. You'll find information on:

- the two types of approval required
- eligibility rules
- the evidence you need to provide
- how to submit your application
- what happens after you apply
- how to add, remove or relocate a service
- why approvals can be suspended.

Read this information carefully and make sure your application is complete. If details are missing, we'll request more information before assessment can begin.

Learn more about the approval process on our website.

Gap fee audits

Collecting gap fees from families using electronic funds transfer (EFT) is a requirement under Family Assistance Law (FAL). We conduct regular audits to check providers are taking all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically.

We may conduct audits by:

- requesting information through a compliance notice
- visiting your service to complete a face-to-face audit.

If we contact you about an audit, please respond promptly. We may request additional documents and statements about how you collect gap fees.

Read more about:

- what to do if you get a compliance notice
- guidance on collecting gap fees.

CCS approval can be cancelled

Did you know we can cancel your CCS approval for not complying with the conditions of continued approval under FAL?

This includes where:

- you fail to provide care for 3 continuous months
- you cease to operate all the approved services for which you are approved as a provider
- you no longer have any services for which you are approved as a provider
- there are serious risks to CCS payments and/or child safety and wellbeing.

We can also cancel your CCS approval if your National Law provider or service approval is cancelled.

Find out more about cancellation of approval on our website.

Overpayments and debt

Sometimes, you may receive more CCS than you're entitled to. This is known as an overpayment. If this happens, we'll use your future CCS payments to pay back the difference.



From the department

Budget 2026–27: early childhood education and care

More funding for the National Early Childhood Worker Register

The 2026–27 Budget includes $17.6 million funding to enhance and expand the National Early Childhood Worker Register.

The Register helps keep children safe by ensuring only qualified and checked staff work in the sector.

All approved providers must enter who is working in their services and update the Register within 14 days of any change. This is a mandatory requirement under the National Law.

The additional investment for the Register will support enhancements, including:

- identity verification
- integration with the Family Day Care register
- other system improvements.

Read a fact sheet to learn more.

Support for children with additional needs

The 2026–27 Budget includes $54.8 million funding towards the Inclusion Support Program (ISP).

While all early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers are inclusive, some services need extra support. ISP funding will help ECEC services support children with additional needs, as demand for the program continues to grow.

In 2024–25, the ISP supported more than 26,000 children by helping services address barriers to participation.

This new funding is in addition to the $59.2 million funding provided in 2025–26, bringing total supplementary funding for the Inclusion Development Fund subsidy in 2026–27 to $114 million.

Read a fact sheet to learn more.

Learn more about the Inclusion Support Program on our website.

A national Commission for early education and care

The Australian Government will work with states and territories to consider the potential development of a national early education and care Commission.

Establishing a Commission was a recommendation of the Productivity Commission in its 2024 inquiry report outlining a path to universal ECEC.

If established, a Commission is the next possible step to strengthen the ECEC system, and it could:

- have a role in ensuring services are located where families need them

- also involve reforming the existing Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Further details about the Commission will be discussed at the next Education Ministers Meeting in July.

Read a fact sheet to learn more.

Tell us what it costs you to deliver quality ECEC

We want to know what it costs you to deliver quality ECEC.

The Early Education Service Delivery Prices project will build a clear, evidence-based picture of the costs of delivering safe, quality ECEC across Australia.

Deloitte Access Economics is supporting us to conduct this research.

We are inviting all Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved providers to participate. Look out for an email from Deloitte Access Economics (EESDP@deloitte.com.au). If you can't find it:

- check your provider-level email address as recorded in the Child Care Subsidy System
- check your spam or junk folder
- contact EESDP@deloitte.com.au for help.

Your insights will help:

- identify the cost drivers of safe and quality ECEC
- quantify reasonable costs
- inform future reforms on the pathway to universal ECEC.

Help is available to ensure all providers can take part. You will also be able to register for a webinar to learn more about the project. We will share more details on this with you soon.

Learn more about the Early Education Service Delivery Prices project on our website.

Supports for completing the national child safety training

With national child safety training now underway across the sector, providers can access a range of supports to help staff complete the training in a way that works for their service.

Service closures

CCS-approved services can use service closures for national child safety training. Services can:

- close for up to 5 hours each year, from 5 pm
- continue to claim CCS while closed
- use this time specifically for national child safety training.

Professional development subsidy

The professional development subsidy is now open and can help cover wages while staff complete national child safety training. We are prioritising applications from small and medium providers on a first come, first served basis. Applications close on 3 July 2026 or earlier if funding is fully allocated.

Using the supports together

Services can choose the option, or combination of options, that best suits their workforce. You may claim both supports, but not for the same educators and training hours.

Foundation training available now

Foundation training is available on Geccko. To complete the training, you must:

- register on Geccko and create your account
- enrol in the foundation training
- complete both foundation training courses by 27 August, at a time and pace that suits you.

Advanced training coming soon

Advanced training will be available from 31 July 2026. It will build on foundation training and must be completed by certain people.

We'll share more information about advanced training ahead of its release.

Visit our national child safety training page for more information.

Paid practicum subsidy: check your eligibility

The paid practicum subsidy helps providers support staff with paid leave while they complete their practicum. It covers up to 8 weeks of practicum per staff member.

You may apply on behalf of staff who:

- are completing a diploma-level, degree-level or a post-graduate early childhood teacher (ECT) qualification
- are an Australian citizen, permanent resident or hold a valid work visa
- work at a CCS-approved service
- work full-time, part-time or casual
- have worked more than 40 hours overall in the last 3 months.

Applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. We have already received a high volume of applications, and not all eligible applicants may receive funding.

If the demand is high, we will prioritise applications for:

- First Nations educators
- educators from regional and remote locations
- educators by provider size (small, then medium, then large providers)

- ECT qualifications (including post-graduate qualifications) over diploma-level qualifications.

Applications close on 3 July 2026 or earlier if funding is fully allocated.

Learn more about the paid practicum subsidy.

Sector spotlight

Get ready for the National Workforce Census

The sixth ECEC National Workforce Census will take place from September to November 2026. Update your details now, so you don't miss out.

The National Workforce Census helps us develop and measure policies and programs for the ECEC sector. Participation is **compulsory** for all CCS-approved providers and services.

Update your details by 15 June 2026

It is critical that your contact details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System so you can participate in the census.

Please take the following actions now:

- Check your provider and service-level contact details.
- Check contact details for all persons with management or control (PMCs).
- Check all PMCs are correctly identified, and add any new or missing PMCs.
- Remove anyone who no longer has management or control.

You can update your details via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Alignment with the National Early Childhood Worker Register

We know services already give a lot of information to government. As we plan the next National Workforce Census, we will work to avoid asking for the same information twice.

This includes making sure our work lines up with the new National Early Childhood Worker Register.

To help reduce the workload for services, the census will no longer ask for information about each individual worker. Instead, it will collect simple, service-level data. This will make the census easier and faster to complete, while still giving us the information we need.

Participation is a legal requirement

Completing the National Workforce Census is part of your obligations under Family Assistance Law. We may take compliance action if you do not participate.

Stay informed

Find out more about the National Workforce Census on our website.

We will provide updates and alerts about the census in this newsletter and on our Facebook group.



Facts from FAL

Balance of allowable absences

By this time of the year, many families have used all or most of their 42 allowable absences from child care.

If absences are not being paid when submitting session reports, we recommend checking the family's remaining absence balance.

Allowable absences will reset on 1 July 2026.

Providers can check a child's year-to-date absence count via the PEP or your third-party software.

Families can find out more about absences on the Services Australia website and check their year-to-date absence count:

- in their Centrelink online account via MyGov
- using their Express Plus Centrelink mobile app.

Understanding prescribed discounts

Prescribed discounts allow third parties or providers to contribute to gap fees without reducing a family's CCS entitlement.

These discounts can reduce or remove the gap fee, and provide extra support for families.

They apply to:

- state and territory government third-party payments
- provider discounts for the early childhood workforce
- provider discounts during a period of emergency.

You must include information about prescribed discounts when submitting and updating session reports.

To learn how to apply prescribed discounts, see the examples on our website.

Getting enrolments right: agreeing on care arrangements

Before enrolling a child, providers and families must agree on the care arrangements. These arrangements set out how care will be provided and form the basis of the enrolment.

There are 4 types of care arrangements. This includes the **Complying Written Arrangement (CWA)**, which is the most common for families receiving CCS.

A CWA must be agreed in writing and include:

- provider name and contact details
- the child's information
- starting date of the arrangement

- care type and schedule
- fee details.

A separate enrolment notice is required for each child, even if one arrangement covers multiple children.

Providers must keep a record of the agreed arrangements. You don't need to submit care arrangements upfront, but we may request them in certain circumstances.

Read more about each step in the enrolment process on our website.

Strengthening safety through CCS

Quality and safety are paramount considerations when we deliver CCS. To get CCS, providers and services must deliver safe and high-quality ECEC.

We will take compliance action where there are identified risks to child safety. This includes applying conditions or preventing access to CCS.

Where there is an imminent risk to a child's health or safety, a provider's CCS approval can be:

- refused
- suspended
- cancelled
- have conditions placed on it.

We can do this under Family Assistance Law, or state and territory regulators can do this under National Law.

Read more on our website.

Workforce support

Secure, responsive educator-infant relationships to support mental health

Join Be You for an online event on how secure, responsive educator-infant relationships can support children's mental health.

This event will also explore opportunities for services to help educators connect with infants.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEST on 21 May 2026.

Register for the webinar.

From the department

Professional development subsidy: check your eligibility

The professional development subsidy helps providers cover wages while staff complete national child safety training.

You may apply on behalf of staff who:

- provide direct early childhood education and care (ECEC) or supervise children
- do not complete the training during service closure periods
- are an Australian citizen, permanent resident or hold a valid work visa
- work at a Child Care Subsidy (CCS)-approved service
- are part of the educator-to-child ratio
- work full-time, part-time or casual
- have worked more than 40 hours overall in the last 3 months.

All CCS-approved providers can apply on behalf of eligible staff, even if those staff have received the subsidy in earlier years.

You can apply for staff who have already completed the training, but funding is not guaranteed until an application is approved.

We're prioritising applications from small and medium providers on a **first come, first served basis**.

Applications close on 3 July 2026.

Learn more about the professional development subsidy.

Strengthening the Family Day Care model this National FDC Week

This week is National Family Day Care (FDC) Week.

It's a chance to recognise the vital role FDC plays in supporting children's learning, development and wellbeing in local communities.

To mark the week, we're highlighting the FDC Capability Trial.

About the Trial

The Trial is being led by Family Day Care Australia. It is exploring ways to strengthen the integrity of CCS and reduce the risk of non-compliance with Family Assistance Law (FAL).

One part of the Trial focuses on **educator recruitment**. This work is testing new ways to attract and support educators, especially in regional areas where families need flexible, local care options.

A new case study

Nature Alliance Family Day Care in Western Australia is taking part in this work. We've just published a case study featuring one of their services – **Bambini Di Natura**.

The case study shows how FDC can provide strong, community-based early learning options. Children are encouraged to connect with their environment. They can grow and explore at their own pace.

Read the case study and learn more about the Trial on our website.

Building Early Education Fund small-scale grant closes soon

The Building Early Education Fund small-scale grant will close on 29 May 2026.

This grant, part of the small-scale grants package, provides funding to:

- build or expand Centre Based Day Care (CBDC) services or
- deliver in-venue FDC in communities with no existing ECEC services.

Small not-for-profit providers operating 1 to 9 CBDC services can apply if they have:

- local council support
- secure tenure over land.

The small-scale grants package also includes 2 other grant opportunities, which remain open:

- funding for new or expanded ECEC services led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- operational funding for Building Fund-supported ECEC services.

For more details, visit the small-scale grant opportunities page.

Sector spotlight

Are your fees correct on StartingBlocks.gov.au?

We publish your fees on StartingBlocks.gov.au. This helps parents choose the best ECEC for their family.

You must keep your fee details up to date to ensure they display correctly. You must report:

- your current **hourly** or **session** fees before any subsidies, discounts or reductions
- any changes to your fees within 14 days of the change.

You report this information in the CCS System through:

- the Provider Entry Point (PEP), or
- your third-party software.

The information then flows through to StartingBlocks.gov.au.

Please report **detailed** fee information to ensure your fees display correctly. Fees will not be displayed if a URL is submitted.

Find out how to update your fees in the PEP.

Facts from FAL

Operating a Family Day Care or In Home Care service without approval

Educators are engaged by an approved provider to deliver care at one of the provider's services. They cannot run their own child care service. Doing this may breach the law because the educator's own business is **not approved** to deliver care or administer CCS.

Providers need to understand this requirement and clearly explain it to their educators.

Keep documents accurate

All documents must show the name of the **CCS-approved service**. This includes:

- statements
- invoices
- receipts.

Educators must use the correct service name whenever they deliver care. This includes advertising, social media pages, websites and newsletters.

If educators want to run their own service

Educators must apply to their regulatory authority and submit a CCS approval application.

They can learn more and check their eligibility on our website.

What to include in session reports

You must submit a session report for each child, every week a session of care is provided.

If a child has more than one enrolment – for example, if their parents are separated – you must submit a weekly session report for each enrolment.

Each session report must include:

- dates
- times
- absences
- fee information
- third-party payments
- educator details
- preschool information.

Find more information about what to include in session reports on our website.

When we impose conditions on your CCS approval

If you don’t comply with your obligations or treat regulatory risk, we can impose additional conditions on your approval.



We can impose conditions:

- at the time of approval
- following compliance audits, investigations and reviews.

Providers with additional conditions imposed must comply with them. A breach could result in further enforcement action.

Conditions will be:

- proportional to the level of non-compliance or regulatory risk identified
- clear, unambiguous and reasonable
- either ongoing or have an end date.

We may publish conditions we've imposed on providers on the enforcement action register.

We can impose any additional conditions which will support the provider's compliance with FAL.

Examples of conditions imposed include, but are not limited to:

- placing limits on educators engaged and providing FDC
- requiring persons with management or control to complete Geccko training
- requiring a provider to supply particular documents, such as a statement of tax record
- conditions to address quality and safety risks in a specified timeframe.

Find out more about imposing conditions on our website.

Workforce support

ECEC workforce measures staff experience survey

Has your service accessed any of our professional development opportunities? Tell us about your experience to help inform future policy development.

We have engaged dandolo partners (dandolo) to conduct a survey about our professional development opportunities.

This includes the:

- professional development subsidy
- paid practicum subsidy
- practicum exchange network.

If your service has received a subsidy, you may have received an email from dandolo with a link to the survey.

If you have been invited, please complete the survey before it closes on **14 May 2026**.

You may also have been invited to take part in an interview. If so, you must contact dandolo to participate.

The survey forms part of the broader workforce measures evaluation process being undertaken by dandolo.

Please contact ECECworkforce@education.gov.au if you have any questions.

News for families

Confirm your 2024-25 family income for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) before 30 June 2026

If you got CCS in the 2024-25 financial year, you need to confirm your family income now.

If you don't do this by 30 June, your CCS will stop and you'll have to pay full fees for any child care you use from 6 July 2026.

Read more on the Services Australia website.

From the department

National child safety training: 2 months in

Thank you to everyone across the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector for the strong interest and early engagement with national child safety training.

Foundation training available now

Since launching, more than:

- 280,000 people have registered in Geccko
- 223,000 are currently enrolled in foundation training
- 186,000 have already completed the foundation training.

If you haven't registered yet, visit the Geccko registration page and follow the prompts to create your account.

Once registered, you will need to **enrol** in foundation training. You don't need to do the training all at once. We encourage learners to complete the training by 27 August at a time and pace that suits them.

If you've already enrolled but haven't progressed with the training, we encourage you to complete it before **27 August 2026.**

Log in to Geccko to complete the training.

Advanced training coming soon

Advanced training builds on foundation training, and we'll share more information about advanced training ahead of its release.

Visit our national child safety training page for more information.

Service closures for national training

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved services can use up to 5 hours per year to close so staff can complete the new national child safety training. CCS can still be claimed during this time, and closures must start no earlier than 5 pm.

Providers must notify families early and keep required records.

Find out more about service closures on our website.

Apply now for our workforce subsidies

Applications are now open for 2 subsidies to help staff complete national child safety training and practicums.

The **professional development subsidy** will support completion of national child safety training.

The subsidy:

- is for staff who provide direct ECEC or supervise children, including centre directors, early childhood teachers and educators

- funds 5 hours of training per staff member
- can be used to backfill staff while they complete the training or pay staff to complete the training outside work hours
- cannot be used for staff who complete the training during service closure periods
- will prioritise small and medium providers on a first come, first served basis.

You can apply for staff who have already completed the training, but funding is not guaranteed until an application is approved.

The **paid practicum subsidy** supports early childhood teachers- and educators-in-training to complete the practicum components of their degree.

The subsidy:

- is for staff completing an eligible ECEC qualification
- funds up to **8 weeks of practicum** per staff member
- can be used to give staff leave with pay while they undertake a practicum.

We pay both subsidies to providers who pass funding on to staff. Staff cannot apply themselves. If you work in the sector and think you would be eligible, talk to your provider about applying.

To find out more, go to professional development opportunities.

Building early education in Queensland

The Australian Government is partnering with the Queensland Government to deliver 5 new ECEC services across Southern and Central Queensland.

Through the Building Early Education Fund, the Australian Government will provide nearly $50 million to deliver ECEC services in the first half of 2028 in:

- Rosewood, supporting 75 new ECEC places
- Yarrabilba, supporting 75 new ECEC places
- Chinchilla South, supporting 75 new ECEC places
- Clermont, supporting 52 new ECEC places
- Yorkeys Knob, supporting 75 new ECEC places.

Funding is being delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement schedule with the Queensland 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.

Facts from FAL

Absences at the start or end of an enrolment

In some circumstances, families may still receive CCS for absences that occur at the start or end of an enrolment.

This only applies in specific situations, including where:



- the child care service changes ownership during the child's extended period
- the child's usual service is closed and the child attends a different service, requiring a new enrolment under the same provider
- a family tragedy occurs within the 28 days before the absence in the child's extended period
- the enrolment was ceased incorrectly
- any of the additional absence reasons apply.

What is the extended period?

The extended period:

- begins 6 days before the child's first physical attendance and ends on their first attendance day, or
- begins the day of the child's last physical attendance and ends 6 days after that day.

Keeping enrolments up to date

To reduce the risk of a CCS debt, it's important to update a family's enrolment when their circumstances change. This includes:

- foreseen absences of more than 14 weeks
- unforeseen absences where you become reasonably sure the child will not return to care before the enrolment ends, or within 14 weeks.

Read about absences at the start and end of an enrolment on our website.

Calendar year reporting deadline is this Friday

Large providers must report financial information each year. This includes information about revenue, profits and leasing arrangements.

Large providers who report on the **calendar year** must:

- complete the 2025 Large Provider Financial Input Report
- email it to ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au by this **Friday 1 May 2026**.

Please include financial statements and any other information outlined in the 'Important Information' tab.

If you report on a **financial year**, your deadline will be 1 November 2026. We'll provide more information about what you need to do closer to the deadline.

A large provider is one that currently operates, plans to operate, or shares operation of 25 or more services. If you're not sure whether this applies to you, please email ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au.

Learn more about the financial reporting obligations for large providers on our website.

Have you made any changes to your business this year?

Under Family Assistance Law, you must notify us about changes to your business, including changes to fees, vacancies, closures and contact details.

You must notify us of these changes to maintain your CCS approval.

Find out more about how to notify us about changes, including:



- when you must notify us
- who can notify us, and
- step-by-step instructions, called task cards.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment update

Updated minimum rates tables

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

The updated tables show minimum rates for workers:

- engaged on or before 28 February 2026
- engaged on or after 1 March 2026.

These updates support the implementation of the Fair Work Commission's decision from the gender undervaluation priority awards review of the *Children's Services Award 2010.*

The decision introduced a simpler classification structure and phased wage increases from 1 March 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*.

We're processing payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 23 February to 22 March 2026.

We processed this payment on 20 April 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 CCS 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

Prepare for the paid practicum subsidy

Applications for the paid practicum subsidy open on 28 April 2026.

The subsidy supports early childhood teachers- and educators-in-training to complete the practicum components of an early childhood education and care (ECEC) qualification.

The subsidy is designed to support providers to give staff leave with pay while they undertake practicums. It will fund up to 8 weeks of practicum per eligible staff member.

Here are a few ways you can prepare:

- check if your staff are completing an eligible degree or diploma level qualification
- confirm whether they need to complete a practicum and when
- read the grant guidelines to confirm eligibility.

Find out more about the paid practicum subsidy.

National Child Safety Reform – survey closing soon

National consultation is now open on child safety reforms. Your feedback will help inform future decisions about child safety.

You can share your views on 7 areas for reform:

- supervision practices
- more transparency for families
- fitness and propriety of persons with management or control (PMC)
- suspension, supervision and training directions, and information sharing
- stronger protections for whistleblowers
- updating quality ratings for providers during or after an investigation
- safer fencing.

The survey closes on 28 April 2026. Learn more and complete the survey online.

The Queensland Department of Education is hosting the national survey on its website.

CCS Provider Helpdesk closed for Anzac Day public holiday

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed on Monday 27 April for the Anzac Day public holiday.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Tuesday 28 April.

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

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.

Facts from FAL

Planning on opening a new FDC or IHC service?

If you plan to operate a Family Day Care (FDC) or In Home Care (IHC) service, you must identify the educators who will deliver care as part of your CCS provider application.

In the application, you must list all proposed educators, including the following information for each:

- full name
- date of birth
- phone number
- email address
- PRODA Registration Authority (RA) number
- evidence of background checks.

If you haven't identified any educators when you submit your CCS application, you must confirm this in writing.

Learn more and get ready to apply on our website.

Issuing statements of entitlement

Providing clear and accurate information to families is an important part of administering CCS.

You must provide families who get CCS at your service with a statement of entitlement every fortnight.

The statement of entitlement helps families understand the relationship between:

- the sessions of care provided
- the CCS amount payable
- the amount withheld
- the fees you charge.

Only issue statements after care has occurred

You must only issue a statement of entitlement for **care that has already taken place**. Statements must **not** be issued in advance or based on estimates, as a family's CCS entitlement can change from fortnight to fortnight for a range of reasons.

While statements of entitlement are mandatory, **how and when you invoice families is up to you**. Your invoicing process does not replace the requirement to issue a statement of entitlement every fortnight when CCS is paid.

Issuing these statements is a legal requirement. Failure to meet your obligations may result in compliance action, so it's important to ensure your processes support timely and accurate reporting.

Learn more about what to include in a statement of entitlement on our website.



Workforce support

Supporting your staff with discounted care

Did you know you can offer discounted care to some staff without reducing their CCS?

The workforce discount is an optional incentive to help you attract and retain qualified staff.

You can:

- choose whether to offer the workforce discount at your service
- determine the discount amount, provided employees pay at least 5% of the gap fee.

The workforce discount:

- is a prescribed discount
- is applied after CCS calculation
- will not reduce a family's CCS entitlement

Learn more about the workforce discount.



From the department

Reminder – spot checks

Spot checks are unannounced, in-person visits by authorised officers. These visits help ensure services meet their legal obligations and manage Child Care Subsidy (CCS) correctly.

Officers may review:

- enrolment and attendance reporting
- CCS administration
- record-keeping
- fee and payment processes
- Working With Children Checks for current staff.

Spot checks can happen at any CCS-approved service. They support accurate CCS administration and safe, high-quality care.

Find out more about spot checks on our website.

Who does not need to complete national child safety training

Wondering if you need to complete national child safety training?

If you work or volunteer in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) service regulated under the National Quality Framework (NQF), you **must** complete the training.

This includes people who support the operation of a service, even if they do not work directly with children.

If you do not work or volunteer in an NQF regulated ECEC service, you **don't** need to complete the training.

This includes:

- primary and secondary school teachers
- school based education staff
- staff at services that are not regulated under the NQF, such as playgroups, play centres and toy libraries
- parents, carers and visitors at an ECEC service.

While In Home Care and some Community Child Care Fund Restricted services are not regulated under the NQF, we encourage staff at these services to complete the training.

If you're unsure whether someone at your service needs to complete national child safety training, take a precautionary approach and check with your regulator. They can provide advice based on your service and jurisdiction.

Learn more about national child safety training.

What you need to know about service closures for national training

CCS-approved services can use up to 5 hours per year to close so staff can complete the new national child safety training. CCS can still be claimed during this time, and closures must start no earlier than 5 pm.

Who it applies to:

- Centre Based Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Family Day Care and In Home Care educators (individual educators only)

What providers must do:

- plan the closure and prepare staff
- notify families early
- keep required records
- ensure the time is used only for national child safety training.

Find out more, including your record keeping responsibilities, on our website.

Prepare for the professional development subsidy

Applications for the professional development subsidy open on 28 April 2026.

From 2026–27, the subsidy supports **national child safety training only**. Other professional development activities previously supported by the subsidy will no longer be funded.

The subsidy is designed to help cover wages while staff complete the training. It will cover 5 hours per eligible staff member. It may be suitable for you if:

- you have staff who can't complete the training during service closure periods
- service closures are not suitable for your service.

All CCS-approved providers can apply on behalf of staff who provide direct ECEC or supervise children. This includes centre directors, early childhood teachers and educators.

You will be able to apply for all eligible staff, even if they have:

- already completed the training before you apply, or
- received the professional development subsidy in earlier years.

We will prioritise applications from small and medium providers (operating fewer than 25 services) on a first come, first served basis.

Find out more about the professional development subsidy.

CCS period of emergency in Western Australia

A CCS period of emergency was applied in parts of Western Australia due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Narelle.

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.

Facts from FAL

Inducements and advertising at your service

An inducement is any incentive offered by a provider or a third party to secure a child's enrolment at a service.

Under the rules, inducements that are **financial** or **not directly related to the quality or provision of education and care** are **not allowed**. This includes:

- cash
- vouchers or gift cards
- electronic devices
- other gifts.

What you *can* do

You can still promote your service in ways that comply with the guidelines, such as:

- offering discounted or free care
- advertising your service and offering free site visits or trial periods
- issuing marketing merchandise up to the value of $30 per complying written arrangement
- including extra-curricular activities as part of a session fee
- highlighting your social impact, such as donations to a charity
- providing transport to or from your service, if this is part of your normal business practice.

Learn more about inducements and advertising on our website.

Backdating child wellbeing certificates and determinations

Providers play an important role in giving families access to Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing. Here's what you need to know about backdating access to the subsidy.

- You can give families access to the child wellbeing subsidy through a certificate or a determination.
- You can backdate all certificates and determinations up to 28 days. You do not need additional evidence to do this.
- You may be able to backdate up to 13 weeks in exceptional circumstances. You must have evidence showing that an exceptional circumstance applies. This is in addition to the evidence you must hold demonstrating the child is at risk.

Learn more about backdating certificates and determinations in the Guide to ACCS child wellbeing.



Calendar year reporting deadline for some large providers is 1 May

Large providers must report financial information each year. This includes information about revenue, profits and leasing arrangements.

Large providers who report on the **calendar year** must:

- complete the 2025 Large Provider Financial Input Report
- email it to ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au by **1 May 2026**.

Please include financial statements and any other information outlined in the 'Important Information' tab.

If you report on a **financial year**, your deadline will be 1 November 2026. We'll provide more information about what you need to do closer to the deadline.

A large provider is one that currently operates, plans to operate, or shares operation of 25 or more services. If you're not sure whether this applies to you, please email ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au.

Learn more about the financial reporting obligations for large providers on our website.

13 April 2026

Tropical Cyclone Narelle: CCS period of emergency expanded to additional areas

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of Western Australia due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Narelle. It has now been expanded to include additional areas.

The CCS period of emergency applied from 25 March to 1 April 2026 in the following local government areas:

(New areas in **bold**)

- **Ashburton**
- Carnarvon
- Exmouth
- Shark Bay
- **The City of Greater Geraldton**
- **Upper Gascoyne**
- **Yalgoo.**

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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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 Emergency WA.



From the department

Workforce subsidies opening soon – get ready

Grant guidelines are now available to help early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers prepare for 2 workforce subsidies opening on 28 April 2026.
We pay both subsidies to providers who pass funding on to staff. Staff cannot apply themselves. If you work in the sector and think you would be eligible, talk to your provider about applying.

Professional development subsidy for national child safety training

The professional development subsidy will support completion of national child safety training.
The subsidy:

- is for staff who provide direct ECEC or supervise children, including centre directors, early childhood teachers and educators
- funds **5 hours of training** per staff member
- can be used to backfill staff while they complete the training or pay staff to complete the training outside work hours
- cannot be used for staff who complete the training during service closure periods
- will prioritise small and medium providers on a first come, first served basis.

Read more about the professional development subsidy.

Paid practicum subsidy

The paid practicum subsidy supports early childhood teachers- and educators-in-training to complete the practicum components of their degree.
The subsidy:

- is for staff completing an eligible ECEC qualification
- funds up to **8 weeks of practicum** per staff member
- can be used to give staff leave with pay while they undertake a practicum.

Read more about the paid practicum subsidy.

National child safety training: community of practice resources now available

A new suite of community of practice resources is now available to support national child safety training.

The optional resources are designed to help services and their teams embed the training into everyday practice through shared discussion and reflection.

They are available in a range of formats, including:

- short videos
- booklets
- information sheets.

Services may choose to use the resources to:

- prompt team discussions about child safety and risk
- support shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- strengthen child-safe practices in everyday work
- complement existing professional development or quality improvement activities.

The community of practice resources:

- are not mandatory
- do not replace required training in Geccko
- can be used flexibly to suit your service and workforce.

The resources are available now on the Australian Centre for Child Protection website.

National Child Safety Reform – have your say

National consultation is now open on child safety reforms. Your feedback will help inform future decisions about child safety.

You can share your views on 7 areas for reform:

- supervision practices
- more transparency for families
- fitness and propriety of persons with management or control (PMC)
- suspension, supervision and training directions, and information sharing
- stronger protections for whistleblowers
- updating quality ratings for providers during or after an investigation
- safer fencing.

The online survey closes on 28 April 2026. Learn more and complete the survey here.

The Queensland Department of Education is hosting the national survey on its website.

CCS period of emergency in Western Australia

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of Western Australia due to the impact of ex-Tropical Cyclone Narelle.

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

Stick it to the flu: Protect kids under 5 this winter

Influenza can be serious for young children and can sometimes lead to hospitalisation. Children under 5 years of age are at higher risk of complications from the flu.

The best protection is the **annual flu vaccine**, which is safe and effective. The vaccine is **free** under the National Immunisation Program for children aged 6 months to under 5 years.

Flu vaccines are now available through GPs, immunisation clinics and participating pharmacies.

How your service can help

You can remind parents and carers to protect their children through vaccination by:

- ordering and displaying free posters and brochures around your service
- sharing flu information through your service's portal, newsletter or email updates.

For more resources and information, visit health.gov.au/flu.

Facts from FAL

Understanding your obligations as a child care provider

Your obligations may differ depending on the laws under which you operate.

Requirements under National Law are separate from those under Family Assistance Law (FAL).

Your **state or regulatory approval** sits under National Law. Your **CCS approval** sits under Family Assistance Law.

To remain compliant with both, contact:

- your state or territory regulatory authority for advice on National Law requirements
- this department for information about CCS approval and obligations.

Checking with the right authority helps you meet your obligations and avoid compliance issues.

For step-by-step guidance on approvals and administering CCS, visit:

- becoming an approved provider
- how to administer CCS.

What can an infringement notice be issued for?

We monitor providers to ensure they comply with the rules under FAL. If a provider fails to meet these obligations, we can issue an infringement notice – essentially a fine.

There are many FAL obligations that carry a civil penalty offence, which may result in an infringement notice.

Examples include:

- not updating the status of a current **Working With Children Check**
- incorrectly recording **PMCs**
- failing to submit **enrolment notices** or **session reports** on time
- not passing on or remitting a **fee reduction amount**
- incorrectly reporting **fee information**
- failing to notify the correct agency about a **child at risk of serious abuse or neglect**.

Stay compliant and avoid penalties

Learn more and find out what to do if you receive an infringement notice, on our website.

Submitting session reports

Remember to submit accurate session reports on time – it's the law. Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process CCS payments.

As a CCS approved provider, you must submit session reports:

- within 14 days of the end of the week in which care was provided
- for each child at your service, for every week care is provided
- with at least one session of care a week, recorded as either an attendance or absence
- only when a fee is charged to a family for providing care to their child.

Submit session reports through the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Learn about submitting accurate session reports on our website.

Workforce support

Making change happen: communicating with families from diverse cultures

Join Be You for an online event on communicating with families from diverse cultures.

This event will share stories and insights on planning for change in learning communities. You will be able to explore how service leaders use culturally responsive communication practices to:

- strengthen family partnerships
- promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEST on 16 April 2026.

Register for the webinar.

2 April 2026

Tropical Cyclone Narelle: CCS period of emergency applied 25 March to 1 April 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of Western Australia due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Narelle.
The CCS period of emergency applies from 25 March to 1 April 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Carnarvon
- Exmouth
- Shark Bay.

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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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 Emergency WA.



1 April 2026

From the department

Who must complete national child safety training

We have updated the information on our website to make it clearer who must complete national child safety training.

Foundation training is mandatory for anyone who works or volunteers in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) service regulated under the National Quality Framework (NQF). This includes:

- approved providers
- people with management or control
- nominated supervisors
- people in day-to-day charge
- Family Day Care educators
- all staff members
- volunteers and students, where they meet the definitions below.

A **volunteer** is someone who helps deliver the ECEC service on a regular or semi-regular basis and is not paid. This does not include one-off visitors or parents who are only involved as a parent or carer.

A **student** is someone completing a supervised placement while studying an approved ECEC qualification. This does not include high school students doing work experience.

What this means for providers

Providers are responsible for determining who must complete the training at their service, based on:

- a person's role and duties
- the regularity of their engagement
- the level of contact they may have with children
- their professional judgement and child-safety risk assessment.

If you are unsure, you should:

- take a precautionary approach
- contact your state or territory regulatory authority for advice.

Read the updated guidance on our website. Complete foundation training in Geccko.

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk is introducing call backs

From Thursday 2 April, the Helpdesk will introduce call backs.

When you call and our system detects that your wait time may be lengthy, you'll be offered a call back. You will keep your place in the queue and will be called back when it is your turn.

We're also introducing a short survey (just 2 quick questions) after some calls. Your feedback helps us understand what we're doing well and where we can improve to better support you.

CCS Provider Helpdesk closed for Easter

The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed on Friday 3 April and Monday 6 April for the holiday period.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Tuesday 7 April.

You can email the helpdesk anytime at 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 Queensland

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was in place in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding and Tropical Cyclone Narelle.

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.

Facts from FAL

Debt notices: what providers need to know

Staying on top of your CCS obligations is the best way to avoid debt notices and potential penalties.

You might receive a debt notice if you:

- change a session of care to report a reduced fee, fewer hours, or fewer days
- withdraw a session report
- act in a non-compliant way
- close or transfer ownership of a service retrospectively
- cease operating your service while offsetting is still occurring
- report an absence before a child's first physical attendance
- report an absence after a child's last physical attendance.

If the debt results from **non-compliance**, we may also issue an **infringement notice**.

Learn more about debt notices and how to avoid them on our website.

Caring for close family members in Family Day Care

Family Day Care (FDC) educators cannot claim CCS when providing care for close family members.

This includes care provided to the educator's (or their partner's):

- child, foster child, adopted child, kinship child, or any child for whom they have legal responsibility
- brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step-brother or step-sister.

To learn more about these rules, watch our short explainer video.



You can find information about providing care for relatives on our website.

Financial reporting deadline for some large providers is 1 May

Large providers must report financial information each year. This includes information about revenue, profits and leasing arrangements.

Large providers who report on the **calendar year** must:

- complete the 2025 Large Provider Financial Input Report
- email it to ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au by **1 May 2026**.
-

Please include financial statements and any other information outlined in the 'Important Information' tab.

If you report on a **financial year**, your deadline will be 1 November 2026. We'll provide more information about what you need to do closer to the deadline.

A large provider is one that currently operates, plans to operate, or shares operation of 25 or more services. If you're not sure whether this applies to you, please email ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au.

Learn more about the financial reporting obligations for large providers on our website.

Workforce support

Worker retention payment update

We're processing payments

We have processed worker retention payments for the period 26 January to 22 February 2026.

We processed this payment on 23 March 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.

Tell your community you've signed up

Is your service receiving the worker retention payment? Use our worker retention payment communication toolkit to let your community know.

News for families

Getting ready for school holidays? Don't forget About Child Care Subsidy for OSHC

Here's what some parents don't realise: you can still get CCS for school aged kids attending Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), including many school holiday programs.

A lot of families assume that once kids start primary school, that CCS for their child will stop. Not true! If your child is under 13 years and not yet in secondary school, you may still be eligible – not just for vacation care, but for before and after school care too.

So before the Easter bunny arrives and the holidays sneak up again, hop onto the Services Australia website and click on ‘Raising Kids’. You might be surprised by how much support your family could receive.

31 March 2026

Queensland: CCS periods of emergency

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) periods of emergency have been applied in parts of Queensland.

The CCS period of emergency applied from **10 to 13 March 2026** in the following local government areas:

- Bundaberg
- Gladstone.

The CCS period of emergency applied from **20 to 29 March 2026** in the following local government areas:

- Aurukun
- Banana
- Barcaldine
- Barcoo
- Blackall-Tambo
- Boulia
- Bulloo
- Bundaberg
- Burdekin
- Burke
- Cairns
- Carpentaria
- Cassowary Coast
- Central Highlands
- Charters Towers
- Cherbourg
- Cloncurry
- Cook
- Croydon
- Diamantina
- Doomadgee
- Douglas
- Etheridge
- Flinders
- Fraser Coast

- Gladstone
- Gympie
- Hinchinbrook
- Hope Vale
- Isaac
- Kowanyama
- Livingstone
- Lockhart River
- Longreach
- Mackay
- Mapoon
- Maranoa
- Mareeba
- McKinlay
- Mornington
- Mount Isa
- Napranum
- North Burnett
- Northern Peninsula Area
- Palm Island
- Pormpuraaw
- Quilpie
- Richmond
- Rockhampton
- Somerset
- South Burnett
- Tablelands
- Torres
- Torres Strait Island
- Townsville
- Western Downs
- Whitsunday
- Winton
- Wujal Wujal



- 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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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



26 March 2026

Northern Territory floods: CCS period of emergency extended to 2 additional areas

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency applies in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 7 to 27 March 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Belyuen
- Coomalie
- Darwin
- **East Arnhem**
- **Groote Archipelago**
- Katherine
- Litchfield
- Palmerston
- Roper Gulf
- Unincorporated Areas
- Victoria Daly
- Wagait
- West Arnhem
- West Daly

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 CCS 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 for a full day, 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 nt.gov.au/emergency.

25 March 2026

From the department

Building Early Education Fund grant opportunities now open

Up to $80 million in grants is now available for small not-for-profit organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation (ACCOs) to build or expand early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in areas of need.

The small-scale grants package is part of the $1 billion Building Early Education Fund. It includes 3 grant opportunities:

- at least $20 million to build or expand Centre Based Day Care services or deliver in-venue Family Day Care in areas where services are needed most
- at least $20 million to support new or expanded ECEC services led by ACCOs
- up to $40 million in operational funding for Building Fund-supported ECEC services.

These grants will:

- support small not-for-profit providers and ACCOs to deliver capital projects that increase supply
- improve access to quality early learning for children and families in outer suburbs, regional and remote communities.

Each grant has its own eligibility requirements, guidelines and application process.

Find out more on the Building Early Education Fund small-scale grant opportunities page.

National CCTV assessment registration closing soon

There's still time for your service to join the national CCTV assessment – but the window is closing soon. If you haven't completed your registration, now is the time the finalise it.

The main data collection period runs from April to June 2026. To participate, you must **complete your registration by the end of March.**

By taking part, your service can:

- join optional **community of practice sessions** to share learnings with other services
- help shape advice to government.

Small and medium providers may be eligible for a participation payment of $30,000 to $50,000.

For help or questions, contact Nous at cctvassessment@nousgroup.com.

Visit our website for more information and resources.

New Child Care Subsidy data: December quarter 2025

We've published data about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in the December quarter 2025.

Each quarter we issue a summary report about CCS-approved care in Australia. The report includes data on child care usage, services, fees and subsidies in Australia.

Key findings from the December quarter 2025 include:

- 1,437,520 children from 1,011,600 families used CCS-approved care
- 15,271 CCS-approved services operated during the quarter
- on average, children attended 27.6 hours of care per week
- the average hourly fee was $13.75
- the Australian Government paid $3.98 billion in subsidies.

Go to the report.

Update national early childhood worker register by Friday

The deadline to update the National Early Childhood Worker Register is this Friday.

Providers who operate services which are regulated under the National Quality Framework (NQF) must record information in the register for all workers providing ECEC, using details they already collect. This is a requirement under National Law.

Going forward, you must update the register **within 14 days** when:

- a worker is employed, engaged or appointed
- you become aware of any change to a worker's details.

For more information, visit ACECQA's website.

Facts from FAL

Easter holiday absences

On public holidays, services can report an absence only if the service would normally be open on that day.

For example:

- If your service is open on Mondays and Fridays, you can report absences for the upcoming public holidays on Friday 3 and Monday 6 April.
- If your service only operates from Tuesday to Thursday, you **cannot** report absences for these public holidays.
- You can only report absences for children who would have normally attended care on that day.

If you report an absence for a public holiday, 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.

Public holiday absences are considered an allowable absence and will be deducted from a family's 42 allowable absences.

Once a family has used their 42 allowable absence days, a public holiday cannot be claimed as an additional absence reason.

Read more about reporting absences on our website.

CCS payments and eligibility

In some cases, Services Australia may pay CCS directly to a family when care has been provided before their CCS eligibility has been confirmed.

While families are encouraged to submit a CCS claim and establish their eligibility before their child begins care, you may occasionally have a child attend before their claim is finalised.

If a family has not yet been assessed as eligible for CCS:

- You should **charge the family full fees** until their claim is processed.
- You **must not estimate or apply CCS entitlements** in advance.
- If the family is later assessed as eligible, **Services Australia will pay any backdated CCS directly to the family**, not to the service.

This process ensures CCS is applied correctly and avoids adjustments or debt issues for services.

Find out more about managing payments and fees on our website.

Workforce support

When we process worker retention payments

Standard worker retention payments are paid in arrears every 4 weeks. We publish and regularly update the payment schedule on our website.

The payment schedule shows:

- **completed payments**, including the dates payments were processed
- **upcoming payments** based on the latest available information.

Payments are calculated using the labour costs for the charged hours of care provided at a service each month. Data from the Child Care Subsidy System helps determine the charged hours of care.

Payments are made at the service-level through the Child Care Subsidy System. These are sent to the same bank account as your CCS payments.

To learn more, see when we make payments on our website.

New National Model Code for Recruitment in ECEC

A new National Model Code for Recruitment in ECEC will support the sector to embed clear, consistent and child safe recruitment practices across the workforce lifecycle.

The Model Code is:



- a voluntary, principles-based national framework grounded in the NQF
- aligned with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

It outlines what good recruitment looks like and covers advertising, interviewing, induction and ongoing suitability checks. This will help services attract and retain safe, skilled and values driven staff.

The Model Code is available on the ACECQA website.

19 March 2026

Northern Territory floods: CCS period of emergency expanded to 11 additional areas

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 7 to 16 March in the following local government areas:

- Belyuen
- Coomalie
- Darwin
- Katherine
- Litchfield
- Palmerston
- Roper Gulf
- Unincorporated Areas
- Victoria Daly
- Wagait
- West Arnhem
- West Daly

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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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 nt.gov.au/emergency.



From the department

Update the national early childhood worker register by 27 March

All approved providers must add their workforce information to the National Early Childhood Worker Register by 27 March 2026.

The register gives regulators a clearer national view of who is working in the sector and where, helping them monitor, identify and respond to risks across the sector.

You must record information in the register for all people working in or engaged by your service, using details you already collect, by 27 March. This is a requirement under the Education and Care Services National Law.

You must keep the information up to date and make any changes within 14 days of becoming aware.

Visit ACECQA's website to find out more.

Reminder: unannounced spot checks continuing in 2026

Spot checks are unannounced, in-person visits by authorised officers. These help ensure services meet their legal obligations and manage the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) correctly.

What happens during a spot check?

Officers will:

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

They may review:

- information or records to check compliance with the Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- enrolment processes, and attendance reporting – including verifying records against actual attendance
- fee and payment processes
- Working With Children Checks for current staff.

Spot checks can occur at *any* registered service across Australia. If officers observe anything that may affect safety or quality, they will report it to the state or territory regulator.

Why these checks matter

Spot checks support:

- accurate and fair CCS administration
- safe, high-quality care

- strong and consistent practices.

Find out more about spot checks on our website.

There's still time to take part in the national CCTV assessment

If you've submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) but haven't finished registration, there's still time to join the national CCTV assessment.

The main data collection period runs from **April to June 2026.** To take part, you need to finalise your registration by the end of March. If you need help or have questions, contact Nous at cctvassessment@nousgroup.com.

Why participate?

Small and medium providers may be eligible for a participation payment of **$30,000 to $50,000**.

By taking part, your service can:

- join **community of practice sessions** to share insights with other services
- help shape advice to government on how CCTV should be used in ECEC.

The national CCTV assessment will:

- identify how CCTV can be used safely and effectively in ECEC to support child safety
- build a strong evidence base to guide future policy and best-practice principles.

Visit our website for more information and resources.

CCS periods of emergency in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory

CCS periods of emergency may be in place in parts of Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

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

Celebrate Harmony Week in your service

Harmony Week (16–22 March) is all about inclusiveness, respect and belonging. It is the perfect time to help little learners appreciate Australia's cultural diversity.

Harmony Week offers an opportunity to teach respect, empathy, and inclusion from an early age. By celebrating cultural diversity, we help children develop a sense of belonging and understanding of the world around them.

Here are some ideas for your service:

- **Wear orange**: the official Harmony Week colour!
- **Cultural dress day**: invite children and educators to wear traditional clothing from their cultural backgrounds.
- **Story circles**: share stories from different cultures – invite families or community members to participate.
- **Music and dance**: play songs from various cultures and encourage children to learn simple dances.
- **Language fun**: teach greetings in different languages spoken by families in your service.
- **Art and craft**: create a "Harmony Tree" with handprints or hearts decorated by children, each representing their unique identity.
- **World map activity**: help children place stickers on countries they or their ancestors come from.

Learn more and download free resources from the Harmony Week website.

Webinar invitation: Evidence to action – strengthening children's development

Join this free webinar to learn key insights from the latest Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data.

Date: Tuesday 24 March 2026
Time: 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm AEDT

The session will outline national trends in child development. Panellists will explore the National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention, experiences of families of children with disability, and a community-led approach to supporting children's development.

Panellists include:

- **Karen Dimmock**, CEO, ACD
- **Dr Sarah Gray**, Senior Research Officer and Project Manager, Centre for Community Child Health
- **Professor Christine Imms**, Chair of Neurodevelopment and Disability, University of Melbourne
- **Rowena Mouda**, CEO, Ngunga Group Womens Aboriginal Corporation
- **Professor Sharon Goldfeld AM**, Director, Centre for Community Child Health

Register now and please share the link with your networks.

New online safety module for young learners

Life Ed Australia has recently launched a new online module to teach young learners about staying safe online.

The *Harold's Safe Screen Time* module will help spark early conversations with children aged 3 to 5 years on online safety.

The module explores topics that help build the foundations for online safety, including:

- recognising early warning signs when something feels unsafe

- knowing how and when to ask for help
- understanding healthy screen time habits
- building a sense of autonomy
- learning about consent.

Life Ed has been supporting Australian children and young people build the knowledge and skills they need to lead safe, healthy lives since 1979. It is Australia's largest and most recognised provider of preventative health education.

Learn more about this initiative in our Newsroom article.

Facts from FAL

Financial reporting deadline for some large providers is 1 May

Large providers must report financial information each year. This includes information about revenue, profits and leasing arrangements.

Who is a large provider?

A large provider is one that currently operates, plans to operate, or shares the operation of 25 or more services.

What do large providers need to do?

Large providers who report on the **calendar year** must:

- complete the 2025 Large Provider Financial Input Report
- mail it to ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au by **1 May 2026**.

Please include financial statements and any other information outlined in the 'Important Information' tab.

If you report on a **financial year**, your deadline will be 1 November 2026. We'll provide more information about what you need to do closer to the deadline.

If you're not sure whether these obligations apply to you, please email ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au.

Why is it necessary to provide this information?

We use this information to:

- assess the financial viability of large providers
- identify and mitigate risks posed by large providers exiting the market unexpectedly
- protect the government's investment in the sector.

We may also publish some information, such as profits and revenue, on the Starting Blocks website. Publishing this information helps:

- improve the transparency of child care costs



- increase the amount of information available to families when choosing a service.

Learn more about the financial reporting obligations for large providers on our website.

Submit a fraud tip-off

We all have a shared role in keeping the ECEC system strong and fair. One way we support this is by making sure public resources are used properly, so they deliver the best outcomes for children and families. Preventing and managing fraud is part of this shared effort, and your awareness and action helps protect the whole sector.

If you suspect a child care provider, service or employee is committing CCS fraud, you can report it to us.

Our CCS fraud tip-off form is anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete.

You can report any activity that may indicate fraud or non-compliance.

Examples of fraud include:

- criminal charges or convictions for violence, abuse or child-related offences
- past fraud or non-compliance with other government programs
- possible conflicts of interest
- use of fraudulent documents to register providers or educators
- use of fraudulent evidence for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) or additional absences
- complex business structures to hide who is in control of a provider
- restarting a service under a new name after being banned
- suspicious money movements or business structures
- offering incentives to ignore rule-breaking.

You can read more examples and find out how to make a tip-off on our website.

Enrolments

You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS. You must submit enrolment notices on time.

Workforce support

Workforce Reference Group meets to progress key workforce priorities

The Early Childhood Workforce Reference Group met in February 2026 to discuss workforce challenges and opportunities.

The group includes frontline educators, peak bodies, unions and sector representatives.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) presented findings from the ECEC Staff Survey on educator retention. The findings highlighted the role of the following in improving educator retention:

- leadership
- workplace culture
- professional support.

Members discussed current workforce pressures and collective ideas about educator retention, reflecting on:

- challenges experienced by services
- opportunities to better support the workforce.

Members also discussed new child safety requirements, with a focus on:

- how the reforms will strengthen child safety in ECEC services
- the role of the workforce in implementing these reforms.

The group will meet again in May 2026.



16 March 2026

Victoria storms: CCS period of emergency

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of Victoria due to the impact of storms.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 22 to 28 February 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Indigo
- Mansfield
- Murrindindi
- Strathbogie.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 24 to 28 February 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Buloke
- Campaspe
- Central Goldfields
- Greater Bendigo
- Horsham
- Latrobe
- Macedon Ranges
- Mildura
- Yarra Ranges.

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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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 emergency.vic.gov.au.



12 March 2026

Northern Territory floods: CCS period of emergency applies 7 to 16 March 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency applies in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 7 to 16 March 2026 in the following local government area:

- Katherine.

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 CCS 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 for a full day, 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 nt.gov.au/emergency.

South Australia floods: CCS period of emergency applies 21 February to 16 March 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency applies in parts of South Australia due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from **21 February to 16 March 2026** in the following local government areas:

- APY Lands
- Berri Barmera
- Ceduna District
- Cleve
- Coober Pedy
- Flinders Ranges
- Orroroo Carrieton
- Pastoral Unincorporated Area
- Peterborough
- Port Augusta.

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 CCS 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 for a full day, 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 safecom.sa.gov.au.

Queensland floods: CCS period of emergency applies 10 to 13 March 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency applies in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 10 to 13 March 2026 in the following local government area:

- Bundaberg.

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 contact details via the PEP or your third-party software, including:

- your contact details in the CCS 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 for a full day, 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.



From the department

Building Early Education Fund large-scale grant closing soon

The Building Early Education Fund large-scale grant round will close 5 pm AEDT 17 March 2026.

The grant provides capital funding to build or expand multiple Centre Based Day Care (CBDC) services in areas of need.

It is a targeted, competitive grant opportunity for large not-for-profit providers operating 10 or more CBDC services with:

- a track record of delivering high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services
- experience building National Law-approved services
- capacity to build or expand at least 3 new services.

Visit the large-scale grant round page to learn more and apply.

There's still time to take part in the national CCTV assessment

The national CCTV assessment is now underway, and there's still time for your service to participate. If you've submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) but haven't completed your registration, you can still take part.

The main data collection period runs from **April to June 2026.** To participate, you need to finalise your registration by the end of March. If you need help or have questions, contact Nous at cctvassessment@nousgroup.com.

Why take part?

Small and medium providers may be eligible for a participation payment of **$30,000 to $50,000**.

By taking part, your service can:

- join optional community of practice sessions to share insights with other services
- help shape advice to government on how CCTV should be used in ECEC.

What's the aim of the assessment?

The national CCTV assessment will:

- identify how CCTV can be used safely and effectively in ECEC to support child safety
- build a strong evidence base to guide future policy and best-practice principles.

Visit our website for more information and resources.

Sector spotlight

Claim reactivations limited to exceptional circumstances

We remind you to submit Inclusion Support Program (ISP) claims on time.

As outlined in your funding approval letter, you must submit all funding claims within 60 days of the end of the relevant claim period.

If a claim is not submitted on time, it will show as inactive or withdrawn in the Inclusion Support Portal.

Due to a significant increase in reactivation cases, the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) will:

- no longer reactivate cases marked as inactive due to operational oversight
- only reactivate cases in exceptional circumstances and will need evidence.

For more information about this change, refer to the claiming factsheet on the IDFM website.

Facts from FAL

ACCS child wellbeing approved program list

We publish a list of Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing approved programs on our website.

Families engaged in these approved programs are eligible to apply for ACCS child wellbeing.

The approved programs are:

- funded by state and territory child safety departments
- designed to support families identified as being at high risk of entering or escalating within the child protection system or outside it.

Learn more about the approved program list on our website.

Caring for extended family in Family Day Care

If you work in Family Day Care (FDC), it's important to understand the rules around providing care to extended family members.

Extended family members include an educator's or their partner's:

- niece or nephew
- cousin
- grandchild
- great grandchild.

FDC educators **can** provide care to extended family members and may still be able to report CCS eligible sessions. To do this you must meet the "less than 50% rule."

This rule helps ensure that most of the children in care are not related to the educator.

Watch our short video to learn how to calculate the less than 50% rule and understand the requirements for caring for relatives.

Session reports

You must submit accurate and complete session reports. You must submit them on time.

Workforce support

Communicating with families from diverse cultures

Join Be You for an online event on communicating with families from diverse cultures to nurture wellbeing.

This event will share insights into respectful and meaningful ways through which educators and services can communicate with families from diverse backgrounds to support children's mental health.

The session will take place online at 4 pm AEDT on 19 March 2026.

Register for the webinar.

Share with families

Parent Pathways: helping parents and carers across Australia

Parent Pathways is a free and voluntary service for eligible parents and carers of children under 6. Participants are guided by a mentor who provides tailored and flexible support to help them reach their personal, study or work goals.

Who is Parent Pathways for?

Parent Pathways is for parents and carers who:

- have a child aged under 6
- are not in paid employment
- live in an area where there is a Parent Pathways provider.

Parents or carers must also be receiving one of these payments:

- Parenting Payment
- Carer Payment
- Special Benefit.

Parents or carers may be eligible if they are not getting a Centrelink payment, and are either:

- under 22 years old
- an early school leaver (parents who don't have a year 12 qualification)

- a First Nations parent or carer.

What support is available?

Services on offer include:

- language or literacy programs
- child care assistance
- financial help
- referral to local services, such as family and domestic violence support, community groups and local charities
- support to gain qualifications
- career guidance to join or re-join the workforce.

For more information, including how to find a provider in your local area, visit the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website.



6 March 2026

Northern Territory floods: CCS period of emergency applied 11 to 20 February 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was applied in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency was applied from 11 to 20 February 2026 in the following local government areas:

- Alice Springs
- Barkly
- Central Desert
- MacDonnell.

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

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 nt.gov.au/emergency.

From the department

National child safety training proving hugely popular

Foundations of national child safety training is now available in Geccko – 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 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.



26 February 2026

Northern Territory floods: CCS period of emergency applies 3 to 13 February 2026

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency applies in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 3 to 13 February 2026 in the following local government area:

- Victoria Daly

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

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 nt.gov.au/emergency.

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.

Geccko

Mandatory national child safety training starts Friday

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

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 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.

Geccko

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 Geccko. All users must have an individual Geccko account using a personal email address.

Register for Geccko 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 Geccko 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.



23 January 2026

Victorian bushfires: CCS period of emergency, new areas added

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

What's new?

- Another 4 LGAs have been added.

Emergency period: 8 to 16 January 2026

(new areas in **bold**)

- Ararat
- Alpine
- **Benalla**
- Colac Otway
- Corangamite
- East Gippsland
- Golden Plains
- Greater Bendigo
- Horsham
- **Macedon Ranges**
- Mansfield
- Mildura
- Mitchell
- Moira
- Mount Alexander
- Murrindindi
- Pyrenees
- Strathbogie
- Towong
- Wellington

- **Wodonga**
- **Yarra Ranges.**

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 provide updates as needed.

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.

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.

16 January 2026

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.



14 January 2026

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.

13 January 2026

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 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.



9 January 2026

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
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