



# Emails to the early childhood education and care sector

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## COVID-19 and early childhood services

We are monitoring the evolving COVID-19 situation in Sydney, including public health orders issued by the NSW Government.

As previously advised, we made a Local Area Emergency Declaration for child care services in the [Northern Beaches Local Government Area \(LGA\) of Sydney](#).

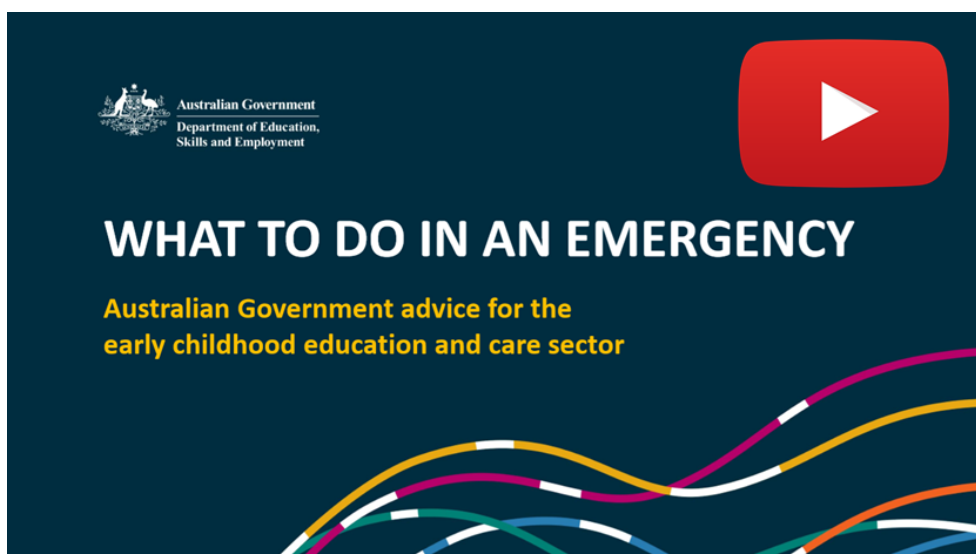
The declaration is in force until **11.59pm Sunday 10 January 2021**.

Services in the Northern Beaches LGA should visit our [help in an emergency webpage](#) to review the support available.

More information is available on the NSW Government website:

- [Restrictions for Northern Beaches](#)
- [Restrictions for Greater Sydney, Central Coast and Wollongong](#)

### Watch now: emergency video series



The [Help in an emergency webpage](#) features three short video explainers to help you understand your obligations and support available in a local emergency.

### How are your educators and families affected?

Have you thought about the impact of local COVID-19 restrictions on whether some educators and children can attend your service?



If your educators and families have been or will be in a restricted area, such as those identified under public health orders by the NSW Government, they must follow the rules set out by state and territory governments.

Please acquaint yourselves with the movement of educators and families and the potential impact upon your service if they are spending any time in restricted areas.

The [COVID-19 restriction checker](#) is a handy tool to check restrictions across Australia.

## Fee waiving

We remind you we extended the provision that allows the waiving of gap fees if your service is forced to close on public health advice until **31 January 2021**.

## Summer safety

It is a tragic statistic that, worldwide, children under five remain the age group at highest risk of drowning. In Australia, 965 children under the age of five have drowned in the past 25 years.

Please be extra vigilant in ensuring the safety of children under your care over summer, especially during water-based excursions. It is important that your policies and procedures ensure you:

- adequately supervise children at all times
- have at least one staff member with a current first aid qualification on duty and present at the service at all times care is being provided, and
- take reasonable precautions to protect children from harm or injury, and any hazard likely to cause harm or injury.

[For more information and resources go to ACECQA's website.](#)

You can report concerns about the quality or safety of a service to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

## National Workforce Census coming

We'll be conducting the 2021 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census in mid-April 2021.

We'll send you a letter providing more details, including the registration process, in the new year.

The census helps develop and measure policies and programs for the sector. The census collects data about service use, children with extra needs, access to preschool and kindergarten programs, and staffing.

[Learn about previous census' on our website.](#)





## Streamlining approval processes

Following consultations, including through last year's National Quality Framework Review Issues Paper, we've released a [Consultation Regulation Impact Statement \(CRIS\)](#), exploring and discussing options for streamlining the early childhood education and care approval processes across jurisdictions.

Australia has two systems safeguarding the interests of children and families using early childhood education and care services, and government investments. One system is for standards and quality, and the other is for parental workforce participation.

Currently, each regulatory system has its own user interface so there is some duplication in paperwork and opportunities exist to streamline the process.

This CRIS explores better options for new and existing providers.

If you'd like to submit feedback on the CRIS email [CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au) by **Friday 8 January 2021**.

## Disadvantaged and vulnerable services

The Community Child Care Fund Open Competitive grant opportunity supports services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

It gives eligible services extra funding to:

- help them stay open, and
- increase the number of children in care from disadvantaged or vulnerable families and communities.

Applications for the next funding round will open on **11 January 2021** and close **11pm (AEDT) 22 February 2021**.

The application form will be available on the [Community Grants Hub](#).

[Learn more about grant opportunity.](#)

## CCS Helpdesk holiday shutdown

The Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk will close from **12.30pm (AEDT) Thursday 24 December 2020** and reopen at **9am (AEDT) Monday 4 January 2021**.

You need to know some important things about session reports, attendances, absences and service closures during this period.

[Learn more about the holiday shutdown.](#)



23 December 2020

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We'll be conducting the 2021 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census in mid-April 2021.

We'll send you a letter providing more details, including the registration process, in the new year.

The census helps develop and measure policies and programs for the sector. The census collects data about service use, children with extra needs, access to preschool and kindergarten programs, and staffing.

[Learn about previous census' on our website.](#)



## Streamlining approval processes

Following consultations, including through last year's National Quality Framework Review Issues Paper, we've released a [Consultation Regulation Impact Statement \(CRIS\)](#), exploring and discussing options for streamlining the early childhood education and care approval processes across jurisdictions.

Australia has two systems safeguarding the interests of children and families using early childhood education and care services, and government investments. One system is for standards and quality, and the other is for parental workforce participation.

Currently, each regulatory system has its own user interface so there is some duplication in paperwork and opportunities exist to streamline the process.

This CRIS explores better options for new and existing providers.

If you'd like to submit feedback on the CRIS email [CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au) by **Friday 8 January 2021**.

## Disadvantaged and vulnerable services

The Community Child Care Fund Open Competitive grant opportunity supports services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

It gives eligible services extra funding to:

- help them stay open, and
- increase the number of children in care from disadvantaged or vulnerable families and communities.

Applications for the next funding round will open on 11 January 2021 and close 11pm (AEDT) 22 February 2021.

The application form will be available on the [Community Grants Hub](#).

[Learn more about grant opportunity.](#)

## CCS Helpdesk holiday shutdown

The Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk will close from 12.30pm (AEDT) Thursday 24 December 2020 and reopen at 9am (AEDT) Monday 4 January 2021.

You need to know some important things about session reports, attendances, absences and service closures during this period.

[Learn more about the holiday shutdown.](#)



## Fee waiving extended nationally

Services can currently access absences and waive gap fees, if they are forced to close on public health advice. The Government has extended this rule until **31 January 2021**.

Family Day Care and In Home Care providers must continue to apply to waive gap fees.

[Learn more about COVID-19 and the early childhood sector on our website.](#)

## For services in the Northern Beaches Local Government Area of Sydney

The Department is monitoring the situation in the Northern Beaches and Greater Sydney, including public health orders issued by the NSW Government.

To assist services and families who have already used 42 absence days, on 21 December 2020 the Department made a Local Area Emergency Declaration for child care services in the Northern Beaches Local Government Area (LGA) of Sydney.

The declaration is currently in force until **10 January 2021**.

The 42 absence days can be used by families for any reason, including a local emergency.

The declaration also enables Child Care Subsidy to continue to be available as it entitles families to additional absence days if their child has used their 42 absence days.

For more information, refer to our [help in an emergency webpage](#).

To see whether your service is located in a suburb within the Northern Beaches LGA, visit the [Northern Beaches Council website](#).

More information on restrictions in the Sydney area is available on the NSW Government website:

- [Restrictions for Northern Beaches](#)
- [Restrictions for Greater Sydney, Central Coast and Wollongong](#)



## Timing of Recovery Payments

Eligible services in Victoria are receiving the Recovery Payment. Here's what you need to know about payment dates during the December/January holiday period.

### Centre Based Day Care, In Home Care and Family Day Care

- We paid you this week for care provided between 14 – 27 December 2020.
- We'll pay you in the week beginning 11 January 2021 for care provided between 28 December 2020 – 3 January 2021.
- We'll pay you fortnightly for the weeks you provide care between 4 – 31 January 2021. We'll review session reports to assess your eligibility. We'll pay eligible services in arrears from the week beginning 11 January 2021.

For payments to be made in the week beginning 11 January 2021, **you must submit session reports by 3 January 2021**. Otherwise you will be paid in the next available fortnightly pay run.

### Outside School Hours Care and vacation care only

- We paid you this week for care provided between 14 – 20 December 2020.
- We'll pay you in the week beginning 11 January 2021, then fortnightly for the weeks that you provided care between 21 December 2020 – 31 January 2021. We'll review session reports to assess your eligibility each week.

For payments to be made in the week beginning 11 January 2021, **you must submit session reports by 3 January 2021**. Otherwise you will be paid in the next available fortnightly pay run.



## Support for services at risk of closure

Is your service at risk of closing due to COVID-19? You can apply for extra financial support to help you stay open.

### Victoria

We provide funding to Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved services in Victoria who can show they are at **high risk of permanent closure**, despite receiving the Recovery Payment.

### Rest of Australia

We provide funding to CCS approved services outside of Victoria who are:

- at **imminent risk of temporary or permanent closure** because of COVID-19, and
- operating in or servicing families from disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, or
- operating in a community with limited or no other child care services.

### How to apply

Before applying, read the [Community Child Care Fund \(CCCF\) Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity Guidelines](#) for details about eligibility and the assessment process.

The [application](#) includes a budget proposal you must complete. You must also provide us with financial evidence from an authorised person such as an accountant.

This evidence needs to show that your service is either at high risk of permanent closure (if located in Victoria) or at high risk of imminent permanent or temporary closure (if located outside Victoria).

To apply, visit the [CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity](#) webpage. If you have any questions, email [CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au).

Applications are open until **31 January 2021**.

## CCS Helpdesk holiday shutdown

The Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk will close from 12.30pm (AEDT) Thursday 24 December 2020 and reopen at 9am (AEDT) Monday 4 January 2021.

There are some important things you need to know about session reports, attendances, absences and service closures during this period.

[Learn more about the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk holiday shutdown on our website.](#)



## Extra allowable absences for Victoria

Children attending Victorian services have been allocated an additional 15 allowable absences to use this financial year.

These are on top of the additional 30 allowable absences we provided earlier in the year. This increases the allowable absence count from 72 days to 87 days per child.

The measure recognises the impact of the extended lockdown on families in Victoria.

## Absences and enrolments in 2021

In 2020, we provided additional support to the sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we head into a new year, some of these measures will end.

From 1 January 2021, absences before and after care will return to normal.

As well, \$0 sessions of care in the Child Care Subsidy System will end. These were used in 2020 to maintain enrolments while children were not attending care.

This means, we will not pay Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for absences submitted after a child's last physical attendance at your service.

If a family chooses to stay enrolled in 2021, but their child does not return to care before their enrolment ends, we will recover absences paid between 1 January 2021 and the enrolment end date. Enrolments end if a child does not attend a session of care for 14 weeks.

You need to take action: Please review your current enrolments and speak to your families about their intentions for 2021.

You can read more about absences and enrolments in the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

## How to record COVID-19 additional absences

CCS can be paid for additional absences for COVID-19 related reasons without the need for medical evidence for the period 24 March 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Families can only access additional absences once they've used their 42 absence days per child, per financial year.

An extra 15 allowable absence days have been provided to children in Victoria, bringing the total absences for Victorian children to 87 for this financial year.

If a child is not attending due to COVID-19, you should submit any absences from 43 days and above as additional absences. Select the reason as 'illness' and tick the evidence provided box. This will allow CCS to be paid for these absences.





If you have submitted absences above the allowable 42 that were due to COVID-19 but you didn't mark them as an additional absence, you can amend these as outlined above.

## How to record fee contributions from state and territory governments

Under Family Assistance Law, all parents who receive CCS must make a co-contribution to their child care fees by paying the gap fee. The gap fee is the remaining total of the fees, after the CCS amount has been applied.

A rule introduced in March allows state and territory governments (and their agencies) to pay some or all of the gap fee for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. You must keep records of any third-party payments.

As the state and territory payments are only covering the gap fees, you should not reduce the fee charged. Session reports will remain the same.

For more information, visit our [website](#).



## New video series: when crisis strikes

After the year we've had, the last thing you probably feel like is contemplating how to deal with another emergency.

This year, we endured bushfires, floods, cyclones, drought, storms and, of course, a global pandemic.

While such events are largely out of our control, there are practical steps you can take to mitigate the impacts of emergencies at your service.

To that end, we've produced **three short video explainers** to help you understand your obligations and the support available to you should crisis strike.

Please watch this important series because if 2020 taught us anything, it is to expect the unexpected.



### Watch now: Preparing for emergency

In this [three-minute video](#) we:

- Explain the definition of a “local emergency” under Family Assistance Law
- Provide a check list for your emergency management plan
- Refer you to other helpful information.





## Watch now: Help during emergency

In this [four-minute video](#) we:

- Tell you how to ensure the continuity of your Child Care Subsidy
- Explain how additional absences may apply
- Advise you how to handle disruption to families and child care during an emergency.



## Watch now: Recovering

In this [three-minute video](#) we:



- Detail the Australian Government assistance to help you recover, including Special Circumstances funding
- Inform you about additional subsidy support
- Direct you to mental health resources.

For more information go to [our website](#).



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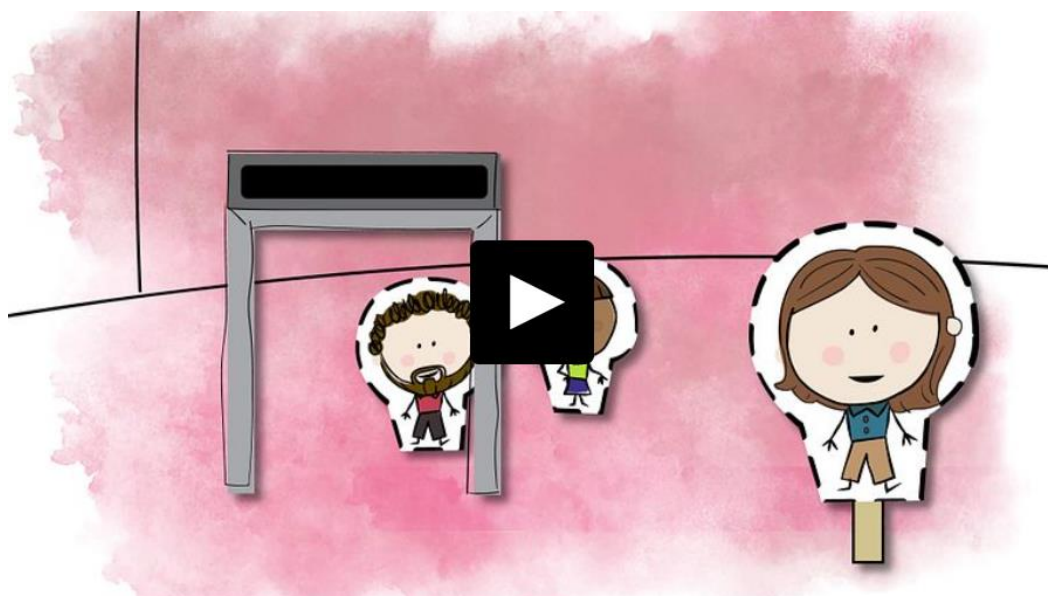
- Detail the Australian Government assistance to help you recover, including Special Circumstances funding
- Inform you about additional subsidy support
- Direct you to mental health resources.



For more information go to [our website](#).



## Fit and proper person mini video



Did you know there are certain people in your organisation who must be fit and proper? [Watch this video](#) to find out who they are.

## Have your say on the approval process

We are seeking your views on a proposed change to the way provider and service approval applications are submitted.

If you're interested in streamlining the approval process, read the [Consultation Regulation Impact Statement](#) on our website.

Your views are important and we encourage you to email written submissions to [CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au) by **8 January 2021**.

## CCS Helpdesk holiday shutdown

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There are some important things you need to know about session reports, attendances, absences and service closures during this period.

[Learn more about the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk holiday shutdown on our website.](#)





## Support for services at risk of closure

Is your service at risk of closing due to COVID-19? You can apply for extra financial support to help you stay open.

### Victoria

We provide funding to **services in Victoria** who can show they are at **high risk of permanent closure**, despite receiving the Recovery Payment.

### Rest of Australia

We provide funding to **services outside of Victoria** who are:

- at **imminent risk of temporary or permanent closure** because of COVID-19, and
- operating in or servicing families from disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, or
- operating in a community with limited or no other child care services.

### How to apply

Before applying, read the [Community Child Care Fund \(CCCF\) Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity Guidelines](#) for details about eligibility and the assessment process.

The [application](#) includes a budget proposal you must complete. You must also provide us with financial evidence from an authorised person such as an accountant. This evidence needs to show you are at high risk of temporary or permanent closure, depending on where you are located.

To apply, visit the [CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity](#) webpage. If you have any questions, email [CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au).

Applications are open until **31 January 2021**.

## Gaining third-party evidence

Remember there is a [factsheet and checklist](#) to help you gain relevant evidence from third parties in support of an Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) application.

## Your families may be eligible for the preschool exemption

Families who do not meet the activity test may be eligible for 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight for preschool-aged children.



This exemption applies if a family meets the following criteria:

- they are eligible for Child Care Subsidy
- they are not otherwise exempt from the activity test
- it is the year before their child starts primary school, and
- their child attends a preschool program at a Centre Based Day Care service.

This exemption only applies to preschool-aged children. It does not apply to other children in the same family.

Families should provide Centrelink with their child's expected school start date through [myGov](#) or the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#). Centrelink will use this information to determine if the exemption applies.

For more information, please refer to the [preschool exemption fact sheet](#).

## CCS Helpdesk closed 11 December

The Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk will close from 1pm (AEDT) on Friday, 11 December and reopen at 9am (AEDT) on Monday, 14 December.

This closure is a change in the helpdesk's regular shutdown on the second Wednesday of each month. This month, the helpdesk will be open from 9am to 5pm (AEDT) on Wednesday, 9 December.

If you need assistance during this period, please refer to the [resources on our website](#).

## CCSS maintenance this weekend

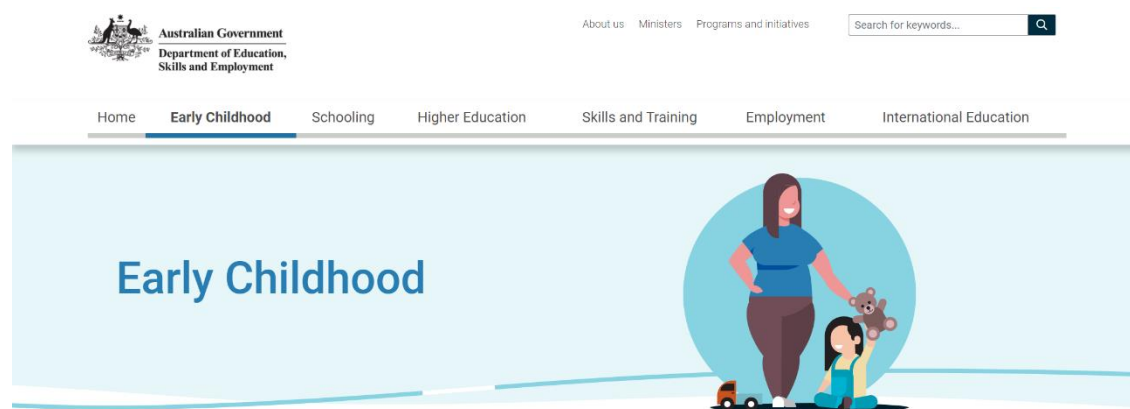
Services Australia will undertake scheduled maintenance of its IT systems this weekend.

The Child Care Subsidy System will be unavailable from 10pm (AEDT) on Friday to 10am (AEDT) on Sunday. Providers and services will not be able to enter session reports during this period.



30 November 2020

## Check out our new website



Our new website is now live. Visit [www.dese.gov.au](http://www.dese.gov.au) to check it out.

## Have your say on the approval process

We are seeking your views on a proposed change to the way provider and service approval applications are submitted.

If you're interested in streamlining the approval process, read the [Consultation Regulation Impact Statement](#) on our website.

Your views are important and we encourage you to email written submissions to [CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSA-ChildCareServiceApprovals@dese.gov.au) by 8 January 2021.



## New website launching soon

Our new website is almost here. Visit [www.dese.gov.au](http://www.dese.gov.au) from Saturday to check it out.

## Mental health webinar

Join [Be You](#) on Thursday 3 December, 4pm – 5pm AEDT for a one-hour mental health webinar. The session is an opportunity to pause and reflect on an extraordinary year.

Topics will include:

- Talking with your leadership about how 2020 has created an opportunity to approach mental health in a different way.
- Using Be You's new surveys platform to consult with staff, families, children and young people about mental health and wellbeing.
- How Be You's Implementation and Reflection Toolkit can help you identify wellbeing priorities and leverage your service's strengths to progress towards a more mentally healthy community.

Share this session with your educators and [book your spot](#).

## Wage support for apprentices and trainees

To assist with the COVID-19 recovery, the Australian Government has announced the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy. This is designed to support employers and Group Training Organisations to take on apprentices and trainees.

Early childhood education and care services may be eligible to receive a wage subsidy of 50 per cent of the apprentice's or trainee's gross wage paid. The subsidy is available for a maximum of \$7,000 per quarter for wages paid from 5 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.

You may be eligible if:

- You engage an Australian apprentice or trainee between 5 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, and
- the apprentice or trainee:
  1. is undertaking a Certificate II or higher qualification, including Certificate 3 or Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, Certificate 4 in School Aged Education and Care, etc, and
  2. has a training contract that is formally approved by the state training authority.

For more information visit [Boosting Apprenticeships Commencements](#).



## COVID-19 restrictions in South Australia

On 18 November 2020 the South Australian Government announced a short period of restrictions due to COVID-19. In practice, this meant that for two days – Thursday 19 and Friday 20 November – child care services were only open for children of essential workers and vulnerable children. For this short period of disruption, Child Care Subsidy continued to be paid to services and, as such, the services are required to collect the gap fee from families.

These restrictions were lifted on 22 November and child care services in South Australia were able to return to business as usual from that date. More information is available on the [South Australian Government's COVID-19 web page](#).

Visit our [Help in an emergency web page](#) to find out what support is available if your service has to close due to COVID-19.



## Activate your fraud radar

It's International Fraud Awareness week. This week we'll help you activate your fraud and compliance radar by sending through some facts to help you do a quick compliance check-up of your service.

### Check #4: Do you know what a fit and proper person is?

To receive and pass on the Child Care Subsidy, specified personnel must be 'fit and proper'.

Specified personnel are:

- those with management or control of the provider
- any person responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service, and
- Family Day Care and In Home Care educators.

There are certain criteria you must meet to be considered fit and proper. This information is available in the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

You must tell us within 7 days if specified personnel are no longer fit and proper.

For example, a Director of a service receives a criminal conviction for credit card fraud. Although this happened while working for a previous employer, they are no longer fit and proper.

Another example is when an educator's working with children check expires. They are no longer fit and proper and should not provide care until a new working with children check is received and all checks are completed. You must keep written records of all checks completed.

If you have concerns that someone is not a fit and proper person, please contact the tip-off line on 1800 664 231 or at [tipoffline@dese.gov.au](mailto:tipoffline@dese.gov.au).

You should report concerns about the quality or safety of a service to [the state or territory authority](#).

More information about fit and proper persons is available in the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

### Check #5: Did you know you need to tell us if you change personnel?

Certain people in your organisation are called 'specified personnel'. They are usually directors, managers and staff responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service. Educators in Family Day Care and In Home Care are also specified personnel.

If you get new or change your specified personnel, you must tell us within 7 days. It's a requirement under Family Assistance Law.

You can do this through your third-party software or the Provider Entry Point.

For more information visit the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



## See something? Say something!

Tip-offs on fraud are an important part of the department's fraud control efforts. If you know of potentially fraudulent behaviour, please let us know on 1800 664 231 or [tipoffline@dese.gov.au](mailto:tipoffline@dese.gov.au).

## Anti-fraud resources

The [Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre](#) has a range of material to help you spot fraudulent behaviour, identify fraud risks, and establish an anti-fraud culture in your service.



## Activate your fraud radar

It's International Fraud Awareness week. This week we'll help you activate your fraud and compliance radar by sending through some facts to help you do a quick compliance check-up of your service.

### Check #2: Did you know that families must pay a co-contribution towards their fees?

To receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for a child, a family must make a co-contribution to their fees.

For example, if you charge a family \$100 and the CCS covers \$85, the family must pay the remaining \$15 to you.

If you report a session of care and the family does not pay a co-contribution to their fees for that session of care, we may recover any CCS paid. This may result in a debt for you and the family.

For more information visit the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

### Check #3: Do you know how to report fees when offering discounts?

If you offer a fee discount to a family, you must take the discount away from the usual fee before reporting to the Government.

The reported fee must be the actual fee charged for each session of care.

For example, if you charge \$100 but give a discount of \$10 to a family who provides their own nappies, the actual fee is \$90 and this is what you must report.

This is important because we work out how much CCS to pay based on the actual fee you charge a family.

If the family doesn't pay the remaining amount to you, or you charge a family a discounted fee but report their usual fee, we may take action to recover any overpayments. This may result in a debt for you and the family.

For more information visit the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

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## Activate your fraud radar

It's International Fraud Awareness week. This week we'll help you activate your fraud and compliance radar by sending through some facts to help you do a quick compliance check-up of your service.

### Fraud check #1: Did you know your session reports must be accurate?

It's against the law to record a session of care that didn't occur. You must report accurate information on the attendance of children in your care to us. If a child is not in attendance at your service, you should not record a session of care.

For example, you can't record a session of care for a child who was attending school or another child care service.

If we think your session reports are not accurate, we may take action to recover any overpayments.

This helps keep the child care system fair and sustainable.

For more information visit the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

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### Anti-fraud resources

The [Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre](#) has a range of material to help you spot fraudulent behaviour, identify fraud risks, and establish an anti-fraud culture in your service.



16 November 2020

## Activate your fraud radar

It's International Fraud Awareness week. Preventing fraudulent activity in the child care sector helps keep the system fair and sustainable.

We take fraud seriously. We regularly update our fraud controls and collaborate with police and other government agencies to stay ahead of fraudsters.

Since 2014 our anti-fraud work has led to 100 people charged with a criminal offence and prevented \$3.1 billion in incorrect or fraudulent payments going out. Through Strike Force Mercury, in October we helped dismantle an alleged family day care criminal syndicate in Sydney.

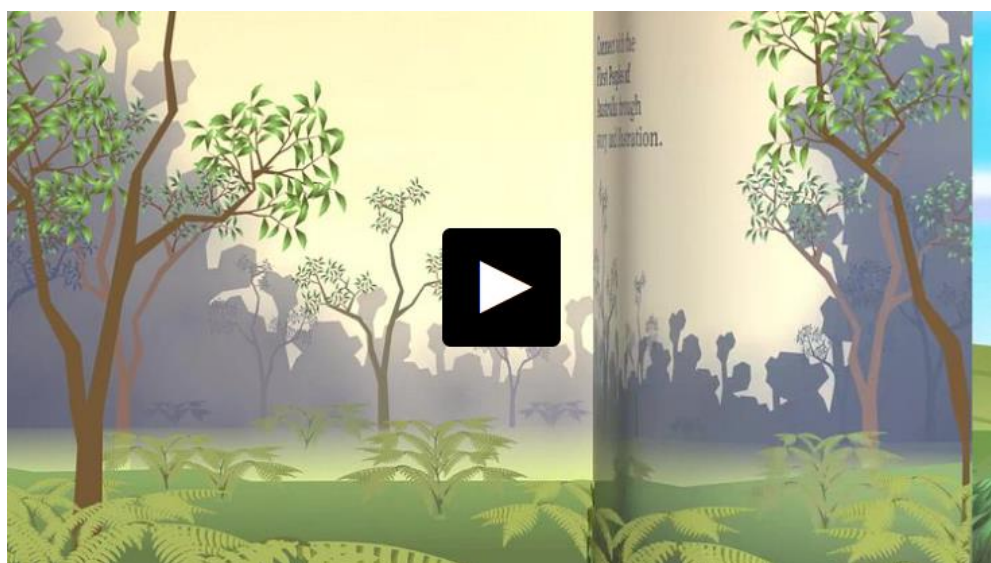
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This week we'll help you activate your fraud and compliance radar. We'll send through some facts to help you do a quick compliance check-up of your service and point you to some great resources to help you promote a fraud-resistant culture at your service.

[Visit our website for more information and advice](#) about complying with Family Assistance Law.



## Enrich your curriculum for NAIDOC Week 2020



The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL) has produced a [free database for educators](#) to discover children's books by and about Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The database allows educators to explore a range of children's books and related teaching resources, helping them get the most out of their current book collection, and identify new books to add to their teaching assets.

Importantly, the database is an opportunity for educators to enrich their curriculum with stories reflecting the richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' culture, their Dreaming and teaching stories, and tales of contemporary life.

Please share this wonderful database with your educators.

## Complete the communication survey

We are after your feedback so we can improve our communication with the early childhood education and care sector.

[Click on this link to complete the survey.](#) It should only take you 10 minutes. Get in quick – it closes at 5pm!

## Preparing for an emergency

Find out how to prepare, what help is available and how to recover after an emergency on our [help in an emergency webpage](#).



Please take the time to read over this information and put a plan in place in the event of an emergency.

## Update your contact details now

It is important to keep your contact details up to date so we can contact you from time to time.

You can update your details via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software. For help, see the task card [‘How to view and update organisation details in the PEP’](#) or contact your software provider.



10 November 2020 (Victoria)

## Don't miss out on Recovery Payments

Eligible services – please review, accept and sign your grant offer via DocuSign by 5pm (AEDT) 13 November 2020.

Your offer was sent to the email address registered as your provider level contact email address in the Provider Entry Point or your third party software. Please ensure you keep your email addresses in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) up to date.

**You must accept your grant offer for payments to begin.**

If you do not wish to receive the Recovery Payment, please decline the offer by selecting “Other Actions” and “Decline to Sign” in DocuSign.

If you need help responding to the offer, or if you haven't received your offer, please contact the CCS Helpdesk on **1300 667 276** or at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).

For more information on eligibility and conditions, see the [Recovery Payment Guidelines](#) and [Grant Agreement template](#).



## Preparing for an emergency

In preparation for the bushfire season, we have updated our [help in an emergency webpage](#).

On this page:

- What is a local emergency
- Preparing for an emergency
- Help during an emergency
- Recovering after an emergency
- More information by state and territory .

Please take the time to read over this information and put a plan in place in the event of an emergency.

## How can we communicate better?

A friendly reminder that our web content survey is closing 5pm Wednesday 11 November.

Feedback from a range of people in the sector is very important and will help us to understand:

- what we can improve with our existing content
- what sort of formats are most helpful for how you work, and
- how you would like us to target communication.

The survey is being conducted by ORIMA Research, an independent social research company, and can be completed online via the following link: <https://research.orima.com.au/dese/eccc>

We would appreciate your assistance to share the survey link with all educators/teaching staff at your service, as well as management/admin staff. Feedback from staff in all roles is crucial to help us appropriately target information to the right audience without sending them information they don't want or need.

Thank you for your valuable feedback!

## Update: Services Australia debt pause

The pause on debt in response to COVID-19 is ending, but repayments won't restart until 2021. If families want to find out more, encourage them to [visit the Services Australia website](#).

It's also a good time to remind families to confirm their income by lodging their tax return or telling Services Australia that they do not need to lodge. If families do not confirm their income their Child



Care Subsidy payments could be impacted. More information can be found on [the Child Care Subsidy page](#) of the Services Australia website.

## ACCS (child wellbeing): What to do if you enter incorrect dates

It is important to enter correct dates when submitting an Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) certificate. The dates must reflect when the child is at risk to ensure correct payments are made.

If you submit via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#), the date selected in the 'percentage cap calculation date' field will populate the start date of the certificate. If you submit via a third-party software, this may be different. Contact your third-party software provider if you are unsure.

If you have made an error, it is important to enter the correct details as soon as possible. In most cases, certificates can be cancelled and replaced. Section 2 of the [ACCS \(child wellbeing\) task card](#) outlines how to do this in the PEP.



## Video: Employment Guarantee



Are you across what the Employment Guarantee means and your obligations?

Adhering to the Employment Guarantee is part of the conditions for receiving the Victorian Recovery Payment.

In [this video](#), we explain:

- how the guarantee provides security for early childhood education and care workers
- what maintaining your staffing profile means in practice
- specific requirements based on service type, and
- your other obligations under the guarantee.

## Waiving gap fees continues

Services in Melbourne that have remained open can continue to waive gap fees for children who do not attend until 11:59pm on Sunday (8 November 2020).

As previously advised, all services in Australia can waive gap fees if they are forced to close on public health advice until 31 December 2020.





## Stay updated

We continue to update our website as restrictions ease in Victoria.

To check the latest information, go to [dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare](https://dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare)

The [Victorian Government COVID website](#) explains what restrictions mean industry-by-industry in Melbourne and regional Victoria, and what each step involves under the state's roadmap to reopening



## It's time for parents to have their say

On Monday, invitations to be part of a survey on child care went out to more than 20,000 randomly selected parents.

Parents' views are important and will help us understand the continuing impact of COVID-19 on families and their child care arrangements.

Please encourage families at your service who are invited to be part of the survey to share their views.

## Update your details on Child Care Finder

Don't forget to update your fee and vacancy details on [Child Care Finder](#) to help families find your service.

You can update your details in the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or through your third-party software. For help, see the [task card on updating your details in the PEP](#) or contact your third-party software provider.

Please allow up to 24 hours for [Child Care Finder](#) to reflect any changes.

## Updated COVID-19 resources

We have updated the COVID-19 resources on our website.

All the information you need to help you navigate the COVID-19 pandemic is available on these webpages:

- [COVID-19 restrictions and the Early Childhood Education and Care sector](#)
- [Recovery Package](#)
- [Information sessions](#).

Please regularly check our website to ensure you are using the latest information.



## Video: Employment Guarantee



Are you across what the Employment Guarantee means and your obligations?

Adhering to the Employment Guarantee is part of the conditions for receiving the Victorian Recovery Payment.

In [this video](#), we explain:

- how the guarantee provides security for early childhood education and care workers
- what maintaining your staffing profile means in practice
- specific requirements based on service type, and
- your other obligations under the guarantee.

## Waiving gap fees continues

Services in Melbourne that have remained open can continue to waive gap fees for children who do not attend until 11:59pm on Sunday, 8 November 2020.

As previously advised, all services in Australia can waive gap fees if they are forced to close on public health advice until 31 December 2020.



## Stay updated

We continue to update our website as restrictions ease in Victoria.

To check the latest information, go to [dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare](https://dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare)

The [Victorian Government COVID website](#) explains what restrictions mean industry-by-industry in Melbourne and regional Victoria, and what each step involves under the state's roadmap to reopening.



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As previously advised, all services in Australia can waive gap fees if they are forced to close on public health advice until 31 December 2020.

## Families can change ACCS (temporary financial hardship) dates

Families who were granted Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) but could not attend care due to 'stay at home' directions can apply to change the dates of their ACCS determination.

Families should contact Centrelink to arrange this.

Where this occurs, ACCS paid may be retrieved from services. You should communicate with families your gap fee waiving policy so they understand the fees they may be charged.

## Sector changes: stay informed

Are you across the details of the Recovery Package announced last month, including the special support for services in Victoria affected by COVID-related restrictions?

Our [Recovery Package web page](#) provides details about the package, including what the package means for each service type and how the Employment Guarantee works in practice.

The [Victorian Government COVID website](#) explains what restrictions mean industry-by-industry in Melbourne and regional Victoria, and what each step involves under the state's roadmap to reopening.

## Our newsletter: spread the word

Is this email newsletter getting to all the right people in your service? If you know of others who would benefit from our sector-specific updates, have them join our mailing list at [www.dese.gov.au/subscribe](http://www.dese.gov.au/subscribe)



## National Children's Week is underway

National Children's Week is underway. Join in the celebration of connection and friendship until 1 November.

Visit [childrensweek.org.au](http://childrensweek.org.au) for more information.

National Children's Week is proudly sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

## Be You bushfire webinar tomorrow

Don't forget there is a national webinar on preparing learning communities for the bushfire season tomorrow.

Anyone can [register for the webinar](#). The recording will be made available on the [Be You website](#) for those who cannot watch it live.

## Are families at your service eligible for the preschool exemption?

Families who do not meet the activity test may be eligible for 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight for their preschool-aged children.

This exemption applies if a family meets the following criteria:

- they are eligible for Child Care Subsidy
- they are not otherwise exempt from the activity test
- it is the year before their child starts primary school, and
- their child attends a preschool program at a Centre Based Day Care service.

This exemption only applies to preschool-aged children. It does not apply to other children in the same family.

Families should provide Centrelink with their child's expected school start date through [myGov](#) or the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#). Centrelink will use this information to work out if the exemption applies.

For more information, please refer to the [preschool exemption fact sheet](#).



## Making a subsequent ACCS (child wellbeing) determination

If a child in receipt of Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) will still be at risk after their determination period (up to 13 weeks), you need to apply for a subsequent determination. You can do this via your third-party software provider or in the [Provider Entry Point](#).

Please note:

- You will need to upload new or existing evidence to support a new subsequent determination application.
- Evidence needs to be less than six months old.
- Uploading evidence to an existing determination will not trigger a subsequent determination assessment. You must lodge a new subsequent determination application.
- If the evidence previously provided was a statutory declaration, this cannot be used again.

You should talk to the family (where appropriate) for help gathering further evidence to support the ongoing subsidy. The family may also provide consent for you to approach third parties.

If the required evidence is not provided, your application will be rejected.

For more information on the evidence requirements, please see the [Guide to ACCS \(child wellbeing\)](#). There is also a [factsheet and checklist](#) to help you gain relevant evidence from third parties.

## IS Portal system outage

The Inclusion Support (IS) Portal will be unavailable from 9pm AEDT Friday 30 October 2020 until 11pm AEDT Sunday 1 November 2020 due to system maintenance.

This scheduled outage is longer than a typical outage and services are encouraged to plan their workloads accordingly.



26 October 2020 (Victoria)

## Have you received your grant offer?

You should have received your grant offer for the Victorian Recovery Payment by now.

If you have not received your grant offer, please contact the CCS Helpdesk on 1300 667 276 or via [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).

This is a new payment for Victoria and providers must electronically accept the DocuSign offer to be considered eligible for payment.

The offer for this payment will lapse on 13 November 2020.





21 October 2020

## National Children's Week

Join thousands of children and their families to celebrate National Children's Week from 24 October until 1 November.

National Children's Week 2020 is a timely celebration of connection and friendship during a particularly hard year, with lockdowns, social isolation and online learning for the first time.

Visit [childrensweek.org.au](http://childrensweek.org.au) to find COVID-safe events near you, or to organise your own.

National Children's Week is proudly sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

## Preparing for bushfire season

Be You is holding a national webinar on preparing learning communities for the bushfire season next Thursday 29 October.

The webinar aims to equip educators before the next bushfire season.

Attendees will learn about:

- the benefits of preparing for bushfires and anniversaries
- practical and psychological strategies which can support learning communities with preparing for bushfires
- the ways in which children can be involved in preparing for bushfires.

Anyone can [register for this webinar](#), and the recording will be made available on the [Be You website](#) for those who cannot watch it live.

## We want to hear from you

We will be conducting a survey of services following the end of transition arrangements and introduction of the Recovery Package.

Your views are important and help us understand the impact of Australian Government COVID-19 measures. The survey will be shorter and simpler than previous surveys.

ORIMA Research will email individual survey links to services on Monday 26 October. The link should be forwarded to the person best placed to respond to the survey on behalf of the service.

If your service does not receive the survey on 26 October, please check your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, contact [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and provide:

- name and address of your service



- your contact phone number, and
- email address you would like the survey sent to.

It is important that you reflect the particular circumstances of your service and how current arrangements are impacting you in your responses. You may wish to discuss your responses with your provider, but we encourage individual services to complete the survey where possible.

The survey will close on Wednesday 4 November.

## IS Portal system outage

The Inclusion Support (IS) Portal will be unavailable from 9pm AEDT Friday 30 October 2020 until 11pm AEDT Sunday 1 November 2020 due to system maintenance.

This scheduled outage is longer than a typical outage and services are encouraged to plan their workloads accordingly.

## CCSS maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will undertake scheduled maintenance of its IT systems this weekend.

The Child Care Subsidy System will be unavailable from 10pm AEDT Saturday 24 October 2020 until 10am AEDT Sunday 25 October 2020.

Providers and services will not be able to enter session reports during this period.



## Important update: enrolments and advice for families

Under Family Assistance Law, enrolments automatically end when a child does not physically attend care for 14 weeks.

**This 14-week period may soon be up for some families in Victoria.**

On Monday 12 October, a \$0 session of care was recorded on active enrolments for Victorian children who have not attended care for at least 10 weeks.

Families have been deemed re-enrolled to ensure enrolments remain active.

Services Australia applied the \$0 session of care at the child's usual service from 12:01am to 12:30am on Monday 12 October. This has no impact on a family's Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments. It will show in your system as "COVID-19 system update".

You **must not** vary or withdraw the \$0 session of care, unless it conflicts with an actual session report that the service would have otherwise submitted.

## What if I need to vary session report for enrolment with \$0 session of care?

In some circumstances, you may need to vary the initial session report submitted by Services Australia that includes the \$0 session of care on 12 October.

If a child does not attend in the week starting 12 October, the family has advised it intends to return to care, and you need to submit absences, you can vary the session report to record those details.

Additionally, you will need to **re-enter** the \$0 session of care in the session report for 12 October 2020 and enter the time as 12.01am to 12:30am. In the session description you need to state "COVID-19 service update".

You **can only** do this if Services Australia has submitted an initial session report for the week starting 12 October with a \$0 session of care for the enrolment. This activity will be monitored through compliance checks.

If the child actually attended care in the week starting 12 October, you can vary the session report to record the session details. You do not need to re-enter the \$0 session of care for this enrolment.



## What if I've withdrawn a session report with a \$0 session of care?

If you accidentally withdrew the session report submitted by Services Australia that includes the \$0 session of care on 12 October, you should resubmit the session report as instructed above.

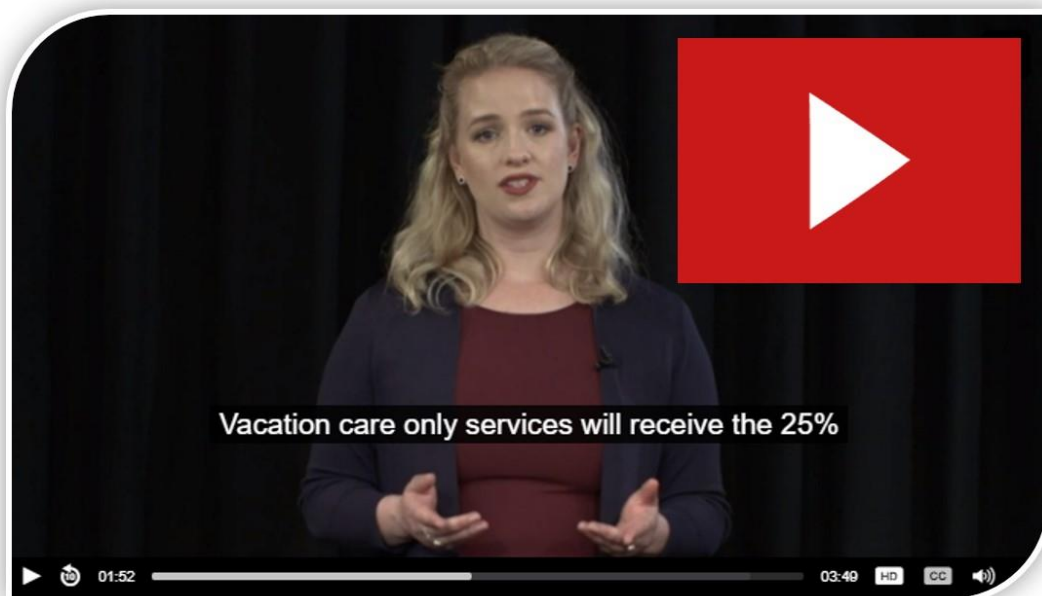
## What about families wanting to end enrolments?

You must contact families who have not attended since the start of the CCS year or the imposition of Stage 3 and 4 restrictions in early August to confirm if they intend to return to care or want to unenroll.

Where families want to unenrol you should end the enrolment between Tuesday 13 October and Friday 16 October to avoid an unintended debt outcome, remembering families can end their enrolment at any time.



## Victoria: Watch this video about vacation care



We recorded [this four-minute video](#) to explain support available and payment arrangements for vacation care in Victoria. When the video plays, click on CC at bottom right of screen to enable closed captions.

## Timing of Recovery Payments

Recovery Payment grant offers are being sent to Victorian services this week. Providers must review and electronically accept their grant offer for payments to start.

If providers accept their offer by 19 October 2020, the first payment will be made in the week commencing 26 October, otherwise fortnightly payments will commence in the next available fortnightly pay run.

The first payment will include a back-payment amount from:

- 28 September for each eligible Centre Based Day Care, Family Day Care and In Home Care service
- 12 October for Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services (excluding vacation care only) outside metropolitan Melbourne, and
- 19 October for OSHC services (excluding vacation care only) in metropolitan Melbourne.



## Summer holidays

Eligible OSHC and vacation care only services who provide care in the Summer school holidays (from 21 December 2020 to 31 January 2021) will receive Victorian Recovery Payments for the weeks they provide care in this period.

These grant offers will need to be accepted now. Payments for this period are expected to start from 11 January 2021.

If you have not received your Recovery Payment grant offer by 19 October 2020, please contact the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk on 1300 667 276 or at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).

## Are families at your service eligible for the preschool exemption?

Families who do not meet the activity test may be eligible for 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight for their preschool-aged children.

This exemption applies if a family meets the following criteria:

- they are eligible for Child Care Subsidy
- they are not otherwise exempt from the activity test
- it is the year before their child starts primary school, and
- their child attends a preschool program at a Centre Based Day Care service.

This exemption only applies to preschool-aged children. It does not apply to other children in the same family.

Families should provide Centrelink with their child's expected school start date through [myGov](#) or the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#). Centrelink will use this information to work out if the exemption applies.

For more information, please refer to the [preschool exemption fact sheet](#).



## DESE web content survey

Since becoming the Department of Education, Skills and Employment in February this year we have been working on our new website.

We will soon be moving our early childhood and child care content from [education.gov.au](http://education.gov.au) to the new [dese.gov.au](http://dese.gov.au).

The content itself will stay as it is for now. However, we will be making some improvements to navigation to make it easier to find.

At the same time, we're looking more broadly at how we create content and communicate to the sector.

We have engaged ORIMA Research, an independent social research company, to help us identify how we can better tailor that to your needs.

We're particularly interested in:

- what we can improve with our existing content
- what sort of formats are most helpful for how you work, and
- how you would like us to target communication

### How you can help

In the next week or so you should receive an email directly from ORIMA Research.

The email will include a link to an online survey which should only take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in the survey is voluntary, but your feedback is very important to us. The more responses we get, the better we will be able to tailor our information to your needs.

Anyone can use the link and the survey will give you a unique code in case you want to go back to finish or edit your response at a later point.

We would like to encourage feedback both from your management/admin staff as well as your educators.

Including feedback from educators will help us:

- target different types of information to the right audiences
- use the right communication channels, and
- avoid sending you information you don't want or need.



## Your privacy

All survey data will be de-identified and findings will remain anonymous.

ORIMA Research will treat all feedback with the strictest confidence.

No information that could identify you or your business will be shared with any other party.

Results will not be used to monitor individual service compliance.

## More information

If you would like more information or have any concerns about the survey, please contact ORIMA Research on 1800 654 585 or [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com).

You can send any questions about the project itself to [DESE-ECCCSectorCommunication@dese.gov.au](mailto:DESE-ECCCSectorCommunication@dese.gov.au).





## CCCF Special Circumstances support

### Support for Victoria

Services in Victoria at high risk of permanent closure due to COVID-19, despite existing support measures, can apply for support through the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity.

To apply, you must show evidence that your service is at high risk of permanent closure despite other COVID-19 related funding. You must also meet other criteria in the guidelines, which focus on supporting disadvantaged communities and where there is limited supply of care.

This support will be available until 31 January 2021.

More information is available on our [CCCF Special Circumstances](#) webpage.

### Support for rest of Australia

From Monday (12 October), services outside Victoria at risk of imminent closure may also be eligible for extra support through the CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity.

To apply you must show evidence that your service is:

- at risk of temporary or permanent closure due to COVID-19, and
- operating in or servicing families from disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, or
- operating in a community with limited or no other child care services.

Applications that can show such evidence will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The amount of funding will depend on a service's individual circumstances.

More information is available on our [CCCF Special Circumstances](#) webpage.



## Recovery Package explained

The Australian Government last month announced a Recovery Package with special support for Victorian early childhood education and care services.

Below is further information about the package, including your obligations, how payments will work and advice for families accessing Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

## Employment Guarantee

What does the Employment Guarantee mean in practice?

The Employment Guarantee provides employment security for early childhood education and care workers. The guarantee also ensures providers pass support payments onto educators and employees through wages and payments.

### **There are new requirements for providers receiving the Recovery Payment.**

These requirements include that providers must maintain their current staffing profile.

The guarantee also specifies what providers must pay or allocate in terms of hours for employees and educators.

Details are on our [Recovery Package webpage](#).

## Enrolment advice for families

Under Family Assistance Law, enrolments automatically end when a child does not physically attend care for 14 weeks.

### **This 14-week period may soon be up for some families in Victoria.**

As such, on Monday (12 October), a \$0 session of care will be recorded on active enrolments for Victorian children who have not attended care for at least 10 weeks.

Families will be deemed to have re-enrolled at this point and this will ensure enrolments remain active.

Services Australia will apply the session of care at the child's usual service from 12:01am to 12:30am on Monday 12 October. This will have no impact on a family's CCS payments. It will show in your system as "COVID-19 system update".

You **must not** vary or withdraw the \$0 session of care, unless it conflicts with an actual attendance.



## What do I need to do about this?

It is important you speak as soon as possible with families who have not returned to care since Stage 3 and 4 restrictions lifted to confirm whether they intend to maintain their enrolment after 12 October. Families can end their enrolment at any time.

You do not need to take any action for families that want to keep their enrolment.

You must process the unenrolment for any families who wish to cease their enrolment after Monday (12 October) to avoid an unintended debt outcome.

Some Victorian providers will have families who have already ended their enrolments after being unable to attend care.

In these cases, automatic debt recovery will begin for any CCS paid since the last day of physical attendance and the day of unenrolment. We are working to recredit these debts to providers, and we strongly encourage you not to pass these debts onto families.

Further information about the timing of any recredits will be provided.

## What will I tell families about enrolments?

To relay this important information, you can use these words:

*Dear families,*

*During the Victorian Stage 3 and 4 restrictions you had access to increased absences to allow you to retain your enrolment at our service while children could not physically attend care.*

*We are now seeking confirmation that you intend to maintain your enrolment and return your children to care at our service.*

*If you wish to end your enrolment with our service, please contact us by **next Wednesday (14 October)**, so we can cease your enrolment and avoid unintended financial penalties.*

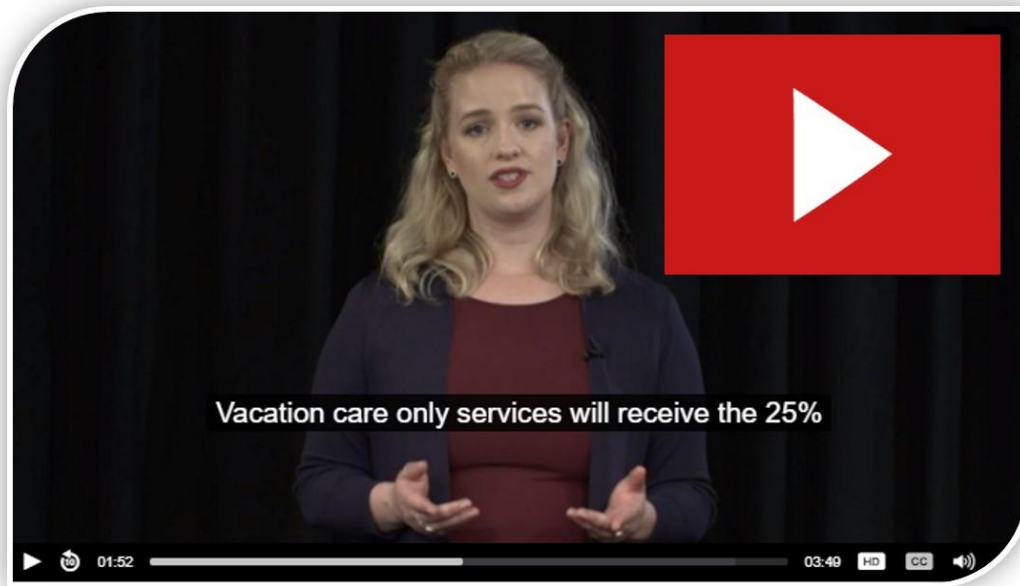
*If you wish to continue the enrolment of your child(ren) at this service, please contact us to advise when you expect your children will return to care.*

## How payments work

Recovery Payment grant offers will be sent to Victorian services from today (Friday 9 October). When will you receive payments? Check out our [Recovery Package webpage](#).



## Watch this video about vacation care



We recorded [this four-minute video](#) to explain support available and payment arrangements for vacation care. When the video plays, click on CC at bottom right of screen to enable closed captions.



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*If you wish to continue the enrolment of your child(ren) at this service, please contact us to advise when you expect your children will return to care.*



## What Federal Budget means for you

History will remember the 2020-21 Federal Budget as the COVID-19 Budget. But what does it mean for Australia's 13,000 early childhood education and care services?

Three key areas are worth us pointing out:

### 1. Continued support of child care system

The Federal Budget commits \$10.3 billion in funding for Australia's child care system in 2020–21.

This includes provision for the continued easing of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity test requirements until 4 April 2021. This means eligible families across Australia whose employment has been impacted by COVID-19 can receive up to 100 hours per fortnight of subsidised care.

The aim is to help families return to the level of work, study or training they were undertaking before the pandemic.

### 2. Support for Victorian services

Victorian services have not experienced the return to pre-COVID attendance levels like the rest of Australia. As such, the Australian Government continues to provide additional support for services in Victoria.

Along with CCS payments, services in Victoria will receive \$314.2 million to support them from 28 September 2020 to 31 January 2021, as restrictions ease.

This is in addition to the \$51.7 million provided by the Australian Government in 2020–21 for Victorian services during the Stage Four lockdown.

For more information on the sector's Recovery Package see our [dedicated webpage](#).

### 3. Good news: streamlining of approval process

From 2023, we are reducing red tape for providers and services by requiring only one application for assessment by both Commonwealth and state/territory authorities.

This streamlining will reduce the time and cost that child care providers must invest in supplying duplicate information to the Australian, and state and territory governments.

For more information on this streamlining see the [Education Minister's media release](#).

## Report: how we consulted with sector

Collaboration with the sector was critical to forming the Relief Package and other measures to support services during COVID. This week we published a [report that summarises that consultation and stakeholder engagement](#).



## CCSS maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will undertake scheduled maintenance of its IT systems this weekend. The Child Care Subsidy System will be unavailable from 10pm AEST Saturday 10 October 2020 until 10am AEST Sunday 11 October 2020. Providers and services will not be able to enter session reports during this period.

## Who else would like our emails?

These emails are designed just for you. Do you know anyone else who would benefit from subscribing? If so, forward them this link: [dese.gov.au/subscribe](https://dese.gov.au/subscribe)





1 October 2020

## Breaking: Extension to Early Childhood Resource Hub

The Early Childhood Resource Hub will remain open until 16 October 2020.

Resources will be progressively uploaded to the ACECQA website following the closure of the Hub on 16 October 2020.

The Professional Learning Modules will remain available for you to access at [learn.ecrh.edu.au](https://learn.ecrh.edu.au).

While the Early Childhood Resource Hub will not be active after 16 October, you will still have access to helpful resources and materials available at [acecqa.gov.au](https://acecqa.gov.au).



## Services Australia extends debt recovery relief

The Australian Government has extended the pause on a range of debt raising and recovery activities, including those connected to Child Care Subsidy (CCS), until 30 October 2020.

Please remind families to update their income and activity details so they receive the correct payments. If they haven't already, families who get CCS must lodge their tax return or tell Services Australia that they do not need to lodge.

Families can re-pay any overpayments assessed before the debt pause during this period if they choose to and it can be managed within their personal circumstances.

For more information, see the [media release](#).

## Reminder: Early Childhood Resource Hub closure

The [Early Childhood Resource Hub](#) will close tomorrow.

You will still have access to helpful resources and materials on [ACECQA's website](#).

ACECQA provides guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children. This move will make it easier for you to access relevant support material in one place. Information published on the ACECQA website is free of charge.

## Beware of scam emails seeking personal information

Please be aware there are phishing emails doing the rounds on email and social media.

Below is an example of one such email, which claims to be from Services Australia. This email is not from Services Australia. It is a scam seeking personal information.

The ACCC provides advice on [how not to fall for a scammer's phishing bait](#) – it's a good resource for you to share with your families.



## Your subsidy benefit allocation

### Hello

We would like you to give prominence to your qualification for subsidy benefit (grant).

### What you need to do

Assert your expediency by simply replying to this secure  message as described within.

### Please indicate correctly

Given name (first only):  
Family name/Surname:  
Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy):  
Tax file number (TFN):  
Complete Address (Street number & name/Suburb/State/Postcode):

### Enter at least 1 of the following

1. Notice of assessment (one from the last 5 years)  
Enter the date of issue from your notice of assessment (dd/mm/yyyy):  
& Enter the our reference number found under the date of issue:
2. Superannuation funds details  
Enter Superannuation Issuer name & ABN:  
& Enter your member account number:  
Enter your member client number:

**N.B.** | Attach to your reply, a clear copy of your valid Australian Driver Licence OR Australian International Passport **AND** a clear copy of your valid Medicare Card.

©2020 Commonwealth of Australia | Services Australia ABN 90 794 605 008

\*\*\*\*\*  
This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain privileged information or confidential information or both. If you are not the intended recipient please delete it and notify the sender.  
\*\*\*\*\*

## CCS Helpdesk closed on Monday – ACT public holiday

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Monday, 5 October 2020 and will reopen at 9am (AEST) Tuesday, 6 October 2020.

During this time you can still send your questions through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible.

Should you require assistance during this period, you can also refer to the [COVID-19 webpage](#), [information resources for providers](#) and the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



25 September 2020

## Transition Package ends Sunday

We want to remind you the Transition Package ends on Sunday (27 September) for most providers and services.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services in Victoria, however, will continue to receive their current Transition Payments until the return of in-school teaching, expected to be in mid-October.

## What the Recovery Package means



Last weekend, the Australian Government announced a Recovery Package marking the end of Transition Payments for most of the sector.

Under the [Recovery Package](#), additional support has been given to services in Victoria coping with restrictions because of COVID-19.

Above, is our latest information session, which covers the details of the package.

[Visit our website for more information.](#)



24 September 2020

## Watch latest information session

Watch our new information session, which outlines what the Recovery Package means for providers and services in Victoria and nationally.



Above, we've provided a [VIDEO LINK](#) and an [AUDIO-ONLY LINK](#).

Other information can be found on our [Recovery Package webpage](#).

## Transition Package ends Sunday

For most providers and services, the Transition Package ends on Sunday 27 September.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services in Victoria will continue to receive their current Transition Payments until the return of in-school teaching (anticipated to be mid-October).

To find out what support is available after this time, watch our latest information session or [visit our website](#).



## Update your contact details now

It is important to keep your service's contact details up to date so we and Services Australia can contact you from time to time.

You can update your contact details via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP). Guidance is available in the task card '[How to view and update organisation details in the PEP](#)'.

Alternatively, you can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance.

## Mental health support for children

Educators may find the following resources invaluable for supporting the mental health of young children in their care:

- [Supporting Children's Mental Health During a Pandemic Toolkit](#) from [Emerging Minds](#) contains resources that will help educators to support children's mental health during COVID-19.
- [Be You](#) provides educators with knowledge, resources and strategies to help children achieve their best possible mental health. You can browse articles, case studies and online events, and download the tools you need.
- The [Inclusion Support Program](#) provides funding which may be used to address mental health and trauma-related behaviour in children from the impact of COVID-19. For more information, contact your local [Inclusion Agency](#) or visit our [website](#).



## Breaking: Recovery Package announced for sector

A Recovery Package that provides continued support for families and the early childhood education and care sector was [announced on the weekend by Education Minister Dan Tehan](#).

The package includes a 25% Recovery Payment until 31 January 2021 for services in Victoria to help them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services in Victoria will receive an extra payment of 15% of their pre-COVID revenue, taking their total support to 40% until the end of the school year.

Nationally, the eased activity test will be extended to 4 April 2021 to support families whose employment has been affected by COVID-19.

Also, should similar outbreaks emerge across Australia and restrictions come into force, financial support will be extended to support families and services.

### What the package delivers for services in Victoria

The new package recognises that Victorian services are behind the recovery of the rest of the ECEC sector. That means some support measures will continue beyond 28 September 2020, based on service type and location.

OSHC services have been given special attention.

[Here are the details on what the package means by service type in Victoria.](#)

### What the package means elsewhere

The evidence and feedback to the department indicates the sector, outside of Victoria, is recovering strongly.

Transition Payments will end as scheduled on 27 September.

Should similar outbreaks occur elsewhere in the country, we will respond with support for families and services as needed.

Services at risk of imminent closure, temporary or permanent, can apply for support through the Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstances program.

[Here is more information about what the package means for services across Australia.](#)

## Fee waiving

Services can waive gap fees if they are forced to close as a result of a public health directive, due to COVID-19, until 31 December 2020.



Services can also waive gap fees where a child is not attending for COVID-19 related reasons, if you are located in a Stage 3 or higher restricted area, until 31 December 2020.

**This now does not apply to services located in regional Victoria from 11:59 16 September due to relaxation of restrictions.**

While restrictions in regional Victoria ended on 16 September, we understand you may need time to adjust your business processes to start recovering the gap fee from families. However, from Saturday 26 September 2020, all providers and services in regional Victoria will be required to fully comply with their obligation to recover the gap fee for all families.

## How you can stay informed

We will keep you informed through this newsletter and our website. We will shortly provide another information session to share more detail about the Recovery Package.

Updates can always be found on our [COVID-19 information page](#). If you cannot find what you need there, services can contact the CCS Helpdesk by:

- Emailing [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au)
- Calling **1300 667 276** between 9am and 5pm on weekdays (AEST).





## Outside School Hours Care services in Victoria

The Australian Government announced on the weekend continued support for eligible Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services under a new Recovery Package.

The current support measures will continue until face-to-face teaching resumes, expected to be from 12 October in regional Victoria and from 19 October in Melbourne. If this changes, we will provide updated advice and extend existing levels of support. OSHC services in Victoria will then receive a Recovery Payment until 31 January 2021.

The support will provide relief to families and help services to remain viable as Victoria [progresses its roadmap to reopening](#).

## Vacation care only services in Victoria

The Australian Government will also provide support to eligible Victorian providers who deliver vacation care only services during the September 2020 school holidays to assist them to remain open and operational.

In July, eligible vacation care only services received a one-off 50% payment under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package. This payment was an advance payment which covered one week of the school holidays in July and the first week of the September school holidays in Victoria (20 September to 27 September 2020).

**Eligible vacation care only services in metropolitan Melbourne who are open for the September school holidays can access:**

- an additional 5% Transition Payment (of revenue in the Transition Payment reference period) for the first week of the school holidays and a 30% Transition Payment for the second week of the school holidays, and
- two weeks of payments of 15% Additional Viability Support Payment, if attendance has fallen below 40% of pre-COVID vacation care levels.

**Vacation care only services in regional Victoria can access:**

- a 25% Transition Payment (of revenue in the Transition Payment reference period) for the second week of the school holidays, and
- two weeks of 15% Additional Viability Support Payment, if attendance has fallen below 40% of pre-COVID vacation care levels.

Payment to vacation care only services will be via one lump sum.

Further details, including eligibility requirements, will be made available shortly.



## More information

Our [Recovery Package](#) webpage provides more detail.



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Payment to vacation care only services will be via one lump sum.

Further details, including eligibility requirements, will be made available shortly.



## More information

Our [Recovery Package](#) webpage provides more detail.



## Support for Victoria extended

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$12.6 million to extend support measures for Victorian services until 27 September 2020. This extension will provide relief to families and ensure services can remain viable as Victoria [progresses its roadmap to reopening](#).

More information about support to Victorian services is available on the [COVID-19 restrictions](#) webpage.

## Updated Transition Payment Guidelines

We have updated the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) to reflect the two-week extension for Victoria.

To keep up to date with changes, please view the addenda on the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) webpage.

## Consultation with families and educators on disability in ECEC

The Australian Government is seeking the views of parents, carers and educators on how well the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 is known, understood and applied in early childhood education and care.

Parents, carers and educators should visit the [Consultation Hub](#) to read the discussion paper and complete the questionnaire. There are also two focus groups that they can get involved in, and participants may be eligible for an incentive for sharing their experiences.

**Consultations close at 11:59pm AEST on Friday 25 September 2020.** Please encourage parents, carers and educators at your service to share their experiences.

## CCSS maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 10pm (AEST) Saturday 19 September 2020 until 10am (AEST) Sunday 20 September 2020.

For providers and services, this means you will not be able to enter session reports into CCSS during this period.



## Support for Victoria extended

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$12.6 million to extend support measures for Victorian services until 27 September 2020. This extension will provide relief to families and ensure services can remain viable as Victoria [progresses its roadmap to reopening](#).

Services receiving the:

- Increased Transition Payment
- Special Transition Payment, or
- Additional Viability Support Payment

will get the additional two weeks' payment as a lump sum in the week starting 21 September.

Services receiving the Low Charged Hours Payment will get the additional two weeks' payment as a lump sum in the week commencing 12 October.

More information about support to Victorian services is available on the [COVID-19 restrictions](#) webpage.

## Mental health support in Victoria

*Please share the below information with staff at your service.*

The Australian Government is providing extra support so Victorians can access 24/7 mental health support through digital and telephone counselling services during this difficult time.

- Headspace is increasing outreach services to young people in the community who are in severe distress.
- Beyond Blue is expanding capacity, extending counsellor webchat hours to operate 24/7, and boosting the ability to refer people with severe and complex needs for five additional sessions.
- Lifeline and Kids Helpline are expanding capacity to deal with increased call volumes in Victoria.
- Victorians can access an additional 10 subsidised psychological therapy sessions under Medicare.

For more information, visit the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) and the [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services](#).





## Reminder: Recording absences

Services must accurately record absences so the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is paid correctly and to avoid unintended debt.

### Allowable absences for Victorian families

All Victorian families have received an additional 30 days of allowable absences per child in the 2020–21 financial year. This brings the allowable absence count from 42 days to 72 days per child.

Until 31 December 2020, services open and located in an area of Stage 3 or higher – ‘stay at home’ restrictions in Victoria can waive families’ out-of-pocket fees where a child is not attending due to COVID-19 and an absence is recorded.

Services must continue to record absences for each session of care for CCS to be paid, regardless of any decision to waive the gap fee.

### How to record additional absences for COVID-19 related reasons

For all other absences (outside of Victoria), once a child’s 42 initial absences have been used, CCS can be paid for additional absences for COVID-19 related reasons without the need for medical evidence.

If the child is not attending due to COVID-19, services should submit any absences from 43 days and above as additional absences under the reason ‘illness’ and tick the evidence provided box. This will allow CCS to be paid for these absences. Families can only access additional absences where children have already used their initial allowance of 42 absence days per child, per financial year.

## Early Childhood Resource Hub closure

The [Early Childhood Resource Hub](#) will close from 1 October 2020.

You will still have access to helpful resources and materials on [ACECQA’s website](#).

ACECQA provides guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children. This move will make it easier for you to access relevant support material in one place. Information published on the ACECQA website is free of charge.

The Hub will remain available until 30 September 2020.

## Reminder: Have your say on inclusion in ECEC

ACECQA is seeking the views of providers about their awareness, understanding and application of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. This includes questions of access and participation by children with disability in education and care.



Your feedback will help ACECQA inform the Australian Government's [2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005](#).

For more information visit the [consultation page](#) on ACECQA's website.

## How to have your say

ACECQA released a [discussion paper](#) on 21 August 2020. You are invited to complete the [online survey](#) that addresses the issues and questions within the discussion paper. All survey responses will remain anonymous. Written submissions can also be emailed to [DSEfeedback@acecqa.gov.au](mailto:DSEfeedback@acecqa.gov.au).

Survey responses and written submissions will be accepted up until Wednesday 16 September 2020. ACECQA will publish a summary of findings later in the year.



## Low Charged Hours Payment for OSHC services

To assist Victorian services with low revenue due to low attendance and reduced enrolments, a new Low Charged Hours Payment will be provided to some Outside School Hours Care services.

Victorian OSHC services whose charged hours have fallen below 40 per cent may be eligible for more financial help.

The amount services can receive will depend on how much Transition funding they are already receiving and how much their charged hours fell between 10 and 23 August compared to the reference fortnight, which for most services is 17 February to 1 March 2020.

To receive payments, services must continue to support their employees through wages. This is called the [Employment Guarantee](#).

**Eligible services will be provided with a grant offer through DocuSign from Tuesday 8 September.**



## Submit session reports on time to receive CCS

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week the sessions occurred.

It is vital that you submit accurate session reports on time because Child Care Subsidy cannot be paid until you submit those reports.

You can submit session reports in your third-party software or the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP).

For help submitting session reports:

- contact your software provider, or
- see our [task card](#) for help in the PEP.



2 September 2020

## Thank you, Early Childhood Educators

Today, on Early Childhood Educators' Day, we recognise the extraordinary contribution of educators. Our educators provide an incredibly important contribution to the wellbeing and healthy development of our children.

This year has been particularly challenging for the nation, but educators have continued to support our working families throughout this pandemic. We owe them a great deal of gratitude for their work.

Today, and every other day, we thank our early childhood educators.

Get involved using the hashtags #LoveMyECE and #EarlyChildhoodEducatorsDay

## Special Transition Payment offers in Victoria

Eligible providers in Victoria have now been contacted about the Special Transition Payment.

These providers should submit their variation offer via DocuSign by **5pm (AEST) 7 September 2020**.

Eligible providers that have correctly submitted their variation offer and all attendance reports by 7 September 2020, will be paid from the week commencing 14 September 2020.

The Special Transition Payment will be paid as a single lump sum.

For more information see the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) and the [Grant Agreement template with terms and conditions](#).

If you require further help responding to the variation offer, please contact the CCS Helpdesk on 1300 667 276 or at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).

## Transition Payment Grant offers expire tomorrow

If you haven't already done so, please submit your Transition Payment Grant offer via DocuSign by **Thursday 3 September 2020**.

The department will not accept any further offers after this date.

For step by step instructions on how to review and sign the offer see the [process for reviewing and submitting the Transition Payment Grant offer](#).

If you haven't received your offer or require further help responding to the offer please email the CCS Helpdesk on 1300 667 276 or at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).



## Find Child Care Family Helpline

Please let families know there is a national toll-free helpline available for those looking for child care during COVID-19. ACECQA has established the helpline to support families, including essential workers and those with vulnerable children.

Families can call the helpline on **1800 291 041** from 9am to 5pm (AEST), Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

The helpline builds on the [Starting Blocks](#) and [Child Care Finder](#) online tools. For more information, please visit [ACECQA](#).



## Making a subsequent ACCS (child wellbeing) determination

If a child in receipt of Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) will still be at risk after their determination period (up to 13 weeks), you need to apply for a subsequent determination.

You can do this via your third party software provider or in the [Provider Entry Point](#). You will need to upload new or existing evidence to support a new subsequent determination application.

Please note:

- Evidence needs to be less than six months old.
- Uploading evidence to an existing determination will not trigger a subsequent determination assessment. You must lodge a new subsequent determination application.
- If the evidence previously provided was a statutory declaration, this cannot be used again.

You should talk to the family (where appropriate) for help gathering further evidence to support the ongoing subsidy. The family may also provide consent for you to approach third parties.

If the required evidence is not provided, your application will be rejected.

For more information on the evidence requirements, please see the [Guide to ACCS \(child wellbeing\)](#). There is also a [factsheet and checklist](#) to help you gain relevant evidence from third parties.

## CCSS maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) will be unavailable from 10pm AEST Saturday 29 August 2020 until 10am AEST Sunday 30 August 2020.

For providers and services, this means you will not be able to enter session reports into CCSS during this period.



## Check out our new information session

Thank you to the Victorian providers who participated in our survey last week. Your feedback helped us identify key areas to cover in our information session.

[The session is now available on our website.](#)

### Your go-to-hub for updates

- The department's [COVID-19 child care webpage](#) provides regular updates.
- For specific information about arrangements in Victoria go to the [COVID-19 restrictions webpage](#).





# Offers for the Special Transition Payment and Additional Viability Support Payment

## Special Transition Payment

The Special Transition Payment aims to support services in metropolitan Melbourne:

- where average Child Care Subsidy received in the pre-COVID reference period is proportionally low ('low average CCS')
- with low attendance (which means the service is highly dependent on allowable absences), and
- who are waiving gap fees.

We have emailed providers with eligible services that meet the above criteria with an offer, in the form of a grant variation to their Transition Payment Grant agreement.

Eligible services that have submitted both their offer, and accurate session reports for the fortnight 10 to 23 August through their third party software or the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) by 7 September 2020, with attendance hours less than 30 per cent of those in the pre-COVID reference period, will be paid from the week commencing 14 September 2020.

## Additional Viability Support Payment

Providers with eligible Outside School Hours Care services in regional Victoria (excluding Mitchell Shire) should have received an offer for the Additional Viability Support Payment on Monday 24 August 2020.

This provides an additional 15 per cent of fee revenue from the pre-COVID reference week. Eligible services have until 7 September 2020 to submit both their offer and accurate session reports for the fortnight 10 to 23 August 2020 to receive this payment.

## More information

To find out more about eligibility, calculations and conditions, visit our updated [COVID-19 restrictions webpage](#) and [Transition Payment Guidelines](#).

## Consultation with providers on inclusion in ECEC

ACECQA is seeking the views of services providers about their awareness, understanding and application of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (the DDA). This includes questions of access and participation by children with disability in education and care.



Your feedback on rights for children with disability – and your obligations as an education and care service provider – will help ACECQA inform the Australian Government’s [2020 Review \(Review\) of the Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (the Standards).

For further information visit the [consultation page](#) on the ACECQA website.

## How to have your say

ACECQA released a [discussion paper](#) on 21 August 2020. You are invited to complete the [online survey](#) that addresses the issues and questions within the discussion paper. All survey responses will remain anonymous. Written submissions can also be emailed to [DSEfeedback@acecqa.gov.au](mailto:DSEfeedback@acecqa.gov.au).

Survey responses and written submissions will be accepted up until Wednesday 16 September 2020. ACECQA will publish a high level summary of stakeholder engagement findings in late 2020.

## Consultation with families and educators on disability in ECEC

As part of the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education, the Australian Government is looking at how well the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) is known, understood and applied in early childhood education and care.

We want to hear about the experiences of children with disability and their parents in accessing and participating in early childhood education and care, as well as the experience of educators.

Please direct parents and educators to the dedicated early childhood education and care section of the Review’s [Consultation Hub](#) where they will find an early childhood education and care discussion paper and a questionnaire.

They can also [register](#) to participate in a webinar at 4.30 pm – 6 pm (AEST) on Thursday 27 August 2020.



## Victoria: Check out our new information session!

A new information session for Victorian providers and services is now available on our website.

The session covers support available to services and families in Victoria and answers some specific questions.

Thank you to the Victorian providers who participated in our recent survey. Your feedback helped us identify key areas to cover in this session.

[Watch or listen now](#)

## Online book database for educators now available

The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL) has produced a free database for educators to discover children's books by and about Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The database allows educators to explore a range of children's books and related teaching resources, including:

- a description of the text and story
- advice on how to present the text to children during learning activities
- information on the cultures and traditions presented in the text
- age-level guidance
- insights into the illustrations and author
- relevant links to Early Years Learning Framework, and
- links to teaching resources.

The database will help educators get the most out of their current book collection and identify new books to add to their teaching assets.

Importantly, the database is an opportunity for educators to enrich their curriculum with stories reflecting the richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' culture, their Dreaming and teaching stories, and tales of contemporary life.

Please share this wonderful database with educators in your services.

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander book database](#)

[Print out a flyer to display at your service or share with families](#)



Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment and established by National Centre for Australian Children's Literature.



## Updated IHC Guidelines and Handbook

We have updated the In Home Care (IHC) National Guidelines and Handbook.

These updates reflect recent legislation changes and do not change how the IHC program operates for families. These legislative changes ensure that IHC is now incorporated better into Family Assistance Law.

Our updates include:

- We will formally delegate the power to assess families' eligibility for IHC to the IHC Support Agencies. This ensures that decisions made by IHC Support Agencies are reviewable under Family Assistance Law.
- We've updated the Handbook to provide extra support to services in metropolitan Melbourne by reimbursing the travel costs of undertaking home visits during the COVID-19 crisis in Victoria.
- We've clarified the responsibilities of IHC services in relation to excursions and travel.
- We've made minor amendments to the indexation of income thresholds, the annual subsidy and hourly rate caps, and we have updated department names throughout.

For details, visit the [In Home Care](#) webpage.

## Factsheet and checklist for third party evidence

Remember there is a [factsheet and checklist](#) available to help you gain relevant evidence from third parties in support of an Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) determination application.

## Employment Guarantee – paying staff

The Employment Guarantee reflects the department's and the community's expectation that services will look after their educators and their staff, permanent and casual.

The Transition Payment and return to full Child Care Subsidy (CCS) (including the ability to charge fees) have replaced the Relief Payments and JobKeeper, and is supplemented by extra support for Victoria and Melbourne. These measures should be used to support educators and employees and should be passed on through wages and payments.

The department considers that standing down permanent staff without pay is inconsistent with the Employment Guarantee.

Services which do not fulfil the conditions of the Transition Payment will be investigated and may be required to repay transition payments and may lose access to future payments. Concerned



employees or parents should speak with their provider in the first instance, and can escalate matters to the tip-off line on 1800 664 231 or [tipoffline@dese.gov.au](mailto:tipoffline@dese.gov.au).



## Top topics hitting our Helpdesk

Our Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk (CCS Helpdesk) is on the frontline of the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In only a few months, the CCS Helpdesk has fielded almost 30,000 calls and emails from providers and services seeking support as they navigate these times and the new arrangements in the sector.

What are the main subjects that services want information about?

Victorian services and educators have wanted to know specifics about the additional support provided by the Government. The CCS Helpdesk has also fielded a steady stream of inquiries from services nationwide about transition arrangements since the sector returned to the Child Care Subsidy on 13 July.

**Here are three of the top topics the Helpdesk is taking calls about:**

1. Employment Guarantee, and ability of services to modify educators' hours
2. Waiving of gap fees
3. How the Transition Payment and Special Transition Payment (Melbourne) work.

We continue to update our webpages so you can stay across such topics.

- You may like to bookmark our [COVID-19 child care webpage](#). This is our child care information hub with links to facts sheets, webcasts, frequently asked questions and other resources designed to help you.
- The [COVID-19 restrictions page](#) has information specific to Victorian services.

This week, we asked providers in Victoria about their needs in the lead-up to our next online information session. We'll let Victorian services know soon when that session will be held.

## Do you have a question about support?

The CCS Helpdesk is there to help. If you have a question email [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au)

## State and territory governments can pay gap fees for disadvantaged

New rules allow for state and territory governments (and their agencies) to pay all, or some, of the gap fee for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

This new rule recognises that a requirement to make even a small co-contribution to fees may be a barrier to disadvantaged and vulnerable children accessing child care.



For more information, visit our [website](#).





## What are the hot topics as you navigate COVID-19 restrictions?

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department) is seeking your feedback as we prepare an information session about the support available to Victorian providers and services experiencing COVID-19 restrictions.

We have held regular information sessions to update the sector on its obligations under new arrangements and about the Australian Government support that is available to you, including new payments.

**Two minutes** of your time to answer [this short survey](#) will help us identify what matters most to Victorian providers at this time. **The survey closes 5pm on Wednesday.**

We will let you know as soon as the information session is uploaded to our website.

### Your go-to-hub for updates

- The department's [COVID-19 child care webpage](#) provides regular updates.
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## It's time for parents to have their say!

On Monday, invitations to be part of a survey on child care will go out to over 20,000 randomly selected parents.

Parents' views are important and will help us understand whether transition arrangements are working as intended to:

- support families to access the care they need to return to work, and
- enable vulnerable and disadvantaged families or families impacted by COVID-19 to access affordable child care.

Please encourage any families at your service who are invited to be part of the survey to share their views.

## Community Child Care Fund Restricted Non-Competitive Program update

The Australian Government has [announced](#) an additional \$6.1 million to support the viability of 84 child care services in regional, rural and remote communities.

Around half of children attending these services are Indigenous, so this funding will support Australia to achieve its Closing the Gap targets through increasing participation of Indigenous children in early childhood education and care.

The additional funding is provided through the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) program. More information on the CCCFR program, can be found on the [CCCF Restricted Non-Competitive Grant opportunity](#) webpage.



## Find Child Care Family Helpline

Please let families know there is a national toll-free helpline available for those looking for child care during COVID-19. ACECQA has established the helpline to support families, including essential workers and those with vulnerable children.

Families can call the helpline on **1800 291 041** from 9am to 5pm (AEST), Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

The helpline builds on the [Starting Blocks](#) and [Child Care Finder](#) online tools. For more information, please visit [ACECQA](#).

## Resources for Victorian ECEC sector

We have updated our [COVID-19 restrictions and the Early Childhood Education and Care sector](#) webpage with new frequently asked questions.

The [Victorian Department of Education and Training](#) have a webpage to provide advice and operating guidelines to providers and services on the outbreak of COVID-19.

They have also set up a COVID-19 hotline on **1800 338 663** for the sector operating between 9am – 5pm (AEST), Monday to Friday.

## ACCS (child wellbeing) certificates Q&A

### **Do I need to issue a new certificate for Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) each 12-month period?**

Yes. Once a child has received Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) for continuous periods over 12 months, you need to issue a new certificate.

The Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) will not allow you to apply for a further determination if the child has received ACCS (child wellbeing) for continuous periods over 12 months and a new certificate is not issued. If the child remains 'at risk' after six weeks on the certificate, you will then need to apply for further 13-week period determinations.

*For example:*

*Billy attends Pink Unicorn Child Care Service and a certificate was issued for six weeks on 8 July 2019 because he was assessed as being 'at risk'. Billy has remained on 13-week determinations continuously since then (inclusive of the Relief Package period). On 18 May 2020, Services Australia made a determination for another 13 weeks for Billy which ceases on 16 August 2020. If Billy is still considered to be 'at risk', the service will need to issue a new six-week certificate, from 17 August 2020, before another determination can be given.*

### **Does a child need to use the full six weeks of a certificate before I can apply for a determination?**



Yes. When you apply for a determination, the system will check to see if the child has been on a certificate for six weeks in the previous 12 months.

If the child has not been on a certificate for six weeks in the last 12 months, you will need to issue a certificate for the remaining balance of the six weeks before you can apply for a determination.

*For example:*

*Orange Monkey Child Care Centre issued Janie a certificate for three weeks because she was assessed 'at risk' when she started at the service on 8 July 2019. Janie continued to be assessed as 'at risk' so the service applied for a determination from Services Australia for 13 weeks commencing 29 July 2019. The system checked to see if Janie had been on a certificate for six weeks in the previous 12 months. In this case, only three weeks of the certificate was used. The service must issue a certificate for the remaining balance of the six weeks before they can apply for a determination.*

## CCSS maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 10pm (AEST) Saturday 15 August 2020 until 4am (AEST) Sunday 16 August 2020.

For providers and services, this means you will not be able to enter session reports into CCSS during this period.



10 August 2020

## 2019–20 balancing starts today

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) balancing for the 2019–20 financial year starts from 10 August 2020. Families need to confirm their income for Services Australia to balance their CCS.

Find out more on our [website](#). If you receive questions from families, please direct them to [Services Australia](#).

## Benefits of keeping children enrolled during COVID-19

We have developed an information sheet to help your families understand the benefits of keeping their children enrolled at your service during COVID-19.

Please share the [information sheet](#) with families at your service.

## Updated resources

We have created a new webpage all about the [Transition Payment](#). We have also updated the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Please regularly check our [website](#) to ensure you are using the latest information.



## Updated resources

We have updated the resources on our website in response to the [recent Victorian announcement](#). The updated resources include:

- [Additional Viability Support Payment for OSHC providers](#)
- [COVID-19 restrictions and the Early Childhood Education and Care sector](#)

Please regularly check our [website](#) to ensure you are using the latest information.

## Employment Guarantee – paying staff

The Transition Payment together with additional support for services in Victoria is provided to ensure a service can have low attendance and still have strong financial support so that there are no barriers to continuing to employ and pay staff.

The Employment Guarantee reflects the Department and the community's expectation that services will look after their educators and their staff, permanent and casual.

As the Transition Payment is paid in lieu of JobKeeper it should be used to support educators and employees and should be passed on through wages and payments.

The Department considers that standing down permanent staff without pay is inconsistent with the Employment Guarantee.

Services which do not fulfil the conditions of the Transition Payment will be investigated and may be required to repay transition payments and may lose access to future payments.

Concerned employees or parents should speak with their provider in the first instance, and can escalate matters to the tipoff line on 1800 664 231 or [tipoffline@dese.gov.au](mailto:tipoffline@dese.gov.au).

## Transition Payments

Transition Payments are being made to eligible providers on a weekly basis. Now that CCS payments are also being made, the two payments may be included in the same clearing number.

If you are unable to locate your Transition Payments, please first check the weekly clearing numbers in your third party software or the Provider Entry Point (PEP).

Where Transition Payments cannot be located, providers can contact the CCS Helpdesk at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au) or call 1300 667 276.



## CCS Helpdesk operating hours

The temporary extension of the CCS Helpdesk operating hours will cease on Friday 7 August 2020. From Monday 10 August 2020, the CCS Helpdesk operating hours will return to 9am – 5pm (AEST), Monday through Friday.





## Victorian COVID-19 support

Today, Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Minister Tehan [announced](#) measures to support families, ECEC educators and services through the Victorian Stage 3 and 4 COVID-19 restrictions.

The Government's intention is for families to keep their children enrolled in services at no cost, for educators to be covered by the Employment Guarantee, and for providers and services to have greater financial certainty and to be able to keep their services open to the children of permitted workers.

Details on the new arrangements are available on our [website](#).

## Don't miss your chance to shape the future of child care

We have extended the current survey on transition arrangements by 24 hours and it will now close at **12 noon (AEST) Thursday 6 August**.

If your service has not received the survey, please check your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, please contact ORIMA at [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and provide:

- the name and address of your service
- your contact phone number, and
- the email address you would like the survey to be sent to.

## Reminder - submit your session reports by 9 August

Providers need to submit all session reports for the 2019–20 CCS year by 9 August 2020. These session reports need to be accurate and finalised as they are essential for balancing (or reconciling) family CCS entitlements after the end of the financial year.

The Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) will be closed for the 2019–20 CCS year from 10 August 2020. This means providers will not be able to submit new session reports, or vary or withdraw existing session reports, for any period between 1 July 2019 and 6 April 2020.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package commenced on 6 April 2020 and ceased on 12 July 2020. Session reports cannot be submitted for this period.



## CCSS maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 10 pm (AEST) Saturday 8 August 2020 until 10 am (AEST) Sunday 9 August 2020.

For providers and services, this means you will not be able to enter session reports into CCSS during this period.



3 August 2020

## Don't miss your chance to shape the future of child care

Time is running out! The survey on transition arrangements closes at 12 noon (AEST) Wednesday 5 August.

We want to hear from each and every service. Your views are important, and help us understand whether the transition arrangements are working. Complete the survey now using the link sent to services last Friday.

If your service has not received the survey, please check your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, please contact ORIMA at [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and provide:

- the name and address of your service
- your contact phone number, and
- the email address you would like the survey to be sent to.

## Early Learning Matters Week 2020

Early Learning Matters Week is a chance to highlight the important work educators and children do together.

From 3 to 7 August 2020, early childhood educators, parents, carers, and community leaders across Australia are encouraged to come together (online) to raise awareness of the role of early childhood education and care in children's development and wellbeing.

You can get involved by sharing photos on social media and using the hashtags *#EarlyLearningMatters* and *#EarlyLearningMattersWeek* or posting a message about why early learning matters to you on the Early Learning Matters website, or by holding an on-site celebration within your service.

For more information, visit the Early Learning Matters Week [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

## MyAus COVID-19 app

The [MyAus COVID-19 app](#) is a multilingual mobile app for Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse communities about COVID-19, its impact and available support.

The app is currently available in **24 community languages**: *Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese, Korean, Punjabi, Tamil, Thai, Japanese, Italian, Greek, Tagalog, Indonesian, French, Spanish, Khmer, Turkish, Persian, Dari, Urdu, S'gaw and Burmese.*



Information provided by the app is in line with the current Government advice and is regularly updated to ensure it remains relevant and timely. Please share this information with staff and families at your service.



## We want to hear from services today!

We are conducting a survey of services from 31 July to 5 August about the current transition measures and we want to hear from you.

Your views are important and help us understand whether the transition arrangements are working as intended to:

- help you remain open and viable and skilled staff can be retained in the industry
- support families to access the care they need to return to work, and
- enable vulnerable and disadvantaged families or families impacted by COVID-19 to access affordable child care.

If your service has not received the survey by 3pm today, please check your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, please contact ORIMA at [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and provide:

- the name and address of your service
- your contact phone number, and
- the email address you would like the survey to be sent to.

It is important that the particular circumstances of your service and how current arrangements are impacting you are reflected in the responses. You may wish to discuss response arrangements with your provider, but we would encourage individual services to complete the surveys. Please note there is no option for group responses.

## Have you used the correct enrolment type?

Enrolling children is a requirement under Family Assistance Law for all children who attend child care (or have an arrangement for care) regardless of their parent's or guardian's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

For eligible individuals and children, entitlement decisions will not occur without the right enrolment in place. An enrolment links the child, the individual claiming the subsidy, and the child care service.

Under CCS there are different enrolment types for different arrangements and it's important that you have submitted the correct one. For further information please refer to the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



## Additional support for OSHC services in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire that experience a drop in attendance hours to 40 per cent or less compared with their reference period will be eligible for a 15 per cent Additional Viability Support Payment (Support Payment).

Provided they are eligible and receiving the existing Transition Payment, eligible OSHC services will be offered this Support Payment as a lump sum.

The Support Payment recognises that OSHC services in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire in Victoria are experiencing significantly reduced attendances because of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the move to remote and flexible learning from 20 July 2020.

In the week starting Monday (3 August), we will email a grant variation offer to OSHC providers with services in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire. Providers can verify their eligibility and accept the grant offer using DocuSign, which is the same online process we used for Transition Payments.

Further information, including about the calculation of the amount paid, can be found on our [website](#).

Providers in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire who require more information can contact the CCS Helpdesk at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au) or call 1300 667 276.

## Have your families been affected by COVID-19?

If you have families at your service who are doing less work, study or [other recognised activity](#) due to COVID-19, they may be able to apply for more Child Care Subsidy (CCS) hours. Services Australia has created a [short video](#) to help families understand if they are eligible.

For more information and how to apply, please direct your families to [Services Australia](#).

## Have you submitted your session reports?

By Sunday 9 August 2020, providers need to submit all session reports for the 2019–20 CCS year. These session reports need to be accurate and finalised as they are essential for balancing (reconciling) family CCS entitlements after the end of the financial year.

From 10 August 2020, the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) will be closed for the 2019–20 CCS year. This means providers will not be able to submit new session reports, or vary or withdraw existing session reports, for any period between 1 July 2019 and 6 April 2020.



The Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package commenced on 6 April 2020 and ceased on 12 July 2020. Session reports cannot be submitted for this period.



27 July 2020

## Have your say on the future of child care

We will be conducting a survey of services from 31 July to 5 August 2020 about the current measures to support the transition back to CCS.

Please keep an eye out for the survey. Individual services will receive the survey via email from ORIMA Research on Friday 31 July 2020.

Your views matter and are essential to helping us understand whether the transition arrangements are working to:

- help you remain open and viable so that skilled staff can be retained in the industry
- support families to access the care they need to return to work
- enable vulnerable and disadvantaged families or families impacted by COVID-19 to access affordable child care.

If your service has not received the survey by 3pm on Friday 31 July, please check that your email hasn't gone into your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, please contact ORIMA at [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and ensure that you provide: the name and address of the service (or services); your contact phone number; and the email address/es you would like the survey to be sent to.





## Watch our new FDC and IHC information session

A new information session for the Family Day Care and In Home Care sector is now available on our website.

The session provides answers to questions we have received from the sector.

[Watch it now!](#)

In line with our commitment to accessibility, captions will be uploaded shortly.

## Additional reporting requirement for temporary closures of services

Services that need to temporarily close for COVID-19 related reasons must now also report closures (and re-openings) via your third party software or the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#).

You must report your service closure and re-opening in a timely manner, clearly stating the reason for the closure to the following authorities within 24 hours:

1. Your [state or territory regulatory authority](#)
2. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment in your state or territory (contact details below) AND
3. Via your third party software provider or via Operational Details in the [PEP](#).

Please contact your software provider if you need assistance reporting a closure via your third party software program.

Contact details for state and territory offices

- New South Wales & Australian Capital Territory [CCSAssessmentsNSWACT@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessmentsNSWACT@dese.gov.au)
- Victoria [CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au)
- Queensland [CCSAssessments-QLD@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-QLD@dese.gov.au)
- Western Australia [CCSAssessments-WA@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-WA@dese.gov.au)
- South Australia [ChildcareSA@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareSA@dese.gov.au)
- Tasmania [ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au)
- Northern Territory [ChildcareNT@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareNT@dese.gov.au)



22 July 2020

## Reminder — accept your Transition Payment Grant offer ASAP and update your information

Ninety five per cent of providers have accepted their Transition Payment offer and have already received their first payment.

If you aren't one of these providers, please accept your Transition Payment Grant offer via DocuSign as soon as possible to receive your payments.

Your offer has been sent to the email address registered as your provider level contact email contact, either through the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or in your third-party software.

This is a good time to check that your information is up to date, at both the provider and service level. If you have not done so, please update your information through PEP or your third party software.

If you have updated your information and have not yet received your Transition Payment Grant offer, or you require further help responding to the offer, contact the CCS Helpdesk at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au) and include the email address you would like the offer sent to. Please also ensure you check your junk/spam email if you have not received your offer.

For step by step instructions on how to review and sign the Grant offer see the [process for reviewing and submitting the Transition Payment Grant offer](#).

For more information see the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) and the [Grant Agreement template with terms and conditions](#).

## The new financial year is here — submit your session reports

Providers need to submit all session reports for the 2019–20 Child Care Subsidy (CCS) year by **9 August 2020**.

These session reports need to be accurate and finalised by 9 August 2020 as they are essential for reconciling (or balancing) families CCS entitlements after the end of the financial year.

From 9 August 2020, the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) will be closed for the 2019–20 CCS year. This means providers will not be able to submit new session reports, or vary or withdraw existing session reports for any period between 1 July 2019 and 6 April 2020.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package commenced on 6 April 2020 and ceased on 12 July 2020. Session reports cannot be submitted for this period.



# Child Care Subsidy System maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 10 pm (AEST) Saturday 25 July 2020 until 10 am (AEST) Sunday 26 July 2020.

For providers and services, this means you will not be able to enter session reports into CCSS during this period.



21 July 2020

## Reminder: JobKeeper ended yesterday for the sector

JobKeeper Payments ended yesterday for employees of a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved provider operating a child care service.

For more information on whether this applies to you, please visit the JobKeeper Eligibility section in our [COVID-19 frequently asked questions](#).

Please keep checking in for [information on the ATO website](#) about changes to JobKeeper for child care providers and what you need to do.

## Updated frequently asked questions

We have completed a comprehensive update of the frequently asked questions in response to transition back to CCS. You can check these out [here](#).



17 July 2020

## Family Day Care and In Home Care providers: COVID-19 in Victoria

Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) providers located in an area experiencing Stage 3 or higher restrictions may choose to waive families' out of pocket fees where a child is not attending due to COVID-19 reasons and an absence is recorded.

FDC and IHC providers who believe their families need this assistance must first apply to us by emailing [childcareintegrity@dese.gov.au](mailto:childcareintegrity@dese.gov.au).

## Family Day Care and In Home Care are providers: Transition Payment eligibility

We have updated our information sheet [Information for FDC and IHC providers](#) to include detail about eligibility requirements.

We are also planning a webcast specifically for the FDC and IHC sector next week.

## Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) and COVID-19

Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) is available to support families experiencing temporary financial hardship due to COVID-19 to get back on their feet. Families need to provide appropriate evidence to avoid any delays in assessment.

Please share our new information sheet [ACCS \(temporary financial hardship\) and COVID-19](#) with any of your families that might need this assistance.

## Families income confirmation for 2018-19

Families receiving the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) have until 31 March 2021 to submit their 2018-19 tax return for CCS purposes.

As families have been given more time, if you are displaying this [poster](#) in your service we ask could you please take it down.



# Reminder: Please update your details in the Child Care Subsidy System

As the COVID-19 situation across the country and in particular Victoria continues to change, the department is engaging directly with both providers and services more often.

Please update your provider and each service's contact information in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS), especially if you are in Victoria. It's particularly important that your email address is correct. The provider and service email addresses could be the same, but both may need updating.

You can update your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#). Guidance is available in the task card '[How to View and Update Organisation Details in the PEP](#)'.

Alternatively, you can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance updating your details via a third party software program.

Please also check your 'junk mail' folders if you think you may have missed an email from the department.



## Reminder: JobKeeper ends for sector on 20 July

JobKeeper Payments will end on 20 July 2020 for employees of a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved provider operating a child care service.

For more information on whether this applies to you, please visit the JobKeeper Eligibility section on our [COVID-19 FAQ](#) webpage.

The [ATO has provided information](#) about changes to JobKeeper for child care providers and what you need to do.

## Why a family's Child Care Subsidy amount may change

There are a few reasons why the amount of the CCS Services Australia pays to you for your families may change. These include changes to family circumstances and eligibility.

Read Services Australia's article for more information about [why the amount of CCS they pay changes](#).

## Inclusion Support Program — return to usual claim processes

The Inclusion Support Program (ISP) continued to operate during the COVID-19 period, supporting services to include children with additional needs.

With the return to CCS from 13 July, the claiming process will return to the pre-Relief Package arrangements.

- For care provided during the Relief Package (6 April to 12 July 2020), claims for the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) subsidy are to be submitted as 'non-face-to-face hours' for all hours. This will allow claims to be processed without reference to attendance records in Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).
- For care provided from 13 July 2020, claims for the IDF subsidy are to be submitted as 'face-to-face hours' and 'allowable non-face-to-face hours', which refers to attendance records in CCSS.

The department will also communicate these changes directly to IS Portal users by email.

More information on the [claim processes](#) is available on the department's website, or you can email the [Inclusion Development Fund Manager](#).



# Beware of scam emails seeking personal information

Please be aware there are phishing emails doing the rounds on email and social media.

Below is an example of one such email, which claims to be from Services Australia. This email is **not** from Services Australia. It is a scam seeking personal information.

The ACCC provides advice on how not to [fall for a scammer's phishing bait](#) – it's a good resource for you to share with your families.

The image shows a screenshot of a phishing email. At the top, a dark blue banner contains the text "Your subsidy benefit allocation" in white. Below this, the email body is white with blue and teal text. It starts with "Hello" and a paragraph: "We would like you to give prominence to your qualification for subsidy benefit (grant)." This is followed by a section "What you need to do" with a small square icon and the text "Assert your expediency by simply replying to this secure message as described within." Below that is "Please indicate correctly" and a list of fields: "Given name (first only):", "Family name/Surname:", "Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy):", "Tax file number (TFN):", and "Complete Address (Street number & name/Suburb/State/Postcode):". A section "Enter at least 1 of the following" lists two options: 1. "Notice of assessment (one from the last 5 years)" with instructions to enter the date of issue and the reference number; 2. "Superannuation funds details" with instructions to enter the issuer name & ABN, member account number, and member client number. A note (N.B.) says to attach a clear copy of a valid Australian Driver Licence OR Australian International Passport AND a clear copy of a valid Medicare Card. At the bottom, a black footer contains the text "©2020 Commonwealth of Australia | Services Australia ABN 90 794 605 008" and a disclaimer: "This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain privileged information or confidential information or both. If you are not the intended recipient please delete it and notify the sender."

**Your subsidy benefit allocation**

Hello

We would like you to give prominence to your qualification for subsidy benefit (grant).

**What you need to do**

Assert your expediency by simply replying to this secure  message as described within.

**Please indicate correctly**

Given name (first only):  
Family name/Surname:  
Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy):  
Tax file number (TFN):  
Complete Address (Street number & name/Suburb/State/Postcode):

**Enter at least 1 of the following**

1. Notice of assessment (one from the last 5 years)  
Enter the date of issue from your notice of assessment (dd/mm/yyyy):  
& Enter the our reference number found under the date of issue:
2. Superannuation funds details  
Enter Superannuation Issuer name & ABN:  
& Enter your member account number:  
Enter your member client number:

**N.B.** | Attach to your reply, a clear copy of your valid Australian Driver Licence OR Australian International Passport **AND** a clear copy of your valid Medicare Card.

©2020 Commonwealth of Australia | Services Australia ABN 90 794 605 008

\*\*\*\*\*  
This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain privileged information or confidential information or both. If you are not the intended recipient please delete it and notify the sender.  
\*\*\*\*\*





# Child Care Subsidy System maintenance this weekend

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 10 pm (AEST) Saturday 18 July 2020 until 10 am (AEST) Sunday 19 July 2020.

For providers and services, this means you will not be able to enter session reports into CCSS during this period.



## Response to COVID-19 in Victoria

On 7 July 2020, the Minister announced fee relief for Victorian families in response to the COVID-19 lockdowns. From 13 July until 31 December 2020, services open and located in an area of Stage 3 or higher – ‘stay at home’ restrictions are permitted to waive families’ out of pocket fees where a child is not attending due to COVID-19, and an absence is recorded.

Areas subject to Stage 3 or higher – ‘stay at home’ restrictions are listed at [vic.gov.au](http://vic.gov.au).

## Child Care Subsidy returns on Monday – are you ready?

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) will resume on Monday, 13 July 2020.

The following information may help you prepare.

### Submit Additional Child Care Subsidy applications now

Services Australia are continuing to process applications for ACCS (child wellbeing) during the Relief Package Period. You should ensure ACCS (child wellbeing) certificates and determinations are in place as soon as possible to reduce the risk of delays or gaps in ACCS payments once the Relief Package ends.

Families can also apply for other ACCS payments they may be eligible for now, so their entitlement can begin on 13 July. You should direct families to the [Services Australia website](#) for more information on eligibility and to apply for ACCS (temporary financial hardship), ACCS (transition to work) and ACCS (grandparent).

Further information is available in the ACCS - transition arrangements and the [Information for Families](#) information sheets.

### Child Care Subsidy and ACCS return from 13 July 2020

From Monday 13 July 2020, the CCS and ACCS will recommence, along with a range of new measures to support the sector and its families through the transition.

### Session reports

Providers will be able to resume submitting session reports on the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) from 13 July 2020, noting that session reports cannot be submitted to the CCSS for the period 6 April 2020 to 12 July 2020.



## Gap fees

In addition to the arrangements in Victoria, if a service is required to close as a result of a state public health directive at any time between 13 July 2020 to 31 December 2020, they are also able to waive families' gap fee during the closure. Otherwise, all requirements of Family Assistance Law apply, including the requirement for providers to recover gap fees from families.

## Enrolment details

Providers are encouraged to ensure all enrolments are up to date in advance of CCS resuming, to help ensure transition back to CCS is as smooth as possible. A \$0 session of care will be recorded on Sunday 12 July 2020 for every CCS enrolment current at that time (this is in addition to the \$0 session of care recorded on Monday 6 April 2020 at the commencement of the Relief Package).

Families will see the \$0 session in their [myGov](#) account, and it will show in the Provider Entry Point and third party software with the note "COVID-19 System Update". Families do not need to do anything or contact Centrelink. This will not have any impact on a family's entitlement. By recording this session of care, we are ensuring that enrolments remain current for any family unable to immediately return to care when CCS resumes.

It's important to note that the 14 week rule and absences still apply. Therefore, services should determine families' intentions relating to ongoing care as early as possible rather than continue to record absences from 13 July 2020 onwards.

## Absences

In response to feedback from the child care sector, new allowable absences provisions also take effect from 13 July 2020. Families can receive CCS for absences up to seven days before a child's first, and after a child's last physical attendance at a service, where they have been booked in for care, for any of the following reasons:

- any of the [additional absence reasons](#)
- the child, the individual who cares for the child, the individual's partner or another person with whom the child lives is ill (no medical certificate required if the child has not used 42 absence days)
- the service has changed ownership
- the usual service is closed and the child is attending a different service under the same provider
- a family tragedy (a major event including the death of an immediate family member) has occurred, or
- the enrolment ceased incorrectly.

For further details on absences please see the [Absences Fact sheet](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the department's website.



## Activity test

From 13 July 2020 to 4 October 2020, individuals who can no longer engage in the same number of hours of work, training, study or other activity recognised by the CCS activity test immediately prior to the COVID-19 crisis, can advise Services Australia they meet the requirements to access 100 hours of subsidised child care, per child, per fortnight for up to 12 weeks.

This can be done through their [Centrelink online account](#) through [myGov](#) or the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#). For more information, visit [dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare](https://dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare).

## COVID-19 health and safety resources

We have developed a [COVID-19 related poster](#) which may be downloaded and displayed by early childhood education and care providers and services. The poster provides information and tips for families and staff to help minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Also a reminder that the Australian Government Department of Health has an [online](#) infection control training module that covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19.

The module is easy to use, takes approximately 30 minutes to complete, and provides useful information including:

- COVID-19 – what is it?
- signs and symptoms
- keeping safe – protecting yourself and others
- myth busting

This training is **not compulsory**.

You can find the [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) on the Department of Health's website.



## Overview of transition arrangements

We have developed a [transition overview](#) to support you to return to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) on 13 July 2020. This outlines key dates and activities during transition and into next year. This will be a useful guide for you and your families now and over the coming months.

More information is available in our [frequently asked questions](#). If you receive questions from families, encourage them to visit the [Services Australia](#) website.

## Updated resources

We have updated the resources on our website in preparation for the upcoming transition to CCS. The updated resources include:

- New [JobKeeper Payment eligibility for mixed businesses](#)
- Updated [Transition information for Family Day Care providers](#)
- Updated [Additional Child Care Subsidy - transition arrangements](#)
- Updated [Additional Child Care Subsidy \(temporary financial hardship\)](#)
- Updated [Additional Child Care Subsidy \(transition to work\)](#)
- Updated [FAQs](#) on the Transition Payment

Please regularly check our [website](#) to ensure you are using the latest information.



## Avoid delays — sign your Transition Payment Grant offer by Wednesday

Accept and sign your Transition Payment Grant offer via DocuSign by **5 pm (AEST) 1 July 2020** to avoid delays with the first payment.

Your offer will be sent to the email address registered as your provider level contact email address, either through the Provider Entry Point or in your third party software.

If you haven't received an offer yet, make sure to check your junk/spam mail. If you have checked these and still haven't received an offer or require further help responding to the offer, please contact the CCS Helpdesk email at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au) and include the email address you would like the offer sent to.

For step by step instructions on how to review and sign the Grant offer see the [process for reviewing and submitting the Transition Payment Grant offer](#).

For more information see the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) and the [Grant Agreement template with terms and conditions](#).

## Changes to absences

From 13 July 2020, families can receive CCS for absences up to seven days before a child's first, and after a child's last, physical attendance at a service, where a session of care would have usually been provided, for any of the following reasons:

- any of the [additional absence reasons](#)
- the child, the individual who cares for the child, the individual's partner or another person with whom the child lives is ill (no medical certificate required if the child has not used 42 absence days)
- the service has changed ownership
- the usual service is closed and the child is attending a different service under the same provider
- a family tragedy (a major event including the death of an immediate family member) has occurred, or
- the enrolment ceased incorrectly.

This amendment was made in response to feedback from the sector and has been timed to coincide with the start of the 2020–21 CCS year.

Families can continue to claim additional absences for COVID-19 related reasons without the need for medical evidence until 31 December 2020.



For more information check out our updated [absences fact sheet](#) and [FAQs](#).

## Child Care Subsidy rates from 13 July 2020

CCS family income thresholds, the annual cap and the hourly rate caps are adjusted at the start of each financial year based on the Consumer Price Index. A fact sheet detailing the [CCS rates from 13 July 2020](#) is available on our website.



## Have you signed your Grant offer for the Transition Payment yet?

Remember to accept and sign your Transition Payment Grant offer via DocuSign by **5 pm (AEST) 1 July 2020** to avoid delays with the first payment.

Your offer will be sent to the email address registered as your provider level contact email address, either through the Provider Entry Point or in your third party software.

For step by step instructions on how to review and sign the Grant offer see the [process for reviewing and submitting the Transition Payment Grant offer](#).

If you require further help responding to the offer, please contact the CCS Helpdesk on **1300 667 276** or email at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).

For more information see the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) and the [Grant Agreement template with terms and conditions](#).

## What if I haven't received an offer?

If you haven't received an offer yet, please check your junk/spam mail and that your details are correct in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

If your details are not up to date, please update them in the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or third party software. The following need to be correct to receive your offer and for payments to be made:

- Provider name
- Provider email address
- Service email address
- Legal entity address
- Service address
- Bank details

If you need help, see the task card [How to View and Update Organisation Details in the PEP](#) or contact your software provider.

After you update your details, you should receive your offer within two to three working days. If you have still not received your offer after this period, please contact the CCS Helpdesk on **1300 667 276** or email at [ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au).





## Why is the Transition Payment less than the Relief Package Payment?

The 25 per cent Transition Payment is less than 50 per cent Relief Package payment as it recognises that providers will once again receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) payments on behalf of families, and parents will return to making their co-contribution (or gap fee) to child care fees.

The Transition Payment is additional help in anticipation that some services may not immediately return to their pre-COVID capacity when CCS recommence.

More information on the Transition Payment is available on the [department's website](#).

## What do the transition arrangements mean for the Additional Child Care Subsidy?

CCS and ACCS will recommence on 13 July 2020.

We have developed a new [information sheet](#) to help you understand what this means for families at your service receiving ACCS.

## Resources for families

All families who got CCS for 2018-19 need to confirm their family income for their CCS to continue.

To help families understand this process, we have developed a [poster](#) for you to display at your service and an [information sheet](#) for you to share.



25 June 2020

## Child Care Subsidy is starting again soon – are your families ready?

Dear Provider

**Please forward the below information to your families.**

Families who were receiving Child Care Subsidy (CCS) before 6 April 2020 need to ensure they have stayed eligible and their enrolment is current for their CCS to start again.

Families who are new to child care should claim CCS now to avoid paying full fees from 13 July 2020.

This email contains information to help families at your service understand what they need to do.

If you receive questions, you should encourage families to visit the [Services Australia](#) website.

Kind regards

Stakeholder Communication Team

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Dear Families

[Child Care Subsidy \(CCS\) is starting again](#) on 13 July 2020.

If you were receiving CCS before 6 April 2020, it will automatically start again if you've stayed eligible and your enrolment is current and confirmed.

Follow these five steps to make sure you've stayed eligible and receive the right amount of CCS:

1. Give Centrelink your [2020–21 family income estimate](#) to receive the correct CCS percentage and avoid an overpayment.
2. Check your [activity hours](#) to receive the correct amount of hours of CCS per fortnight\*.
3. Make sure your child meets [immunisation requirements](#).
4. Check your child's [enrolment details](#) are current with your child care service and re-enrol if you need to.
5. [Confirm your income for 2018–19](#) if you haven't already by 30 June 2020.

\*From 13 July 2020, the Australian Government is easing the activity test for CCS. This means you may be able to apply for extra activity hours if COVID-19 has affected you. There will be more information about how to do this in July.

If you're [new to child care](#), you should [claim](#) CCS as soon as possible. From 13 July 2020, you'll pay full fees unless you're getting CCS.

For more information, visit [Services Australia](#).



The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has created an information sheet for [families about the transition arrangements for the end of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package](#) and the return to CCS.



19 June 2020

## How to accept Grant offers for Transition Payments

Approved providers are receiving Grant offers from the Australian Government for Transition Payments as the sector prepares to return to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy on 13 July 2020.

If you haven't received a Grant offer yet, you will soon.

You will receive a DocuSign email to review and sign. The DocuSign agreement links to the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#).

These Guidelines will be routinely updated as required. We ask providers to review the Guidelines regularly as it is a key document for your Grant agreement.

To allow the department to process the first payment, you will need to accept the offer by 5 pm AEST 1 July 2020.

For the most current information on what to do when you receive the Grant offer please view the [process for reviewing and submitting the Transition Payment Grant offer](#). This document explains the process step by step.

The agreement can only be signed electronically and by a member of the organisation who has authorisation to enter into a legal agreement on behalf of your organisation.

## Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment

Applications close at 11:59pm on Saturday 20 June 2020. [More information can be found on our website](#).

## New information session: watch now

Our latest information session is live – and you can [watch it now](#).

The session explains the Transition Payments that will be paid from 13 July 2020 to 27 September as a Grant under the Community Child Care Fund.

With changes to JobKeeper Payments for the sector from 20 July 2020, the session also details various scenarios regarding JobKeeper ineligibility.

Information is also provided on the relaxed activity test for families, and how services can prepare families for what they need to do as the sector transitions.



# Frequently Asked Questions

Our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) webpage continues to be updated and should satisfy most enquiries. We ask that you consult those FAQs before calling the CCS Helpdesk.

For more information please visit our [website](#).



## Important information about transition arrangements

All Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers will start receiving emails from today (17 June 2020) to offer an Australian Government grant for Transition Payments.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package (Relief Package) will cease on 12 July 2020, with the CCS and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) resuming from 13 July 2020.

Instead of receiving JobKeeper Payments, providers will receive Transition Payments. These payments will be 25 per cent of providers' fee revenue from the relevant reference period. These will be paid as a grant under the Community Child Care Fund and will be progressively sent to CCS approved providers.

For more information please see the [Transition Payment Guidelines](#) and the [Grant Agreement template with terms and conditions](#).

The offer will be sent to the email address registered as your provider level contact email address in the Provider Entry Point or in your third party software, as at 14 June 2020. It will come from DocuSign with a link to the agreement to sign.

**The agreement can only be signed electronically and by a member of the organisation that has authorisation to enter into a legal agreement on behalf of your organisation.**

Instructions on how to complete this will be provided in the email you receive and in the information sheet [process for reviewing and submitting the Transition Payment Grant offer](#).

## New information session and resources available on transition arrangements

We have recorded a new information session. You can [watch it on our website now!](#)

This session gives more details about the grant offer, the transition arrangements for the end of the Relief Package and return to CCS, and what providers and families need to do to prepare.

New information sheets and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) are also available on transition arrangements:

- [Information for Child Care Subsidy approved providers](#)
- [Information for Family Day Care providers](#)
- [Information for providers delivering Vacation Care only](#)
- [Information for families](#)



For more information please visit our [website](#).



## Urgent - Please update your details to receive information about your Transition Payments

The department will soon be emailing providers with details of the Transition Payments they will receive for the period 13 July to 27 September 2020. To ensure Transition Payments can occur as planned, providers need to check and update their provider and service details in the Child Care Subsidy System.

Most importantly, the following need to be correct for payments to occur:

- Provider name
- Provider email address
- Service email address
- Legal entity address
- Service address
- Bank details

If any of these details are not correct, Transition Payments may be delayed.

You can update your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#). Guidance is available in the task card '[How to View and Update Organisation Details in the PEP](#)'.

Alternatively, you can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance.





## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

We have included answers to some common questions we have been receiving on the transition arrangements following the Minister for Education Dan Tehan's [announcement](#) on Monday 8 June 2020.

Remember to regularly check our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for further updates.

### What arrangements will be in place when the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package ends?

From 13 July 2020, the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy will return, along with new transition measures to support the sector and parents as they move back to the subsidy.

To ensure Government support is appropriately targeted, JobKeeper will cease from 20 July 2020 for employees of a CCS approved service and for sole traders operating a child care service.

In recognition that this is a transition period from the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package (Relief Package), all approved services will receive a Transition Payment, instead of JobKeeper, for the period 13 July 2020 to 27 September 2020.

### What are the new Transition Payments?

Transition Payments are up to 25 per cent of services' fee revenue or the existing hourly rate cap, whichever is lower, in the relevant reference period. This is the same reference period (for the majority of services, the fortnight preceding 2 March 2020) that has been used during the Relief Package.

### Are there any additional conditions on the Transition Payments?

Conditions of accessing the Transition Payments include:

- services do not receive JobKeeper from 20 July 2020 (the beginning of the JobKeeper fortnight)
- services must maintain the same fees charged during the relevant reference period
- services must maintain the same average number of employees.

### When will I start receiving Transition Payments?

The detail around the timing and intervals for making Transition Payments is still to be confirmed, but Transition Payments will be backdated to 13 July 2020. We will provide further information on this as soon as possible.



## How often will Transition Payments be made?

The detail around the timing and intervals for making Transition Payments is still to be confirmed. We will provide further information on this as soon as possible.

## Can I opt out of Transition Payments and increase my fees?

As a condition of receiving the Transition Payments, services must maintain the same fees charged during the relevant reference period, until 27 September 2020. If a child care provider wants to increase their fees, they must apply to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to 'opt out' of receiving the Transition Payments.

## Can I opt out of Transition Payments and receive JobKeeper instead?

Providers may choose to opt out of receiving the Transition Payments, however, employees will not be able to receive JobKeeper.

## Beware of scam emails seeking your personal information

Please be aware there are phishing emails doing the rounds on email and social media.

Below is an example of one such email, which claims to be from Services Australia. This email is **not** from Services Australia. It is a scam seeking your personal information.

The ACCC provides advice on how not to "[fall for a scammer's phishing bait](#)" - we encourage you to visit their [website](#) for further information.





# Australian Government

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## Services Australia

Our Reference: 14-A0-931C67

Saturday, June 6, 2020

### Subsidy Benefit Allocation.

Here is to draw your attention to your qualification for subsidy benefit.

Kindly affirm your eligibility by simply replying to this secure  message appropriately, as listed below.

Please indicate correctly...

.....  
Given name (first only):

Family name/Surname:

Date of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY):

Tax File Number:

Complete Address (Street number & name/Suburb/State/Postcode):  
.....

**Enter at least 2 of the information listed below correctly**  
.....

1. Notice of assessment (one from the last 5 years)

**Enter the date of issue from your notice of assessment (DD/MM/YYYY) :**

**& Enter the our reference number found under the date of issue :**

2. Dividends statement (one from the last 2 years)

**Enter the investment reference number (e.g. X0011223344) :**

3. PAYG summary (one from the last 2 years)

**Enter the gross amount (no spaces or symbols, e.g. \$42,000.00 enter 42000) :**

4. Centrelink payment summary (one from the last 2 years)

**Enter the taxable income amount (no spaces or symbols, e.g. \$42,000.00 enter 42000) :**

5. Enter a bank account your tax refundable was paid into for the last financial year, or an account you have received bank interest on from the last 2 years.

**Enter BSB :**

**& Enter Account Number :**  
.....

**NB:** Attach to your reply, a clear copy of your valid Australian Driver Licence **OR** Australian International Passport **AND** a clear copy of your valid Medicare Card.

@2020 Commonwealth of Australia | Services Australia ABN 90 794 605 008

.....  
This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain privileged information or confidential information or both. If you are not the intended recipient please delete it and notify the sender.  
.....



## Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package extended until 12 July 2020

The Australian Government has [announced](#) its extension of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package (Relief Package) and the plan to return to Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) payments.

The [Four Week Review](#) and sector-wide consultations have informed the Government's plan going forward.

### Extension of the Relief Package and Transition Payments

The Relief Package will be extended until **12 July 2020**, in line with the start of the 2020/21 CCS financial year.

From **13 July 2020**, CCS and ACCS will re-commence.

From 13 July 2020, all approved early childhood education and care services will receive a Transition Payment, instead of JobKeeper, for the period 13 July 2020 to 27 September 2020. The Transition Payment is 25 per cent of fee revenue or the existing hourly rate cap, whichever is lower, during the relevant reference period that has been used during the Relief Package.

Child Care Community Fund (CCCF) Special Circumstances grants will also be available to support services experiencing viability issues. This support will be targeted at services in areas of limited supply, and ensure families in regional, rural, remote areas and areas of disadvantage continue to have access to care.

The [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Conditions](#) will be updated to reflect these new arrangements.

### Relaxing the activity test

The CCS activity test requirements will be eased for 12 weeks from 13 July 2020 to 4 October 2020 for families impacted by COVID-19, who can no longer access the same number of hours as before. During this period, impacted families will be able to access up to 100 hours per fortnight of subsidised care.

This will assist families to return to the level of work, study or training they were doing before the COVID-19 crisis, or to do more than before.

From 13 July 2020, families will need to update their activity levels to access the 100 hours. This can be done in their [Centrelink online account](#) through [myGov](#) or the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#).



## CCS Helpdesk open today

In light of this announcement, the CCS Helpdesk will be open today until 7:00 pm (AEST), to help you with any questions you may have on **1300 667 276**, however we encourage you to check the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) before calling, as call wait times may be longer than anticipated. You can also send your question through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible.

## More information

More information is available in our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Additional information will be published on our [website](#) as it becomes available.



4 June 2020

## Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk closed on Monday 8 June 2020 - Queen's Birthday Public Holiday

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Monday, 8 June 2020. It will reopen at 9:00am (AEST) Tuesday, 9 June 2020.

During this time you can still send your question through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible.

Should you require assistance during this period, you can also refer to the [COVID-19 webpage, information resources for providers](#) and the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



2 June 2020

## Help make sure your families' Child Care Subsidy continues

Dear Provider

**Please forward the below information to your families.**

Families who received Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in 2018-19 need to confirm their income for that financial year by 30 June 2020 for their CCS to continue.

Parents and their partners confirm their income with Centrelink by either:

- lodging their tax returns with the Australian Taxation Office
- completing an 'Advise non-lodgement of tax return' with Centrelink, if they don't need to lodge a tax return.

If families don't do this by 30 June 2020, their CCS will stop from 13 July 2020 (the start of the next CCS year). It can't start again until they have confirmed their income.

It's important to know, if a family's CCS stops, they will not be back paid for the period between when it stops and when they confirm their income.

This email contains information to help families understand what they need to do.

If you receive questions from families, you should encourage them to visit the [Services Australia](#) website.

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement and Education Team

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Dear Families

If you received Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for 2018-19, you must confirm your income with Centrelink. This includes CCS paid directly to you and CCS paid on your behalf to a child care provider.

Most parents have already confirmed their income, but if you haven't, do it now.

If you don't confirm your 2018-19 income by 30 June 2020, your CCS will stop from 13 July 2020.

To confirm your income with Centrelink, you and your partner need to either:

- lodge your tax returns with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO)
- complete an 'Advise non-lodgement of tax return' with Centrelink, if you don't need to lodge a tax return.



You complete the 'Advise non-lodgement of tax return' in your [Centrelink online account](#) through [myGov](#) or your [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#).

If you've already confirmed your family income for 2018-19, there's nothing else you need to do.

Find out more about [Child Care Subsidy](#) on the Services Australia website.





## New Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment application video

A new video is now available to help providers and services complete the application for an Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment based on an increase in demand at your service.

The video will guide you through the application process and explain the eligibility criteria and important information and evidence you must provide.

You can find the video on our [Early Childhood Education and Care Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#) under the 'Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package—Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment' section.

For more information on the application process, please contact [ECECR relief@dese.gov.au](mailto:ECECR relief@dese.gov.au).

## Will Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments be backdated?

Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments based on an increase in demand will be backdated to the beginning of a **relevant four-week period**. The first four-week period commenced on 6 April 2020.

The four-week periods are:

- Period 1 – 6 April 2020 to 3 May 2020
- Period 2 – 4 May 2020 to 31 May 2020
- Period 3 – 1 June 2020 to 28 June 2020.

The following Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments will be backdated until the commencement of the Relief Package on **6 April 2020**:

- to support providers that are operated by non-government schools and large charities/not-for-profit organisations that are not eligible for JobKeeper Payment
- to providers of Family Day Care and In Home Care services, on behalf of their (sole trader contractor) educators who are not eligible for the JobKeeper Payment.

Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments made to services who have more than 30 per cent of full-time equivalent employees who are ineligible for JobKeeper will be backdated to **18 May 2020**.

For more information, please see [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package – Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment](#).



## Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) and the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

Even though Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) is not being paid to services during the Early Childhood and Care Relief Package (Relief Package) period, there are some things you should note about children who are 'at risk' in your service.

### Should I continue to submit certificates and determinations?

Yes. The Child Care Subsidy System will continue to accept and process applications for certificates and determinations during the Relief Package period, with payments beginning to flow when the Relief Package ceases. We encourage providers to continue to submit ACCS (child wellbeing) certificates and determinations, as they fall due. This will help ensure a smooth transition back to regular ACCS (child wellbeing) payments when the system returns to its normal payment arrangements, and reduce the risk of any delays.

### What if the current determination has already lapsed or I am providing care to new 'at risk' children?

Where ACCS (child wellbeing) determinations have already lapsed or where new 'at risk' children may be receiving care, we would also encourage providers to submit a new application for a determination, or a certificate for new children, as soon as they are able to, to help ensure a smooth transition to normal payment arrangements, and reduce the risk of any delays.

### Do I still need to refer 'at risk' families to state and territory support agencies?

Yes. Where you identify that a child at your service is 'at risk' for the purposes of ACCS (child wellbeing), as a condition of receiving payments through the Relief Package, you are required to make a referral to an appropriate support agency as per the existing ACCS (child wellbeing) referral requirements. As families will not be charged fees during the Relief Package period, you may have new enrolment enquiries for children who are 'at risk'. This is an opportunity to engage these families in care and improve visibility of the 'at risk' child in the community.

## New early childhood online safety education initiative

On 18 May 2020, a new early childhood online safety education initiative was launched which aims to help parents, carers and educators teach infants, toddlers and pre-school children basic technology and online safety concepts.



[Playing IT Safe](#), developed by the Alannah & Madeline Foundation, includes an introduction to online safety education through preventative messaging and a series of digital play-based and offline activities that children can undertake with educators in early learning environments, and at home with parents and carers.

## Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk closed on Monday 1 June 2020 – Reconciliation Day public holiday

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Monday, 1 June 2020. It will reopen at 9:00am (AEST) Tuesday, 2 June 2020.

During this time you can still send your question through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible.

Should you require assistance during this period, you can also refer to the [COVID-19 webpage, information resources for providers](#) and the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



## Physical distancing in services and "venue density rules"

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee have reviewed the physical distancing requirements for early childhood education and care services and determined that the 'venue density rule' of no more than 1 person per 4 square metres is not appropriate or practical in early childhood and learning centres, nor is maintaining 1.5m between children. The full advice is available at [health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-early-childhood-and-learning-centres](https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-early-childhood-and-learning-centres).

Safe Work Australia (SWA) have also updated their advice for services, explaining that children are not to be included in any calculations of 4 square metres per person, however employers are reminded these principles should be adhered to "so far as is reasonably practicable" for adults in services, including visitors. The SWA advice is available at [safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/early-childhood-education/physical-distancing?tab=tab-toc-employer](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/early-childhood-education/physical-distancing?tab=tab-toc-employer).

## Information for non-government schools - Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment

Following the Australian Government's decision to expand the Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment to support early childhood education and care services that are not eligible for the JobKeeper Payment, services associated with non-government schools have now received a separate payment to cover the period from 6 April 2020. Going forward, these payments will be included with the regular weekly Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment.

If you are a service associated with a non-government school that is not eligible for JobKeeper and you have not received an Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment, you should contact the department.

All services that are receiving Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments must tell the department if:

- the service closes
- the service experiences a decline in attendance or hours of care provided, or
- the service's income increases (including if you receive any government financial assistance such as JobKeeper).

You can keep the department informed by emailing: [ECECreliiefpackage@dese.gov.au](mailto:ECECreliiefpackage@dese.gov.au). Your service name and service CRN should be included in the email subject header.



## Contacting the department

We have taken on board feedback that some providers have had difficulty contacting or receiving a response from the department regarding the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package (Relief Package) announced on 2 April 2020.

These are challenging times and we endeavour to support and maintain communication with the sector to ensure your concerns regarding viability are considered. We are receiving a significantly high volume of emails and have established teams to prioritise management of issues that arise and we apologise for any delay in responding.

We are committed to responding to your concerns in a timely manner and appreciate your patience. If your query/concern has become urgent and you require additional support, or you have not had any response from the department regarding the Relief Package, please contact the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk at [CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au) or on **1300 667 276**.

## Reminder: Please update your details in the Child Care Subsidy System

As we navigate COVID-19, the department is engaging directly with both providers and services more often, including through the recent ORIMA Survey and Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package funding arrangements.

Unfortunately, many contact details are out of date, resulting in providers and services missing important information.

The department encourages providers to update both your provider and each service's contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS), particularly email addresses. The provider and service email addresses could be the same, but both may need updating.

You can update your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#). Guidance is available in the task card '[How to View and Update Organisation Details in the PEP](#)'.

Alternatively, you can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance updating your details via a third party software program.

Please also check your 'junk mail' folders if you think you may have missed an email from the department.

## Updated COVID-19 information

We have updated the [COVID-19 information](#) on our website in line with the recent [response](#) to the Four Week Review of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

The updated information includes:



- new [Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment application](#) available for services that have a high number of staff ineligible for the JobKeeper Payment
- updated [Frequently Asked Questions](#), and
- updated information sheets:
  - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for early childhood education and care providers and services from 6 April 2020](#)
  - [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Conditions](#)
  - [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package – Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment](#)
  - [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package – Information for Family Day Care and In Home Care Providers](#)

Please regularly check the [website](#) to ensure you are using the latest information.



21 May 2020

## Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Phase Two ORIMA Survey

Thank you to the over 5,000 services who have completed the second ORIMA survey by 9:00 am today. The department appreciates the contribution of the sector in such a short timeframe to informing important decisions on the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package and transition back to Child Care Subsidy arrangements.

A number of services have advised that they had worked very hard to collate their data but were unable to complete the survey by the time it closed this morning. To accommodate that feedback, the survey is being reopened until **midday (AEST) Friday 22 May 2020**.

Please note, this later data will not be incorporated in the **initial** analysis, but will be incorporated into the **final** survey analysis.

A reminder that weblinks to the online survey were sent to the email address **as provided by services in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS)**. Please check your junk mail folder for an email from ORIMA if you have not received the link to your service's survey. Unfortunately there is no capacity at this time to re-issue survey links.

To ensure that your service is included in any future surveys please make sure your contact details (particularly email addresses) are up to date in the CCSS. You can do this via the [Provider Entry Point](#) or through your third party software.



20 May 2020

## Response to the Four Week Review of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

The Australian Government has responded to the [Four Week Review of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package](#) with the Minister for Education Dan Tehan [announcing](#) an additional \$12.8 million in funding to support services to continue to provide care for essential workers and vulnerable children. This new funding includes:

- \$12 million for child care services that have more than 30 per cent or more of full-time equivalent staff ineligible for the JobKeeper Payment.
- \$800,000 to increase the level of funding for In Home Care providers.

For more information visit [dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare](https://dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare).





20 May 2020

## Reminder: Rapid follow up survey - Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

We strongly encourage services to complete the rapid follow up survey distributed by ORIMA on Monday 18 May, for response by 9am (AEST) Thursday 21 May 2020.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting the early childhood education and care sector as the economy reopens, schools return and demand for early childhood education and care increases.

This second survey, together with ongoing consultation across the sector, will inform the timing and method for return to the Child Care Subsidy System.



19 May 2020

## Are any of your families new to child care?

Dear Provider

**Please forward the below information to your families.**

If you have families at your service that are new to child care since 6 April 2020, they may want to claim Child Care Subsidy (CCS) when it starts again.

This email contains information designed to help those families understand CCS and how to apply.

If you receive questions from families, you should encourage them to visit the [Services Australia](#) website.

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement and Education Team

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Dear Families

In response to COVID-19, child care is free. This means Centrelink is not currently paying Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

If you were getting CCS before 6 April 2020, you won't need to do anything for it to start again when the free child care period ends.

If you recently started using child care, you should find out about CCS.

### **What is CCS?**

CCS helps with the cost of approved child care. Centrelink pays this subsidy directly to your child care provider to reduce the fees you pay.

### **Who can get it?**

To get CCS you need to meet [certain requirements](#). Centrelink will also consider your circumstances to work out [how much you can get](#).

### **How do I apply?**

If you want to get CCS when it starts again, and haven't already applied, you should [submit your claim](#) now.

Find out more about [CCS if you're new to child care](#) on the Services Australia website.



18 May 2020

## Rapid follow up survey – Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

ORIMA research are now sending links to services for a rapid follow up survey on the ECEC Relief Package, **for response by 9:00am (AEST) Thursday 21 May.**

We strongly encourage services to complete the survey, which will inform the next phase of ECEC arrangements, in the context of [the Prime Minister's announcement on 8 May 2020](#) of a three step approach to reopening the Australian economy by July 2020.

Given tight timeframes, the survey will only be available for completion online on a service by service basis. ORIMA is sending large providers a spreadsheet with survey links for each of their services, so providers may choose to complete the survey centrally for a representative sample of their services (for example, a selection of services across inner metro, outer metro and regional locations).

The department would like to thank the sector for the high (54%) response rate to the first ORIMA survey, which provided useful feedback to inform the Four Week Review. The Government is likely to make initial announcements regarding the Review shortly.

The department will also continue to engage with ECEC peak bodies and a range of providers and services to inform consideration of future arrangements.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## Rapid follow up survey: Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

Thank you to the many services that responded to the ORIMA Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Relief Package survey. Over 7,000 services had their say – more than half the sector! The results showed that the Relief Package has helped over 80% of services to stay open, retain staff and continue to provide early childhood education and care.

The Australian Government is currently considering the Four Week Review of the Relief Package, with an announcement of the Government's response expected soon.

The Government is also considering the next phase of ECEC arrangements, in the context of [the Prime Minister's announcement on 8 May 2020](#) of a three step approach to reopening the Australian economy by July 2020.

To help inform this, the department has asked ORIMA Research to conduct a quick follow up survey of services next week.

There will only be a small window of a couple of days to respond, so you may wish to prepare ahead of time by:

1. Calculating how many children attended your service, and for how many hours, for each day over the week beginning **Sunday 10 May 2020**.
2. Engaging with families to find out how their circumstances are changing with the economy reopening and schools returning, to understand how much early childhood education and care they expect to need over the next few months.

Due to the short timeframe of this survey, the department will be using the same contact details as the previous survey and will be seeking responses at each service level online, including for large providers.

The department continues to also engage with ECEC peak bodies and directly with a range of providers and services to inform consideration of future arrangements.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## COVID-19 and children's safety

As the COVID-19 situation continues to unfold, the issues children are facing during this pandemic are widespread and for some include an increased risk to their safety and wellbeing.

The National Office for Child Safety has published an open letter on [COVID-19 and Children's Safety](#).

The letter contains information on the risks children face in this new COVID-19 environment and helpful resources to keep them safe.

## Please update your details in the Child Care Subsidy System

As we navigate COVID-19, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment is engaging directly with both providers and services more often, including through the recent ORIMA Survey and on Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package funding arrangements.

Unfortunately, many contact details are out of date, resulting in providers and services missing out on important information.

The department encourages providers to update both your provider and each service's contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS), particularly email addresses. The provider and service email addresses could be the same, but both may need updating.

You can update your details via the Provider Entry Point (PEP). Guidance is available in the task card ['How to View and Update Organisation Details in the Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)'](#).

Alternatively, you can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance updating your details via a third party software program.

Please also check your 'junk mail' folders if you think you may have missed an email from the department.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



8 May 2020

## Services Australia is asking parents to update income estimates for 2020-21

Dear Provider

**Please forward the below information to your families.**

Families who are eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy payments from Centrelink may be asked to provide their family income estimate for the 2020-21 financial year.

If you receive questions from families, you should encourage them to visit the [Services Australia](#) website.

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement and Education Team

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Dear Families

If you are eligible to receive payments from Centrelink, such as Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Family Tax Benefit (FTB), you may be asked to provide your family income estimate for the 2020-21 financial year.

You need to do this even though you aren't currently paying child care fees. This is because Centrelink will use this estimate to work out how much CCS and FTB you will get **next financial year**.

There's more information about [updating your family income estimate for the 2020-21 financial year](#) on the Services Australia website.



## NEW COVID-19 Information Session

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has recorded a new information session for providers and services to discuss key updates to the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

The session covers:

- expansion of the Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments and tips for completing the application
- increased access to the JobKeeper Payment
- maximising & prioritising care
- the Four Week review of the Relief Package.

Please note the session was **not** streamed live.

[Watch it now!](#)

## Reporting of temporary closures of services

If your service is required to temporarily close for any reason you must report the closure and re-opening. Failure to report a re-opening may impact your Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package payments.

You must report your service closure and re-opening in a timely manner, clearly stating the reason for the closure to the following authorities within 24 hours:

1. Your [state or territory regulatory authority](#) AND
2. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment in your state or territory (contact details below).

### Contact details for state and territory offices

- New South Wales & Australian Capital Territory [CCSAssessments-NSWACT@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-NSWACT@dese.gov.au)
- Victoria [CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au)
- Queensland [CCSAssessments-QLD@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-QLD@dese.gov.au)
- Western Australia [CCSAssessments-WA@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-WA@dese.gov.au)
- South Australia [ChildcareSA@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareSA@dese.gov.au)
- Tasmania [ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au)
- Northern Territory [ChildcareNT@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareNT@dese.gov.au)



## Please update your details in the Child Care Subsidy System

As we navigate COVID-19, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment is engaging directly with both providers and services more often, including through the recent ORIMA Survey and on Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package funding arrangements.

Unfortunately, many contact details are out of date, resulting in providers and services missing out on important information.

The department encourages providers to update both your provider and each service's contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS), particularly email addresses. The provider and service email addresses could be the same, but both may need updating.

You can use your third party software to update your contact details. Alternatively, guidance is available in the task card ['How to View and Update Organisation Details in the Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)'](#).

Please also check your 'junk mail' folders if you think you may have missed an email from the department.

## Child Care Subsidy providers and service approval applications during COVID-19

Applications received by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) provider and service approval between 6 April and 28 June 2020 will not be assessed unless exceptional circumstances apply.

The department's efforts are currently focused on the implementation of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package which is an essential measure to support the sustainability of the child care sector during COVID-19. To assist with the implementation, a pause has been put in place for the receipt and assessment of CCS provider and service applications.

For more information please refer to our [factsheet](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) on CCS provider and service approval during COVID-19, or call 1300 363 079 to speak to the CCS Assessment Team in your state or territory.

## Talking to children about natural disasters, traumatic events, or worries about the future

This week's mental health resource is a video from [Emerging Minds](#) on [Talking to children about natural disasters, traumatic events, or worries about the future](#).

You might find this useful for supporting children who are anxious regarding media coverage of the recent bushfires, COVID-19 or other traumatic events.





Further mental health resources are available at [emergingminds.com.au](https://emergingminds.com.au) or through our [Emergency and Natural Disaster Assistance](#) webpage.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## No formal schooling to take place during sessions of care

A reminder that children attending care at your service must not be engaged in formal schooling, including home schooling, distance education or online schooling such as the programs many schools are currently providing to parents/carers to deliver to their children.

For more information, visit the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

## Assistance for providers and services

Our Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk can assist providers and services with information regarding the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package – however they are unable to provide business and financial advice to providers and services.

You can email the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk at [CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au), send in your questions via an [online form](#) available on our website, or call **1300 667 276** between 9:00 am and 7:00 pm (AEST), Monday – Friday.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## More child care providers to receive the JobKeeper Payment

The [Australian Tax Office](#) (ATO) has confirmed a new ruling that clarifies eligibility for the JobKeeper Payment for most early childhood education and care (ECEC) services receiving the ECEC Relief Package.

As part of the [eligibility requirements](#) for JobKeeper a decline in turnover test requires providers to demonstrate a fall in “GST turnover” even if an entity was not registered for GST.

The ATO ruling means that any ECEC Relief Package or Exceptional Circumstances Supplementary Payments made to a provider will **not** be considered as taxable supply, which means the payments have been made exempt from GST.

This means ECEC providers will not have to count Relief Package and Exceptional Circumstances payments for the purposes of applying for JobKeeper.

As a result JobKeeper should now be more easily accessible for those providers receiving the ECEC Relief Package payments or Exceptional Circumstances Supplementary Payment provided they do not have access to other income streams (such as being part of a larger entity like a non-government school or a not-for-profit organisation).

For those ECEC providers which do have access to other income, and therefore are not eligible for Jobkeeper, the section below details extra support we can provide.

Detailed guidance will be provided on the [ATO JobKeeper website](#).

## Expansion of the Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment eligibility criteria

The ECEC Relief Package payment is complementary to other government assistance, particularly the JobKeeper Payment. Eligible providers should have applied for the JobKeeper Payment and other available state and Australian Government support to ensure they are maximising all available assistance.

**Providers who are part of non-government schools and large charities/not-for-profit organisations** will be contacted directly by the department and receive an increase to the base payment under the relief package if they confirm that they are ineligible for the JobKeeper Payment, whether or not they have submitted an application for Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment.

For those providers who could receive JobKeeper Payment but their employees are not eligible, this would not be an acceptable reason to apply for Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments.



Providers who are part of non-government schools, you do not need to do anything. Non-government schools will have their payments automatically increased. If you are part of a larger not-for-profit organisation, we will write to you and ask you to confirm that you are not eligible for JobKeeper, and then your payments will be increased each week. Both of these groups will also receive a separate payment to cover the period from 6 April.

**State and local government services** can continue to apply for support through the exceptional circumstances process where they have more children attending and/or a significant increase in the hours of attendance compared to the reference period.

However, these services cannot get extra support on the basis of JobKeeper ineligibility.

The New South Wales Government is meeting the extra costs for local council and state government providers unable to access JobKeeper. Other state governments are being encouraged to do the same.

**Family Day Care (FDC) or In Home Care (IHC) services** with current (sole trader/ contractor) educators who are not eligible for the JobKeeper Payment can also now apply for the Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment using the current application form, as long as their educators apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN) by 1 June 2020.

If an FDC/IHC service has already made an application through the exceptional circumstance process, the department will be in will contact with them shortly to request further information about those educators (sole trader contractors) who are not eligible for JobKeeper Payment. Confirmation and evidence will be sought that all relevant educators have applied for an ABN before any additional payment can be assessed.

Remember – whether or not all your FDC or IHC educators are covered by an ABN – you can still apply for extra support through the exceptional circumstances process if you are delivering more care now than you did in the reference period.

### **New services**

The rules in relation to new services have not changed.

Providers can still apply for relief package payments for services which commenced after the reference period, however these payments will only be made at the base payment rate. This is because these providers can still apply for assistance with JobKeeper payments.

We will work with new services to advise you of your reference period, which is generally the first full two weeks of operation. You will need to provide supporting evidence for this.

If your demand increases after your reference period, you can apply for extra support.

If a provider is not eligible for JobKeeper for a new service – for one of the reasons outlined above – the provider should follow the processes outlined above, depending which category the provider falls into.

### **Other service types**



If you are a provider who is not in one of these groups, but you believe you are not eligible for the JobKeeper Payments, you can still apply for an Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment.

### Summary – providers not eligible for JobKeeper

- Non-government schools will be contacted directly by the department and receive a top-up payment if they are ineligible for JobKeeper, whether or not they have submitted an application for Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment
- Services which are part of a larger not-for-profit organisation will be contacted directly by the department and receive a top-up payment if they are ineligible for JobKeeper, whether or not they have submitted an application for Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment
- Local council services which have applied for an Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment on the basis of more children in their care now than they did in the reference period can get a top-up payment for this extra demand, but NOT to compensate for not being eligible for JobKeeper (they should contact their state government in this latter regard)
- Family Day Care or In Home Care services where not all educators were covered by an ABN on 12 March 2020 and are therefore those educators are not eligible for JobKeeper can apply for help through Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment process to cover the costs for those ineligible educators.
  - To get this extra help, those educators will need to apply for an ABN before 1 June 2020.

## Updated COVID-19 information

We have updated the COVID-19 information on our [website](#) to reflect the changes to the Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payments.

The updated information includes:

- Updated [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for early childhood education and care providers and services](#) information sheet
- Updated [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Conditions](#) information sheet
- Updated [Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment](#) information sheet
- Updated [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package - Information for Family Day Care and In Home Care Providers](#) information sheet
- Updated [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Please regularly check the website to help ensure that you are using the latest information.

You can also contact the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk at [CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au), via an [online form](#) or on 1300 667 276 between 9:00 am – 7:00 pm (AEST), Monday – Friday.



# Reminder: Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Survey

Thank you to the many services that have already had their say in the Relief Package survey.

Have your say on the Relief Package through the ORIMA survey by 12:00 pm (AEST) Friday 1 May 2020.

The ORIMA survey for the Relief Package was sent to the email address of all services as recorded in Child Care Subsidy System on Friday 24 April, 2020.

If your service has not received the survey email, please check that your email hasn't gone into your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, please contact ORIMA at [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and ensure that you provide details of the provider, service (or services) and the email address/es you would like the survey to be sent to.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



29 April 2020

## Reminder: Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Survey

Thank you to the many services that have already had their say in the ECEC Relief Package survey.

Have your say on the Relief Package through the ORIMA survey by **12:00 pm (AEST) Friday 1 May 2020**.

The ORIMA survey for the ECEC Relief Package was sent to the email address of all services as recorded in Child Care Subsidy System on Friday 24 April, 2020.

If your service has not received the survey email, please check that your email hasn't gone into your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find your email, please contact ORIMA at [surveys@orima.com](mailto:surveys@orima.com) and ensure that you provide details of the provider, service (or services) and the email address/es you would like the survey to be sent to.

## This week's [Emerging Minds](#) mental health resource: How to support children in the short term after a disaster or community trauma

Returning to an educator role in a community that has experienced a disaster can be overwhelming. This week we are highlighting another key mental health resource from the [Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit](#) to assist children, parents and communities affected by the bushfires and other disasters or community trauma.

This resource highlights how to support children in the weeks and first few months following a disaster or community trauma. Check it out here: [How to support children in the short term following a disaster or community trauma](#).

Further mental health resources are available at [emergingminds.com.au](http://emergingminds.com.au) or through our [Emergency and Natural Disaster Assistance](#) webpage.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## Reminder about maximising and prioritising care

We appreciate the care you are providing during this difficult time, and that you are needing to make careful business decisions to protect the health and safety of children and staff, and in some cases to manage staff absences. We have had reports that some families are having problems accessing care, and thought this was a good moment to reflect on some of these competing priorities, and to recap your obligations in return for receiving Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package funding.

To receive the Relief Package payments, it is expected that you will consider the staff and resources you have available and provide the maximum amount of care that you can for families and children that need it during this time.

You **must** also prioritise care to children of essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children.

We do not expect you to compromise the safety of your service, and we know that you may not have the usual incentives to take on children during this time. However, we do expect you to think carefully and maximise the care you are providing, and to have policies in place to ensure you can and are prioritising essential workers and vulnerable children.

Families and services can report concerns about services not adhering with the conditions of the Relief Package to the department by phoning **1800 664 231** or by emailing [tipoffline@dese.gov.au](mailto:tipoffline@dese.gov.au). For example, if a family believes a service has capacity to provide more care but is electing not to do so, or that a service is not prioritising essential workers in offering that care, they can and are contacting this line.

We will look carefully at the Government help you are receiving – both through the Relief Package and the JobKeeper payment, to consider if the care you are providing is reasonable. Providers found not to be following the requirements of the Family Assistance Law, including the Relief Package, may have their payments cancelled.

Services experiencing a significantly higher demand should apply for an [Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment](#).

It is also very important that services remain connected to their children and families, as the Relief Package is only operating for a time limited period. When it comes to an end, the relationships between families and services will determine funding flows going forward as they always have.

## Helpline to assist families find care during the COVID-19 pandemic now available

On behalf of the department, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is delivering a national toll free helpline to assist parents and carers to find an early childhood education and care service during the COVID-19 pandemic.





The helpline contact number is **1800 291 041** and it will operate between 9:00 am - 5:00 pm (AEST), Monday – Friday (excluding public holidays).

Please share the helpline number with any families that you are unable to assist whose child care or work arrangements are being impacted by COVID-19.

Families, including essential workers and those with vulnerable children, can also search for early childhood education and child care services online using [Starting Blocks](#) or [Child Care Finder](#).

For more information, visit [ACECQA](#).

## Helpdesk for providers and services

Our Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk is also available to assist providers and services with information to help you manage the impacts on your business. You can email the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk at [CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@dese.gov.au), send in your question via an [online form](#) available on our website, or call **1300 667 276** between 9:00 am - 7:00 pm (AEST), Monday - Friday.

## Clarification: Providers' service offering under the Relief Package

Many of you had questions about the information provided in the department's recent information session on 14 April 2020 on whether or not you can charge for consumable items or increase administrative fees under the Relief Package.

In summary, a provider's usual service offering should not change:

- If you provided consumable items such as meals, nappies or art supplies before the introduction of the Relief Package on 6 April 2020 then you need to continue to offer these services and to not charge families for these items.
- If providers required families to bring consumables such as meals, nappies or art supplied before the introduction of the Relief Package, then these arrangements can continue.
- If you charge administrative fees, such as late pick-up fees, these can continue under the Relief Package but the fees cannot be increased and no fees can be added that were not listed in the family's Complying Written Agreement.

More information is available in the [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for early childhood education and care providers](#). Updated COVID-19 information

We have updated the COVID-19 information on our [website](#).

The updated information includes:

- [Presentation slides](#) for the [COVID-19 information session](#) held on 14 April 2020.
- Updated [Frequently Asked Questions](#).



Please regularly check the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) website to help ensure that you are using the latest information.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



24 April 2020

## ORIMA Survey - Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has engaged ORIMA Research to undertake a quick pulse survey of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector to get your feedback on the ECEC Relief Package.

Services may be experiencing impacts from the package and COVID-19 differently – we need your help to understand your situation.

The Package, together with the JobKeeper Payment, aims to support sector viability and services to retain staff and continue to provide quality early childhood education and care, particularly for children of essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and existing families enrolled with you in the two weeks prior to 2 March 2020 (or the relevant vacation period).

Today, services will receive an email or SMS from ORIMA Research seeking information on:

- changes in your staffing and attendance levels since 1 March 2020
- whether you are eligible for the JobKeeper Payment
- how many of your employees/educators are eligible for the JobKeeper Payment
- how you are approaching providing care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families previously enrolled with you, and
- service financial viability and staff retention.

Applications are now open for the JobKeeper Payment through the ATO Business Portal, and eligible providers will be back-paid for eligible employees – please refer to information on the [ATO website](#). First payments are due around the first week of May.

We need your help to complete the survey so that we have as much information as possible from our wide and varied sector!

## Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk closed on Monday 27 April 2020 - Anzac Day public holiday

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Monday, 27 April 2020. It will reopen at 9:00am (AEST) Tuesday, 28 April 2020.

During this time you can still send your questions through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible.

Should you require assistance during this period, you can also refer to the [COVID-19 webpage](#), [information resources for providers](#) and the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).



14 April 2020

## NEW COVID-19 Information Session

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has recorded a new information session for providers and services to discuss the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

The session covers

- Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package payments including supplementary payments for exceptional circumstances
- other Australian Government assistance including the JobKeeper Payment
- answers to frequently asked questions.

Please note the session was **not** streamed live.

[Watch it now!](#)

Please continue to check the [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for early childhood education and care providers](#) webpage as we update these regularly.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



12 April 2020

## Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Frequently Asked Questions

We have updated the COVID-19 [Frequently Asked Questions](#) with further information on the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package payment, including tips for completing applications for supplementary payments for exceptional circumstances.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## Exceptional Circumstance supplementary payment application now available

Providers may apply to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to receive a higher rate of Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package payment in exceptional circumstances.

These include:

- the current number of enrolments and attendance at a service from 6 April 2020 (and onwards) are significantly and demonstratively higher than the number of enrolments and attendance at the service during the reference period; and/or
- a service experiences a significantly higher demand for child care for vulnerable and disadvantaged children during the period 6 April 2020 to 28 June 2020.

Providers seeking a supplementary payment amount should complete the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Payment - Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment application on the [website](#) and outline their circumstances to request a higher rate of payment.

Providers will need to provide rationale and evidence supporting their application for a higher rate.

## NEW COVID-19 Information session

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment will record a new information session next week for providers and services to discuss the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

The webcast will cover the new relief package payments, including intersections with other Australian Government assistance and answers to frequently asked questions.

If you have questions you would like us to answer during this session, please email [ECCCStakeholderEngagement@dese.gov.au](mailto:ECCCStakeholderEngagement@dese.gov.au). Please do not send personal, identifiable details. We will not be able to answer every question, but will use them to inform future communications.

## Inclusion Support Program Frequently Asked Questions

We have updated the COVID-19 [Frequently Asked Questions](#) with information on arrangements for the Inclusion Support Program during the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package period.



## Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Conditions

More information is now available for providers and services about the Australian Government's new [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package](#) payments.

This includes the conditions you are required to meet if you are receiving these payments. These conditions are outlined in the [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Conditions](#) document published today.

This document also includes information about:

- how the payments are calculated
- information about supplementary payments including the circumstances in which services may be eligible for these payments including, but not limited to, where:
  - the number of enrolments and attendances during the reference period is significantly and demonstratively lower than the current number of enrolments at the service (from 6 April 2020 onwards)
  - a service either maintains their previous level of attendances or experiences a significantly higher demand for child care for children of essential workers and/or vulnerable and disadvantaged children during the period 6 April 2020 to 28 June 2020.

The form to apply for supplementary payments will be available from 9 April 2020. The department will email the relevant link to providers and services when the application form goes live today.

We have also developed a new [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package - Exceptional Circumstance Supplementary Payment](#) information sheet for services about the supplementary payments which you can access.

## Advance Payments

To give services time to [register your interest](#) for [JobKeeper Payment](#), and apply for a supplementary payment where there are exceptional circumstances, the department will be combining the second and third payments (to be paid at the time of the second payment). Other subsequent payments will stay on a weekly cycle at this stage, but this advance payment will mean there will be one less weekly payment at the end of the twelve week payment period.





# Webcast on Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

Next week (commencing Tuesday 14 April 2020), the department will be hosting a webcast to address your concerns and questions. Details to follow on timing.

## Answers to some Frequently Asked Questions

We have included below some answers to a few frequently asked questions we have been receiving. Remember to visit our [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#) webpage which is updated regularly.

### Will immunisation requirements for children continue?

Yes. All Child Care Subsidy (CCS) eligibility requirements will continue in place, and all approved providers and services must continue to comply with Family Assistance Law and National Law requirements. This includes the requirement under the Child Care Subsidy for children to meet the Childhood schedule on the Department of Health's [National Immunisation Program Schedule](#), be on a suitable catch up schedule in line with the Department of Health's current [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#), or have an approved [medical exemption](#) recorded on the [Australian Immunisation Register \(AIR\)](#).

For all care types, except In Home Care, families with children who do not meet the CCS immunisation requirements can attend child care services being supported by payments under the package where permitted to do so under state or territory regulations. These children must be enrolled under a Relevant Arrangement or Organisational Arrangement.

For families using In Home Care, all children attending an In Home Care service must be CCS eligible. Children who do not meet the CCS immunisation requirements cannot attend In Home Care child care services.

### Can families who do not meet the Child Care Subsidy residency requirements enrol their children to attend a service receiving payments under the Package?

Yes. Families who do not meet the Child Care Subsidy residency requirements can be enrolled under a Relevant Arrangement or Organisational Arrangement enrolment while payments under the package are being made, noting however priority for child care places are to be given to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children.

### Can families who have children enrolled under a Relevant or Organisational Arrangement attend a service receiving payments under the Package for free?

Yes, for the duration of the Package.



## What support is available for Family Day Care Services?

In recognition of the unique nature of care that is provided by Family Day Care services, a dedicated [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package - Information for Family Day Care](#) information sheet is available to address issues as they specifically relate to Family Day Care. This includes what support is available, interaction of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package with JobKeeper Payment and how to address a large number of requests for enrolments.

## Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk closed on Friday 10 & Monday 13 April 2020 - Easter public holidays

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Friday, 10 April 2020 and Monday, 13 April 2020. It will reopen at 8:00am (AEST) Tuesday, 14 April 2020.

During this time you can still send your question through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible.

Should you require assistance during this period, you can also refer to the [COVID-19 webpage](#), [information resources for providers](#) and the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



8 April 2020

## Help your families understand the new Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

Dear Provider

**Please forward the below information to your families.**

On 2 April 2020, the Australian Government announced the new Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

From Monday 6 April 2020 payments will be made directly to early childhood education and care services in lieu of the Child Care Subsidy and the Additional Child Care Subsidy, to help you keep your doors open and employees in their jobs.

This email contains information designed to help your families understand how the package will assist them.

If you receive questions from families, you can encourage them to visit [servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au).

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement and Education Team

---

Dear Families

On 2 April 2020, the Australian Government announced the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package that gives families much-needed fee relief while supporting services to keep their doors open and employees in their jobs.

### **What do you need to know?**

From 6 April to 28 June 2020, you won't need to pay fees when you access child care. This will ensure care remains available to you if you need it. We are prioritising care for essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children.

For this period, the Government will provide direct funding to services so we can remain open. Because of this, Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy won't be paid during this time. If you've recently submitted a claim for Additional Child Care Subsidy (Temporary Financial Hardship), and you are eligible, it will only be paid until 5 April 2020.

### **What do you need to do?**

If your enrolment is still current, there's nothing you need to do. Please keep attending as you need.



If you've stopped your child's enrolment, you should contact us. Any families who are re-enrolling will need to confirm their new enrolment with Services Australia in their Centrelink online account through [myGov](#).

Although you won't be getting Child Care Subsidy, you should make sure you stay eligible for Child Care Subsidy. This includes:

- continuing to care for your child at least 14% of the time
- meeting immunisation requirements
- telling Services Australia if you have a change in your circumstances.

On 29 June 2020, your Child Care Subsidy will start again as long as you stay eligible. There's nothing you'll need to do to start it again.

You should continue to update your family income estimate with Services Australia as necessary, especially if you get Family Tax Benefit. You can do that online in your Centrelink online account through [myGov](#).

#### **Where can you find more information?**

To find out more, visit [servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au).



## Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package Payments commence today

Payments to services under the Australian Government's new [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package](#) will be processed from today. Services are reminded that, in return for receiving payments, you are required to:

- stay open unless closed on public health advice or for other health and safety reasons
- ensure families are not charged a fee, including an out of pocket or gap fee
- prioritise care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children
- continue to record attendance of children
- comply with all other provider obligations including National Quality Framework and other relevant conditions of approval under Family Assistance Law.

Services will be able to view payment details in their third party software or the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) from tomorrow. Services will also receive Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy payments this week for sessions of care provided and entered into the system up to the close of 5 April 2020.

## Providers with more than one service -ensure your bank account details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System

It is important that providers with more than one service include **up to date bank account details** at the provider level in the Child Care Subsidy System as soon as possible to streamline payments under the [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package](#). This will not affect the processing of payments to individual services, but ensuring provider's bank account details are correct will assist the department should any manual processing be required.

### How to update your details

You can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance updating your details.

Alternatively, you can update your details via the [PEP](#). Please refer to the [Task Card](#) on the department's website if you need further assistance on how to update your organisation details in the PEP.



# Make sure you get all the support available from the Government

The [Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package](#) payment complements the JobKeeper and other Business Support Payments. Please keep checking the Department of Treasury website at [treasury.gov.au/coronavirus/jobkeeper](https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus/jobkeeper) for more information on how this will work.

## Updated COVID-19 information

We have updated the COVID-19 information on our [website](#).

The updated information includes:

- **Updated** [information for early childhood education and care providers and services – up to and including 5 April 2020](#)
- **Updated** [information for early childhood education and care providers and services from 6 April 2020](#)
- **Updated** [Frequently Asked Questions](#) including information for Family Day Care and In Home Care.

Please regularly check the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) website to help ensure that you are using the latest information.

## Australian Health Protection Principal Committee COVID-19 statement

On 3 April 2020, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) released a statement about COVID-19 in children and early childhood education and care services.

The Committee's advice is that pre-emptive closures are not proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time. The AHPPC considers early childhood education and care services are essential services and should continue at this time, but with risk mitigation measures in place.

View the full statement at the [Australian Government Department of Health](#).

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**



## Submit your session reports before 11:59 pm (AEST) Sunday 5 April!

Please submit your final batch of session reports, relating to care provided in the fortnight ending 5 April, by 11:59pm (AEST) Sunday night. This will ensure your session reports are processed prior to the system being closed with the commencement of the new payments under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package.

## Exactly how much will a service be paid under the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package?

The department is aware there has been some confusing language about 'subsidy' floating around.

To be clear – services will be paid 50 per cent of your fees charged in the reference fortnight, up to the rate cap.

So if you charged \$100,000 in fees that fortnight, and your fees are all below the rate cap, you would get \$50,000 fortnightly for the next six fortnights. However, because you will be paid weekly, you will be paid \$25,000.

If you charge fees above the rate cap, you will receive 50 per cent of the fees you charged up to the rate cap.

## How do I know if JobKeeper applies to my business?

While Treasury is still finalising guidelines, businesses can get [JobKeeper](#) Payment if it's revenue decreases by 30 per cent (or 50 per cent if your turnover is in excess of one billion dollars).

For almost all ECEC services, the move from 100 per cent fees charged in the reference period, to 50 per cent fees paid from next week, will be enough to meet this test.

At the moment, JobKeeper does not cover local council services, however we have heard the issues that have been raised with us today about ECEC services run by local councils, and we continue to work on this issue. We will come back to you with more advice on this issue as soon as possible.

If you are a sole trader (for example, a Family Day Care educator) you are still eligible. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit [JobKeeper Payment for sole traders](#).



## What if I can't keep offering care at this level of support?

The department is setting up a process whereby services that need higher levels of support to continue to offer care to workers and vulnerable children can ask for a higher percentage. Next week, a form will be available on our website enabling people to tell us why the current support is insufficient and to explain their situation.

If you think this might apply to you, you could look at what you will get based on 50 per cent of fees charged in the reference period, and whether [JobKeeper](#) will apply to you, and how much financial support JobKeeper will give your business.

This will support you to decide if you need to make an application once this form becomes available.

## What if I have more children in my care now than I did during the reference period?

If you have more children in your care now than you had during the reference period, you can apply for a higher percent through the process mentioned above.

## Can child care providers opt out of their CCS approval?

If a child care provider wishes not to receive the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package, they should contact the relevant state and territory office. The contact details are:

- New South Wales & Australian Capital Territory [CCSAssessments-NSWACT@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-NSWACT@dese.gov.au)
- Victoria [CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-VIC@dese.gov.au)
- Queensland [CCSAssessments-QLD@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-QLD@dese.gov.au)
- Western Australia [CCSAssessments-WA@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSAssessments-WA@dese.gov.au)
- South Australia [ChildcareSA@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareSA@dese.gov.au)
- Tasmania [ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareTasmania@dese.gov.au)
- Northern Territory [ChildcareNT@dese.gov.au](mailto:ChildcareNT@dese.gov.au)

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education Skills and Employment](#).**





## Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package

Dear early childhood education and care providers and services

The availability of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is vital to ensuring that during this COVID-19 event workers can work, and children, including vulnerable children, can continue to receive high quality education and care.

The legislative amendments to the Family Assistance Law that passed last week provide some continuity of fee relief to help manage the impact of COVID-19, but more support is needed to support the provision of ECEC. The Government has listened to your concerns about ongoing business viability due to low attendance or declining enrolments, as families lose work, and seek to keep their children at home, based on advice from state health authorities.

Today, the Government announced the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package to further support the provision of essential ECEC services.

### Payments

To ensure ongoing availability of ECEC for Australian families, from 6 April until the end of the 2019-20 financial year, services that remain open and have children enrolled will receive a weekly payment to ensure they can continue to deliver ECEC to families who need it. These payments will be made instead of the usual Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) payments, which will cease from 6 April 2020. Importantly these payments will complement the Government's recently announced [JobKeeper Payment](#).

Providers will not be able to upload session reports to the Child Care Subsidy System during this period, but must continue to keep attendance records while the payments remain active. Providers should ensure they have uploaded current session reports by 11:59 pm (AEST) Sunday 5 April 2020.

Payments will be approximately 50 per cent of fees, based on a reference fortnight, up to a maximum of the hourly rate cap.

In return for receiving a payment, services are required to:

- stay open unless closed on public health advice or for other health and safety reasons
- ensure families are not charged a fee, including an out of pocket fee
- prioritise access to care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children
- continue to record attendance of children
- comply with all other provider obligations including National Quality Framework and other relevant conditions of approval under Family Assistance Law.



Where children who otherwise would be considered 'at risk' for the purposes of ACCS (child wellbeing) enrol at a service, services are required to make a referral to an appropriate support agency as per the existing ACCS (child wellbeing) referral requirements.

## No out of pocket fee

Up to and including 5 April 2020, services will now be able to waive out of pocket fees for families whose children are not attending where a service remains open. This change retrospectively takes effect from 23 March 2020 and extends the rule which allows services to waive out of pocket fees where a service is directed to close on public health advice.

From 6 April onwards, no fees can be charged to families for the period the Government is providing payments.

While we encourage services to take advantage of this provision to help families, it is ultimately a service's choice to not recover out of pocket fees.

## Further information

Two new information sheets have been [published](#). I encourage you to regularly check the department's [website](#) to ensure you are using the latest versions. More information, including frequently asked questions, will continue to be published over the coming days.

As you are well aware, the situation is changing very rapidly and we will continue to monitor the viability of ECEC services and take further steps as required to support services and families, and as we plan for recovery once the crisis is over.

I will continue to update you on important changes as we continue work with Government to support you during these unprecedented times.

Thank you again for the critical work you are doing.

Regards

Dr Ros Baxter

Deputy Secretary

Early Childhood and Child Care

Department of Education, Skills and Employment



## Make sure your session reports and details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System!

It is vital that you submit accurate session reports **on time**. Child Care Subsidy cannot be paid until a session report is received.

### How to submit session reports

- You can submit via your third party software.
- Alternatively, you can submit session reports via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#). Please refer to the [Task Card](#) on the department's website if you need further assistance on how to update session reports in the PEP.

If the Department needs to contact you, we will use the details in the Child Care Subsidy System so make sure they are up to date! We will usually contact you via email so please ensure your email address is correct and current in the system. You should also ensure the details of your Family Day Care educators are current.

### How to update your details

You can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance updating your details.

Alternatively, you can update your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#). Please refer to the [Task Card](#) on the department's website if you need further assistance on how to update your organisation details in the PEP.

## Updated Inclusion Support Program Guidelines have now been Published!

The [updated Inclusion Support Program \(ISP\) Guidelines](#) have been published and now provide support for more children with additional needs to participate in early childhood education and care.

The ISP is part of the Child Care Safety Net, which supports services to improve their capacity and capability to implement quality inclusive practices and also supports parents and carers of those children to participate in the workforce.

Key changes include:

- addressing feedback that services with children who do not have a disability are missing out on Inclusion Support



- aligning to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention approach to provide a collaborative framework of support for children with additional needs and their families.

The Department has developed an [information sheet](#) that covers all of the changes, which is also available on the department's website.

## Who can the Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk assist?

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Helpdesk assists child care providers who are authorised in the CCS System. We cannot assist with family entitlements or billing disputes.

Families can find information about CCS entitlements on the Services Australia website or by checking their Centrelink online account through myGov.

If a family is requesting assistance with their CCS entitlements there's information on the Services Australia website. Families can also check their Centrelink online account through myGov.

If you have a billing dispute with a family you can contact your state or territory department of Fair Trading/Consumer Affairs.

If you or a family are needing to report instances of fraud or non-compliance you can contact the Tip Off Line on 1800 664 231 or email [tipoffline@dese.gov.au](mailto:tipoffline@dese.gov.au) and provide the following information:

- Name of the child care service you are referring to, including address
- Parent and child CRN details if appropriate
- Details of the issue you wish to report including dates

Attach any statements or evidence.

## Beware of scam emails seeking your personal information

Please be aware there are phishing emails doing the rounds on email and social media.

Below is an example of one such email, which claims to be from Services Australia. This email is not from Services Australia. It is a scam seeking your personal information.

The ACCC provides advice on how not to "[fall for a scammer's phishing bait](#)" - we encourage you to visit their [website](#) for further information.



27 March 2020

## Please be aware there are phishing emails doing the rounds on email and social media.

Below is an example of one such email, which claims to be from Services Australia. This email is **not** from Services Australia. It is a scam seeking your personal information.

The ACCC provides advice on how not to "[fall for a scammer's phishing bait](#)" - we encourage you to visit their [website](#) for further information.

From: "Australian Government | Services Australia" <20200327@services.australia.gov.au>

To:

Sent: Fri, 27 Mar 2020 10:18:52 +1100

Subject: Approval Notification



# Australian Government

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## Services Australia

Our Reference: 14-A0-9367

Friday, March 27, 2020

### Subsidy benefit allocation

We are writing to bring to your knowledge the allocation of your subsidy benefit.

Kindly affirm your eligibility by simply replying to this secure  message appropriately, as listed below. Please indicate correctly...

Given name (first only):

Family name/Surname:

Date of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY): |

Tax File Number:

Complete Address (Street number & name/Suburb/State/Postcode):

Attach to your reply, a clear copy of your valid Australian Driver Licence **OR** Australian International Passport **and** a clear copy of your valid Medicare Card.

©2020 Commonwealth of Australia | Services Australia ABN 98 794 605 608

This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain privileged information or confidential information or both. If you are not the intended recipient please delete it and notify the sender.



# Child Care Subsidy System maintenance 27 to 29 March 2020

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the Child Care Subsidy System will be unavailable from:

- 8:00pm (AEDST) Friday, 27 March 2020 – 4:00am (AEDST) Saturday, 28 March 2020
- 8:00pm (AEDST) Saturday, 28 March 2020 – 6:00pm (AEDST) Sunday 29 March 2020

For providers and services, this means no session reports will be processed during these periods.



26 March 2020

## Important: today's COVID-19 webcast now available online

Dear early childhood education and care stakeholder,

Thank you for your interest in the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's COVID-19 webcast for providers and services.

Due to technical difficulties, the COVID-19 webcast was slightly delayed for some people. Our sincere apologies.

The session was recorded and you are now able to watch the webcast [here](#).

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement and Education Team

Department of Education, Skills and Employment



26 March 2020

## Live broadcasting delays

### COVID-19 Webcast for Providers and Services

Dear Early Childhood Education and Care stakeholder

Thank you for your interest in the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's COVID-19 webcast for providers and services.

We are currently experiencing technical difficulties with our broadcast. We expect the webcast will commence shortly.

We appreciate your patience.

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement and Education Team

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment





26 March 2020

## Reminder - The Second Coronavirus (COVID-19) Webcast for Child Care Providers and Services starts in 1 hour!

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is holding a second webcast for child care providers and services to discuss the additional support announced this week to assist the early childhood education and care sector in managing the impacts of COVID-19. The webcast will cover the new support available for families and providers and answers to frequently asked questions.

The webcast will commence in **1 hour** from **1:30pm – 2:00pm** (AEDT)\*.

Providers and services can watch the webcast live [here](#). The link will only activate 5 minutes prior to the webcast commencing.

\*Time zones for Thursday 26 March 1:30pm – 2:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (NSW,ACT,VIC,TAS); 1:00pm – 1:30pm Australian Central Daylight Time (SA) 12:30pm – 1:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (QLD); 12:00pm – 12:30pm Australian Central Standard Time (NT); 10:30am – 11:00am Australian Western Standard Time (WA).



25 March 2020

## New Information - Second Coronavirus (COVID-19) Webcast for Child Care Providers and Services

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is holding a second webcast for child care providers and services to discuss the additional support announced this week to assist the early childhood education and care sector in managing the impacts of COVID-19. The webcast will cover the new support available for families and providers and answers to frequently asked questions.

The webcast will take place on **Thursday, 26 March** from **1:30pm – 2:00pm (AEDT)\***.

Providers and services can watch the webcast live [here](#). The link will only activate 5 minutes prior to the webcast commencing.

There is no need to register for this event.

\*Time zones for Thursday 19 March 1:30pm – 2:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (NSW,ACT,VIC,TAS); 1:00pm – 1:30pm Australian Central Daylight Time (SA); 12:30pm – 1:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (QLD); 12:00pm – 12:30pm Australian Central Standard Time (NT); 10:30am – 11:00am Australian Western Standard Time (WA).



## NEW COVID-19 INFO

### Letter from Dr Ros Baxter, Deputy Secretary

Dear early childhood education and care providers and services

This week the Government introduced and passed legislative amendments to Family Assistance Law that will help families and early childhood education and care services manage the impact of the COVID-19 related events.

The amendments allow the Minister for Education to:

- increase the number of allowable absence days a child can access beyond 42 for an exceptional event or circumstance, such as COVID-19
- prescribe that additional absences (when allowable absences are exhausted) can be taken in relation to COVID-19 without evidence.

These measures will ensure continuity of fee relief where children are not able to attend a service as well as ensure that families have ample absence days for COVID-19 circumstances and for other normally accepted absences. The amendments also respond to your views and input that it may be difficult in some circumstances to obtain a medical certificate for COVID-19 related events.

In this unprecedented time, it becomes more likely that early childhood education and care services will be directed to close, on public health advice, for a short period of time because of COVID-19. Where this happens, and services choose to continue to charge families, a period of local emergency under Family Assistance Law will be recognised, and Child Care Subsidy will continue to be paid directly to services on behalf of families. This will provide some continuity for services and families alike as we work through the impacts of COVID-19 together.

A further amendment made to Family Assistance Law allows the Minister to prescribe that where services are directed to close on public health advice, they do not need to recover any out of pocket expenses from families, enabling fee relief during such difficult circumstances. This applies for the duration of the public health enforced closure.

Minister's Rules to support these legislative changes have been made and they outline how these measures take effect. These rules include:

- all families will be allocated an additional 20 days of allowable absences to use in the 2019-2020 financial year
- if additional absences are required for COVID-19 related reasons, medical evidence will not be required – active until 31 December 2020
- services will not be required to recover gap fees between now and 31 December 2020 where they are instructed to close on public health direction [Note: A legislative requirement is in place that providers must not increase fees during this period.]



As the Prime Minister has mentioned, continuing essential services such as early childhood education and care (while it is safe to do so) is crucial to continuing the education of our children, and to enabling parents, including health care professionals, to continue to work and support the broader community. It also reduces the reliance on alternative care arrangements such as grandparents or elderly relatives who are typically at higher risk of COVID-19.

These amendments are as a result of close consultation with your representative groups who continue to work with me and my team to understand your concerns and practical issues during this time and develop further options for support. I greatly appreciate the feedback you have provided to my staff and myself, which has been important in giving effect to these important changes to support services and families.

I again thank you for the invaluable support you are providing to Australian children and families, and to the educators in your services.

Further information is available on the new [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information sheet regarding periods of local emergency and absences for child care providers and services](#).

On Thursday, 26 March from 1:30pm – 2:00pm (AEDT), we are holding a second webcast for child care providers and services to discuss the new support mechanisms announced this week.

Providers and services can watch the webcast live [here](#). The link will only activate 5 minutes prior to the webcast commencing.

Regards

Dr Ros Baxter

Deputy Secretary

Early Childhood and Child Care

Department of Education, Skills and Employment



20 March 2020

## Updated - COVID-19 Information Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions

We have updated the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Information sheet for child care providers and services](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The updated information includes:

- fee information
- updating your fee and vacancy details on Child Care Finder
- In Home Care information
- Australian Government support for business owners

The newest [Frequently Asked Questions](#) will appear at the top of the existing list.

Please regularly check the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) website to help ensure that you are using the latest information.

## Now available - COVID-19 information session for early childhood education and care providers and services

Thank you again to all those who tuned in for the Coronavirus (COVID-19) information session for early childhood education and care providers and services yesterday.

As requested by many of you, the [webcast](#) is now available on our website.

In line with our commitment to accessibility, the video is currently being captioned and will be uploaded to our website shortly.

## New - COVID-19 Infection Control Training

The Australian Government Department of Health has developed an [online](#) infection control training module that covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19.

The module is easy to use, takes approximately 30 minutes to complete, and provides useful information including:

- COVID-19 – what is it?
- signs and symptoms



- keeping safe – protecting yourself and others
- myth busting

This training is **not compulsory**.

You can find the [COVID-19 Infection Control Training](#) on the Department of Health's website.

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.**



19 March 2020

## Clarification of advice in today's webcast

Thank you everyone who attended our webcast today, we hope you found the session useful.

In relation to this question, "Should a service be charging parents if their child is excluded or they choose to stay home?", we would like to clarify that the decision to charge families in this circumstance is a decision to be made by each individual provider. The Department encourages providers to charge no fees, or a reduced fee, in consideration of the outbreak of COVID-19. The requirement for families to pay the co-contribution has not changed.

We apologise for any confusion this has caused.



## Reminder–The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Webcast for Child Care Providers and Services starts in 1 hour!

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is holding a webcast for child care providers and services to discuss the existing support mechanisms in place to assist the early childhood education and care sector in managing the impacts of COVID-19.

The webcast will commence in **1 hour** from **11:30am – 12:00pm** (AEDT)\*.

Providers and services can watch the webcast live [here](#). The link will only activate 5 minutes prior to the webcast commencing.

\*Time zones for Thursday 19 March 11:30am – 12:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (NSW, ACT, VIC, TAS); 11:00am – 11:30am Australian Central Daylight Time (SA); 10:30am – 11:00am Australian Eastern Standard Time (QLD); 10:00am – 10:30am Australian Central Standard Time (NT); 8:30am – 9:00am Australian Western Standard Time (WA).

## COVID-19 resources

The Australian Government Department of Health has released a collection of [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources](#) for the general public.

Check out the resources below and share them online or at your service!

### Posters

[Good hygiene is in your hands](#)

[Recently travelled overseas](#)

[Simple steps to stop the spread](#)

### Videos

[Good Hygiene Starts Here](#)

[Stay Informed](#)

[Recent Traveller](#)

[Help Stop The Spread](#)

**For up to date information on COVID-19 for providers and services visit the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).**





18 March 2020

## COVID-19 - Letter from Dr Ros Baxter, Deputy Secretary



Dear early childhood education and care providers and services

I wanted to reach out to each of you to thank you for the support you are providing to Australian children and families, and to your educators, during this unprecedented period. I would particularly like to thank you and your representative groups for your assistance in helping me and my team understand your concerns and practical issues during this time.

As the Prime Minister has mentioned, continuing essential services such as early childhood education and care and schools (while it is safe to do so) is crucial to enabling parents, including health care professionals, to continue to work and support the broader community. It also reduces the reliance on alternative care arrangements such as grandparents or elderly relatives who are typically at higher risk of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Our primary aim is to support services to remain open for as long as possible. While the Commonwealth Government does not make decisions about school and early childhood education and care service closures, we understand that a decision about any widespread closure of services is not imminent.



Outlined below is information about the help we are providing to support early childhood education and care services continue to operate and the work we are doing to continue to plan for further impacts from the COVID-19 virus.

## ECEC sector webcast – 11:30am Thursday 19 March

I am pleased to announce we are holding a webcast tomorrow from 11:30am – 12:00pm (AEDT) to provide information on the assistance available to services and families accessing early childhood education and care in response to COVID-19. You can watch the webcast [here](#). There is no need to register for this event and it is important to note the link will not activate until five minutes prior to the webcast commencing if you can make it.

## Support for services

Please be assured that we currently have strong processes in place to support you and the families of the children in your care.

Our Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity supports continuity of early childhood education and care where service viability is affected by an unforeseen factor outside your control such as the impact of COVID-19. This could be for example, because you have had to close your service for a week or more on the direction of health or other officials.

Further information is available on the [CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity](#) webpage, including eligibility criteria and instructions on how to apply or you can email our CCCF Program team via [CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCCFSpecialCircumstances@dese.gov.au).

I also encourage you to visit [Business.gov.au](#) to find out more about the measures announced on 13 March 2020 as part of the Government's economic response to COVID-19. These measures complement existing programs, such as CCCF Special Circumstances Grants, and you may be eligible to apply for assistance under multiple programs.

## Help for families

The families of children who cannot (or choose not) to attend early childhood education and care services can also receive help. They can use their 42 allowable absence days to cover continued fee relief during any exclusions due to COVID-19. Additional absence days are also available where families provide medical evidence. We are exploring options to help families access these extra days through a more streamlined process.

If families are experiencing financial hardship because of the impact of COVID-19, and they need help making the co-contribution to their child care fees, they can access Additional Child Care Subsidy (Temporary Financial Hardship) now. We are working with Services Australia to make the process for applying as simple as possible.

## Stay in Touch

We know many of you are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on your families and your service, with the potential of decreasing enrolments and service closures. Please be assured that we have heard your concerns, and have ensured the Government has been fully briefed. The



Government is considering various options based on your input and we will keep you updated as soon as we can. This will include the help we can offer if services need to close.

In the meantime, we will continue to talk to your representative organisations, update the information available on our [website](#) and add to our [frequently asked questions](#). You can also contact our Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk at [CCSHelpdesk@dese.gov.au](mailto:CCSHelpdesk@dese.gov.au) or on 1300 667 276 for information.

I also encourage you to keep your fee and vacancy information up to date on [Child Care Finder](#) to help people who may be looking for alternative or extra child care at this time.

Thank you once again for the support you are providing to us, to those children in your care, and to the educators in your services.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ros Baxter', with a stylized, cursive style.

Dr Ros Baxter

Deputy Secretary

Early Childhood and Child Care

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment



17 March 2020

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Webcast for Child Care Providers and Services -19 March 2020

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is holding a webcast for child care providers and services to discuss the existing support mechanisms in place to assist the early childhood education and care sector in managing the impacts of COVID-19. The webcast will cover current support available for families and providers and answers to frequently asked questions.

The webcast will take place on **Thursday, 19 March** from **11:30am – 12:00pm (AEDT)\***.

Providers and services can watch the webcast live [here](#). The link will only activate 5 minutes prior to the webcast commencing.

There is no need to register for this event.

\*Time zones for Thursday 19 March 11:30am – 12:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (NSW, ACT, VIC, TAS); 11:00am – 11:30am Australian Central Daylight Time (SA); 10:30am – 11:00am Australian Eastern Standard Time (QLD); 10:00am – 10:30am Australian Central Standard Time (NT); 8:30am – 9:00am Australian Western Standard Time (WA).



13 March 2020

## Mental health resource: What to expect immediately after a disaster

Over the coming weeks we will be highlighting key mental health resources from the [Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit](#) to assist children, parents and communities affected by the bushfires and other disasters or community trauma.

The first resource highlights what feelings, reactions and behaviours may occur in children immediately after a disaster or community trauma and what educators should remember during this time.

Check it out here: [What educators can expect during and immediately after a disaster or community trauma](#).

Further mental health resources are available on our [Emergency and Natural Disaster Assistance](#) webpage.



13 March 2020

## New Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Sheet

The health and safety of all Australians, including children using early childhood education and care services and staff in the sector is of utmost importance.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has developed a [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Information for child care providers and services sheet](#). The information sheet covers:

- Absences
- Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstances funding
- who to contact and where to find more information, and
- answers to some common questions and links to [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Please regularly check the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) website to help ensure that you are using the latest information.



10 March 2020

## Updated advice as at 10 March regarding novel coronavirus

The Australian Government has provided further updated fact sheets on the novel coronavirus for the education and training sector in particular around travel restrictions being extended to people travelling to Australia from Iran and South Korea.

The updated Department of Health fact sheets can be found by following the link on the [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) website. We will continue to advise you each time these fact sheets are updated.

Please regularly check the website to help ensure that you are using the latest version of these fact sheets.



## Better child care access for vulnerable and disadvantaged children

On 26 February 2020, the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, introduced legislation to Parliament which proposes changes to the Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing) to improve access to child care for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and reduce administrative burden for child care providers.

The proposed changes will:

- extend the period of time a provider can apply for an ACCS determination from 13 weeks to up to 12 months for children under a long-term child protection order, such as those in foster care
- enable providers to enrol children who are in foster care under an ACCS provider eligible enrolment type for an initial period of up to 13 weeks, giving an individual foster family sufficient time to lodge their Child Care Subsidy (CCS) claim and have it assessed by Services Australia, and
- enable providers to apply to backdate a family's ACCS beyond the current limit of 28 days, up to 13 weeks in exceptional circumstances.

Once the legislation has passed, the ACCS (child wellbeing) changes will come into effect in July 2021.

Other technical amendments include changes to how CCS balancing works for individuals who change their relationship status during the year, ensuring families' CCS entitlements more accurately reflect their financial circumstances.

We will provide further updates as they become available.

## Reminder: We want to hear from you!

There is still time to [complete a short survey](#) to help inform decisions about future arrangements for payments from charitable organisations.

We are seeking your help to provide us with information on what charitable payments you receive to apply to parents' fees and how you manage these payments. Your responses will inform the Government's decisions about future arrangements for payments from charitable organisations.

Please note, for those providers located in a bushfire-declared Local Government Area, this survey is **not** collecting information on payments that have recently been made exempt from the requirement to reduce the total fee before reporting.

**Submissions close 5:00pm (AEDST) Monday, 9 March 2020.**





If you have any questions, please contact us at [ECCCStakeholderEngagement@dese.gov.au](mailto:ECCCStakeholderEngagement@dese.gov.au).

## Reminder: Funding available for services affected by natural disaster

The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Special Circumstances program supports services affected by natural disasters, such as drought, bushfire, flood or other unforeseen circumstances that risk closure and consequential market failure for the community.

This \$14 million program comprises \$5 million for child care services affected by bushfire, \$5 million for services in drought affected areas and another \$4 million for services impacted by other natural disasters or other unforeseen circumstances.

- Services may seek funds for a range of activities, for example:
- establishing temporary child care premises
- temporarily meeting operational costs, and
- addressing health and safety requirements.

For more information and to apply, visit the CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity [webpage](#).

## Child Care Subsidy System maintenance 6 to 8 March 2020

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the Child Care Subsidy System will be unavailable from 11:00pm (AEDST) Friday, 6 March 2020 until 6:00am (AEDST) Sunday, 8 March 2020.

For providers and services, this means no session reports will be processed during this period.

## Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk closed on Monday 9 March 2020 – Canberra Day public holiday

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Monday, 9 March 2020 and will reopen at 9:00am (AEDST) Tuesday, 10 March 2020.

During this time you can still send your question through via our [online enquiry form](#). It is important to fill out all the relevant information so that your query can be actioned as quickly as possible on the next working day.

Should you require assistance during this period, you can also refer to the [information resources for providers](#) and the [Child Care Provider Handbook](#).



25 February 2020

## We want to hear from you!

[Complete a short survey](#) to help inform decisions about future arrangements for payments from charitable organisations.

You would be aware that currently, where a third party pays part of a parent's fees for a session of care, the provider must reduce the fee before reporting to ensure that parents pay a co-contribution to their fees. We have heard your concerns that this may have unintended consequences for disadvantaged families that do not meet the criteria for the Additional Child Care Subsidy.

We are therefore seeking your help to provide us with information on what charitable payments you receive to apply to parents' fees and how you manage these payments. Your responses will inform the Government's decisions about future arrangements for payments from charitable organisations.

Completing the survey is voluntary. Your information will be kept anonymous and will not be used for any other purposes. Please do not provide details that identify individual families or children, we do not want or need personal details.

Please note, for those providers located in a bushfire-declared Local Government Area, this survey is **not** collecting information on payments that have recently been made exempt from the requirement to reduce the total fee before reporting.

**Submissions close 5:00pm (AEDST) Monday, 9 March 2020.**

If you have any questions, please contact us at [ECCCStakeholderEngagement@dese.gov.au](mailto:ECCCStakeholderEngagement@dese.gov.au).



22 February 2020

## Updated advice as at 22 February regarding novel coronavirus

Good morning

On Thursday 20 February, the Australian Government announced that existing travel restrictions for people travelling to Australia from mainland China will be extended for a further week to 29 February 2020.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has updated its [Coronavirus FAQs for international students](#) to reflect this information. This updated fact sheet is also available in [Simplified Chinese](#). The department has also published a new fact sheet about the [delivery of online education to students based in China](#).

Other Department of Education, Skills and Employment fact sheets remain current.

Please note that the Department of Health has consolidated their *Information for Parents* fact sheet into the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for schools and early childhood education and care services, students and parents](#) fact sheet. For further health advice please visit the Department of Health [website](#).

For information on travel restrictions please visit the Department of Home Affairs [website](#).



## Reminder – mental health information and resources

The emergency and natural disasters assistance [webpage](#) includes information on mental health support — which includes trauma and wellbeing — for children, parents and communities affected by the bushfires.

We will continue to add further information and resources as they become available.

## Reminder – Update your details to help families find your service in Child Care Finder!

**You could be missing out on business from families who are searching for a service in your area using [Child Care Finder](#)! Make sure your fee and vacancy details are up to date.**

### How to update your details

- You can update your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#). Please refer to the [Task Card](#) on the department's website if you need assistance on how to update your organisation details in PEP.
- Alternatively, you can update your details via your third party software. Please contact your software provider if you need assistance updating your details via a third party software program.

Please allow up to 24 hours for changes to be reflected on [Child Care Finder](#).

## Making a subsequent determination for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (child wellbeing)

If a child in receipt of ACCS (child wellbeing) continues to be at risk beyond the first determination period (for example, up to 13 weeks), you will need to apply for a new subsequent determination. You can do this via your third party software provider or the [PEP](#). You will need to upload new or existing evidence to support any new subsequent determination application.

Please note:

- evidence needs to be less than six months old
- uploading evidence to an existing determination will not trigger a subsequent determination assessment, a new subsequent determination application **must** be lodged.



If the evidence previously provided was a statutory declaration, this cannot be used for a subsequent determination. You should talk to the family (where appropriate) and ask for their assistance to gather further information to support the ongoing subsidy. The family may also provide consent for you to approach other third parties. If the required evidence is not provided, then the application for a subsequent determination will be rejected.

For more information on the evidence requirements refer to the [Guide to ACCS \(child wellbeing\)](#) and the [factsheet and checklist](#) we have published to help providers gain relevant evidence from third parties in support of an ACCS (child wellbeing) application for a determination.

## Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) maintenance 22 to 23 February 2020

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 10:00pm (AEDST) Saturday, 22 February 2020 until 10:00am (AEDST) Sunday, 23 February 2020.

For providers and services, this means no session reports will be processed during this period.



## Fee relief for families in bushfire-declared areas and volunteer firefighters

As announced by the [Minister](#), third parties, such as state or territory governments and charitable organisations, are able to cover the cost of gap fees for families who live in bushfire-declared local government areas and volunteer firefighters who engage in bushfire fighting activities, without the family's Child Care Subsidy (CCS) entitlement being affected.

Providers are required to maintain records of any third party payments received and how they are applied. As the third parties are only covering the out of pocket costs, providers should not reduce fees charged. Session reports will remain the same.

For more information visit the [Emergency and Natural Disaster Assistance webpage](#).

## Reminder - Are any children in your service eligible for the preschool exemption?

Remember families can receive Child Care Subsidy to support their preschool-aged child to attend a preschool program at a centre based day care service even where families do not meet the activity test.

All families with children attending a preschool program in 2020 should ensure their child's expected school start date is correct and up to date with Centrelink (either in Centrelink Online via [myGov](#) or the Express Plus mobile app).

For more information about the process, please refer to the [preschool exemption fact sheet](#). Further information can also be found on the [FAQ page](#).

## Do you know anyone else who would benefit from receiving our emails?

Did you know anyone can subscribe to receive our early childhood education and care email newsletters?

It would be appreciated if you could please forward the following link to colleagues who might be interested: [Subscribe to the early childhood education and care email newsletter](#).



# Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) maintenance 15 to 16 February 2020

Services Australia will be undertaking scheduled maintenance of their IT systems this weekend. As a result, the CCSS will be unavailable from 8:00pm (AEDST) Saturday, 15 February 2020 until 6:00pm (AEDST) Sunday, 16 February 2020.

For providers and services, this means no session reports will be processed during this period.



14 February 2020

## Updated advice as at 14 February regarding novel coronavirus

The Australian Government has provided further updated factsheets on the novel coronavirus for the education and training sector.

The updated Department of Health factsheets can be found by following the link on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment [website](#). We will continue to advise you each time these factsheets are updated.

Please regularly check the website to help ensure that you are using the latest version of these factsheets.





4 February 2020

## Access to Inclusion Support Portal changing to PRODA from 10 February 2020

The authentication method for accessing the Inclusion Support (IS) Portal will be changing from AUSkey to PRODA on **Monday, 10 February 2020**.

This brings the IS Portal into line with the Child Care Subsidy System.

Early childhood education and care service users of the IS Portal will use their existing PRODA credentials.

For most existing users, when you access the IS Portal from 10 February 2020, (at [inclusionsupport.dss.gov.au/ispportal/](https://inclusionsupport.dss.gov.au/ispportal/)) you should be connected to the Portal once you enter your PRODA credentials.

Further information is available at [education.gov.au/inclusion-support-program-isp](https://education.gov.au/inclusion-support-program-isp).

## New department names

On 1 February 2020, the Department of Education became part of the new Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE).

On 1 February 2020, the Department of Human Services became Services Australia. Services Australia still delivers Centrelink, Child Support and Medicare payments and services, including Child Care Subsidy. There's no change to how you can access their payments and services.

## Have you checked out our resources page?

Did you know we have a range of information resources available on our website to assist you in understanding the Child Care Package?

The handy resources include mini videos, webcasts, frequently asked questions, fact sheets and more!

Go to [education.gov.au/new-child-care-package-information-resources-providers](https://education.gov.au/new-child-care-package-information-resources-providers).

## Do you know anyone else who would benefit from receiving our emails?

Did you know anyone can subscribe to receive our early childhood education and care email newsletters?



It would be appreciated if you could please forward the following link to colleagues who might be interested: [Subscribe to the early childhood education and care email newsletter](#).



3 February 2020

## Updated advice as at 3 February regarding novel coronavirus

Good evening

The Australian Government has provided further updated factsheets on the novel coronavirus for the education and training sector.

The updated Department of Health factsheets can be found by following the link on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment [website](#). We will continue to advise you each time these factsheets are updated.

Please regularly check the website to help ensure that you are using the latest version of these factsheets.



2 February 2020

## Updated advice regarding novel coronavirus

Good morning

Further to our email on Thursday, the Department of Health has provided updated factsheets on the novel coronavirus for the education and training sector.

We are again seeking your assistance in sharing this information with your families and educators. The updated factsheets are available on the Department of Education [website](#).

Please direct your families and educators to the website as any further updates to the factsheets will be published here.



30 January 2020

## Updated advice regarding novel coronavirus

Good afternoon

Further to our email on Tuesday, the Department of Health has provided updated factsheets on the novel coronavirus for the education and training sector.

We are again seeking your assistance in sharing this information with your families and educators. The updated factsheets are available on the Department of Education [website](#).

Please direct your families and educators to the website as any further updates to the factsheets will be published here.



## Mental health support for educators, families and children

Beyond Blue has established an education sector-specific bushfire crisis response program through the Australian Government funded *Be You* initiative.

This initiative will support educators and staff working in early childhood education and care services and schools affected by the bushfire crisis. The focus will be to assist them to connect to local services and support, and link them to trauma informed information and learning. Beyond Blue, working with headspace and Early Childhood Australia, will launch this program across bushfire affected regions during Term one this year by deploying Contact Liaison Officers into affected regions.

For all initial enquires about this program and support service, please email [beyouteam@beyondblue.org.au](mailto:beyouteam@beyondblue.org.au).

## New educators resource pack available

In response to the recent bushfires across Australia, Emerging Minds have developed a new [Educators resource pack: Supporting children after bushfires](#). This includes a one-hour video addressing the key strategies for educators supporting children in school or early childhood education and care, and age-specific videos and factsheets on identifying reactions to trauma.

The Emerging Minds resources are tailored to families, general practitioners, educators, community leaders, first responders and health and social workers.

Further online mental health and trauma support resources are also available on the Department's [emergency and natural disaster assistance webpage](#).

## Factsheet and checklist for third parties providing evidence - Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) application

Remember there is a [factsheet and checklist](#) available to help providers gain relevant evidence from third parties in support of an Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) application for a determination.



## Do you know anyone who would benefit from this email?

Did you know anyone can subscribe to the early childhood education and care email newsletter?

Forward this link on to colleagues who might be interested: [Subscribe to the early childhood education and care email newsletter](#).

You can also access [previous email newsletters](#) on our website to find information on important topics.



28 January 2020

## Confirmation of earlier advice regarding novel coronavirus

Please find [current advice regarding coronavirus](#) as at 5:05pm on Tuesday 28 January 2020.

This advice remains the same as issued earlier today.





28 January 2020

## Important information regarding Novel coronavirus

Good afternoon

The Department of Health has provided updated information on the Novel coronavirus for the education and training sector.

I am seeking your assistance in sharing this information with your staff, families and educators. A copy of the factsheets is available on the Department of Education [website](#) for you to share.



## Updated website – mental health information and resources

The emergency and natural disasters assistance [webpage](#) has been updated to include information on mental health support — which includes trauma and wellbeing for children, families and communities affected by the bushfires.

We will continue to add further information and resources as it becomes available.

## Do your families know what counts towards the activity test?

The number of hours of subsidised child care that families have access to per fortnight is determined by a three-step activity test.

Step	Hours of activity*	Maximum number of hours of subsidy per child*
1	8 hours to 16 hours	36 hours
2	More than 16 hours to 48 hours	72 hours
3	More than 48 hours	100 hours

\* Per fortnight

There is a range of recognised activities that count towards the [activity test](#), not just paid employment. This can include a combination of volunteering, studying, looking for work and unpaid work in a family business or farm.

There is no requirement for an individual to advise Centrelink where there is a change to their activity type, for example, where an individual no longer has a job and is now looking for work. The requirement is to advise when there is a reduction or increase in a person's activity hours that would change a person's entitlement.

Families should advise Centrelink if their **hours** have increased or decreased via their online account, using [myGov](#) or the Express Plus mobile app.



## Are any children in your service eligible for the preschool exemption?

With Term 1 approaching, remember families can receive CCS to support their preschool-aged child to attend a preschool program at a centre based day care service even where families do not meet the activity test.

All families with children attending a preschool program in 2020 should ensure their child's expected school start date is correct and up to date with Centrelink (either in Centrelink Online via [myGov](#) or the Express Plus mobile app).

For more [information](#) about the process, please refer to the [preschool exemption fact sheet](#). Further information can also be found on the [FAQ page](#).

## National Quality Framework Review

As part of the ongoing commitment to quality in early childhood education and care services, Australian governments are reviewing the National Quality Framework (NQF) to see how well its objectives are being met.

The 2019 NQF Review builds on the 2014 Review of the National Quality Agenda, to ensure that the NQF is current, fit for purpose and implemented through best practice regulation. Nation-wide consultations on the NQF Review Issues Paper were conducted from April to June 2019. Over 2,500 people attended the 79 face-to-face consultation sessions held in all jurisdictions around Australia.

A consultation summary report is available at [nqfreview.com.au](http://nqfreview.com.au).

## Child Care Subsidy Helpdesk closed on Monday 27 January 2020 – Australia Day public holiday

The CCS Helpdesk will be closed on Monday, 27 January 2020 and will reopen at 9:00am (AEDST) Tuesday, 28 January 2020.

Should you require assistance during this period, please refer to the [information resources for providers](#).



## Support for bushfire-declared communities

Today the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP [announced](#) a range of measures to support families in bushfire-declared communities. This includes additional mental health support and additional support for early childhood education and care.

On 15 January 2020, the Prime Minister also [announced](#) that families will receive an extra \$400 for each child aged under 16 that is eligible for the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment.

For more information on these new assistance measures visit: [education.gov.au/support-bushfire-affected-communities](https://education.gov.au/support-bushfire-affected-communities).

## Updated emergency and natural disasters assistance webpage

Since we launched the emergency and natural disasters assistance [webpage](#) last week, we have added where to find air quality information in each state and territory as well as the new Community Child Care Fund phone number (1300 650 848).

We will continue to add further information and resources as it becomes available.

The emergency and natural disasters assistance [webpage](#) includes useful information and links on relevant topics, including:

- what is a local emergency
- assistance for providers and services
- reporting requirements and additional absences
- service closures, and
- assistance for families.



## Have families at your service been affected by the bushfires?

Dear Provider

### Please forward the information below to your families

Families affected by the current bushfires may be eligible to receive additional support with the cost of child care through the [Additional Child Care Subsidy \(temporary financial hardship\)](#). Families must apply directly to Centrelink.

If you receive questions from families you can encourage them to visit the [Human Services website](#) for further information.

Kind regards

Stakeholder Engagement Team

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### Dear Families

#### Have you been impacted by the current bushfires?

Families affected by a major disaster, such as the current bushfires, may be eligible to receive additional support through the **Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) (temporary financial hardship)**. ACCS (temporary financial hardship) is a short-term payment from the Australian Government to help families experiencing a substantial reduction in their ability to pay child care fees.

ACCS (temporary financial hardship) can be paid for up to thirteen weeks and during this period, families do not have to meet the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) income or activity tests meaning that children could access up to 50 hours of subsidised child care per week. Depending on the fees charged by a service, ACCS (temporary financial hardship) should cover the full amount of the cost of care so that families do not have any out of pocket costs.

Temporary financial hardship may occur if you or your partner have:

- lost your job, other than if you resigned or retired
- suffered a loss of income or a business failure due to circumstances outside of your control
- been adversely affected by a major disaster event
- had your home destroyed or severely damaged.

#### How to Apply



You can apply for ACCS (temporary financial hardship) if you already get CCS and meet certain criteria. If you don't already get CCS you can apply for an additional subsidy at the same time you claim either via your Centrelink online account, using [myGov](#), or by visiting a Centrelink office and applying in person. You are able to apply for ACCS (temporary financial hardship) up to six months after the date of the event.

**Where to go for more information**

Further information including details on how to apply and supporting information required, can be found on the [Human Services](#) website.



8 January 2020

## NEW - Emergency and Natural Disaster Assistance webpage

In view of the number of emergency and natural disaster situations being experienced across Australia, and the potential for continued disruption over the summer period, we have launched a new webpage which contains useful information and links on relevant topics, including:

- what is a local emergency
- assistance for providers and services
- reporting requirements and additional absences
- service closures, and
- assistance for families.

You can find the new emergency and natural disaster webpage at [education.gov.au/emergency-and-natural-disaster-assistance](https://education.gov.au/emergency-and-natural-disaster-assistance)



## Local emergencies and child care support

In view of the number of emergency and natural disaster situations being experienced across Australia, and the potential for further disruption over the summer period, providers may wish to review the Australian Government child care assistance available when a local emergency occurs.

Each service needs to make a decision that is right for their individual circumstances. For general information on assistance available for families and child care providers when a local emergency or natural disaster occurs, please refer to the [Emergencies and natural disaster](#) fact sheet.

For general information on your reporting requirements during a period of local emergency (additional absences), please refer to the [Information for child care providers when a period of local emergency occurs](#) fact sheet.

For other general information on what services can do in an emergency, including business and insurance advice and other Australian Government assistance available to you and your employees, please refer to the [business.gov.au](http://business.gov.au) website.

## Reminder: Changes to the 8 week rule

We recently let you know that following feedback from child care providers, services and families, the Australian Government has made a number of minor amendments to the [Family Assistance Law](#) to cut red tape and make life easier for families and providers using the Child Care Subsidy.

One of the key amendments includes increasing the number of weeks at which enrolments automatically cease due to non-attendance, from eight to 14 weeks.

This change will take effect from Monday, 13 January 2020.

