



# Emails to the early childhood education and care sector

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## From the department

### Worker retention payment update

Through the worker retention payment, the government intends for all participating providers to receive funding to cover:

- a 10% wage increase for all eligible staff from 2 December 2024
- an additional 5% wage increase for all eligible staff from December 2025
- a minimum of an additional 20% funding, calculated against the wage increase, to contribute towards eligible on-costs.

If you think your service isn't sufficiently funded to deliver the wage increase on an ongoing basis, you can apply for a funding review. If found eligible, you will get extra funding.

Visit our website for the latest details about the [worker retention payment](#).

### 2024–25 Christmas–New Year period

#### Have you read our information about the 2024–25 Christmas–New Year period?

We've got information about Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments, session reports, absences and service closures over the holiday period.

Find out about [CCS and the 2024–25 Christmas–New Year period](#) on our website.

### Don't forget to share your feedback

**We continue to receive useful feedback from you via our communication survey.**

We read every response and use your insights to make improvements to our website and other channels.

If you haven't completed our 5 to 10-minute survey, it's not too late.

[Complete our survey](#).

## Sector spotlight

### More services meeting National Quality Standard

**For the first time, the National Quality Framework (NQF) snapshot shows 91% of services are rated Meeting National Quality Standard (NQS) or above.**

This is an increase from the 90% recorded for the previous four consecutive quarters.

The number of services with a quality rating increased by 3% from Q3 2023.

The number of approved services increased 2% from Q3 2023.



The NQF Snapshot is a national report on children's education and care services operating under the NQF. It provides information on the sector and the quality ratings of services against the NQS.

Read the [latest NQF snapshot](#) on ACECQA's website.

## Fraud Awareness Week

**This week is Fraud Awareness Week. It highlights the importance of fraud prevention and detection.**

Here are some handy tips for you to help prevent fraud:

- Complete a compliance check-up. Find details of your [obligations](#) on our website and make sure your service is complying.
- Complete our fraud awareness course on [Gecko](#). The course explains what you can do to prevent, detect, and report fraud.
- If you have information related to people or services or providers who are not following the rules, you can report it to us. Our CCS fraud tip-off form is anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete.

Learn more about [reporting CCS fraud](#) by visiting our website.

## Facts from FAL

### Correcting mistakes in session reports

**If you make a mistake, you must update the session report. You can update or withdraw session reports up to 28 days after the start of the week for which the report relates.**

You should only withdraw a session report if you do not intend to resubmit. For example, if you've submitted a session report for a child by mistake, where no sessions of care occurred.

If you need to update or withdraw a session report after 28 days, you must select a reason:

- administrative error – there was a mistake in the original session report, such as an incorrect session start time, or the parent provided the incorrect Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- general amendment – changes are being made before Sunday night of the session report week, before the report has been processed and CCS has been paid
- responding to carer's dispute – a parent has disputed a session report
- responding to 204C – only use where a compliance notice has been issued requiring you to make a change to a session report.

If you need to submit, update or withdraw a session report from a previous financial year, you must apply.

You can find more information about [updating session reports](#) on our website.

### Electronic payment of gap fees

**You must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees from families electronically. This is a requirement under Family Assistance Law.**

We conduct regular audits to check providers are taking all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically. If we contact you about an audit, you must respond promptly.



We may take compliance action if you fail to meet your obligations.

See our [guidance on collecting gap fees](#) and find out more about our audit process on our website.

## Workforce support

### Professional development subsidy payments

**Did you apply for a professional development or paid practicum subsidy? Successful round one applicants will start receiving payments soon.**

We have issued funding agreements to all the successful providers. Payments will be made to each eligible service's bank account.

If you get a subsidy, you will need to acquit any funding you receive. We will provide more details about what you need to do soon.

Round 2 applications will open on 13 January 2025.

If we receive a high volume of applications in round 2, we will prioritise:

- educators in regional and remote areas
- First Nations educators.

Learn more about our [professional development opportunities](#)

### Join the practicum exchange network



Australian Government  
Department of Education

## Practicum exchange network

Connecting early childhood education and care services and educators in training

**Join more than 50 early childhood education and care (ECEC) services connecting with educators on the practicum exchange network.**

Last month we launched a new website where ECEC services and educators in training can search for and arrange exchange opportunities. It's called the [practicum exchange network](#).

On the network, you can:



- search for services and educators with availability in your area
- connect with each other
- arrange practicum opportunities.

Registration is easy – enter your details to create a user profile and start connecting.

We appreciate your patience as users join the network. We encourage you to register and check back often for new opportunities.

## Share with families

### Is your family eligible for higher CCS?

**When you have more than one child aged 5 or under in care, you may get a higher Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for your second child and any younger children.**

Services Australia works out which children get the higher subsidy by:

- assessing all children in the family
- identifying the standard rate child, and
- identifying the higher rate child or higher rate children.

The rates for each child are worked out using 2 separate income tests.

The 'higher rate child' is any CCS eligible child younger than your standard rate child. You'll get a higher subsidy rate for them.

For children born on the same date, such as twins, Services Australia will automatically determine one child as the 'standard rate child'. They'll then apply a higher rate to other eligible children.

Combined families are where both members of a couple get CCS for different children in their family. Services Australia counts all CCS-eligible children in a combined family when determining entitlement to the higher rate for second and younger children.

[In Home Care](#) (IHC) sessions do not attract the higher subsidy. This is because IHC is subsidised per family, rather than per child.

Families can find out more on the [Services Australia website](#).



## From the department

### Worker retention payment update

#### Workplace instrument support for small business

**Providers must engage workers through a workplace instrument that meets grant conditions to be eligible for the worker retention payment.**

Community Child Care Association (CCC) and Community Early Learning Australia (CELA) have set up a new workplace relations service to help providers navigate the process.

The service includes:

- information about workplace instruments
- support to develop a compliant workplace instrument.

To find out more, [register your interest](#) or contact [adminmeb@cela.org.au](mailto:adminmeb@cela.org.au).

#### Fee growth cap from 8 August 2025

**Providers must limit fee increases to get the worker retention payment. The fee growth cap that will apply from 8 August 2025 is now available.**

Between 8 August 2024 and 7 August 2025, the fee growth cap is **4.4%**.

Between 8 August 2025 and 7 August 2026, the fee growth cap will be **4.2%**.

The percentage that applies from 8 August 2025 is guided by a new index developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It's called the [Childcare Services Cost Index](#). It measures changes in prices paid by child care providers for the goods, services and labour they buy to deliver child care. To account for shifts in service delivery costs at different times, it uses the average of the latest two quarters.

Providers may request an alternative fee growth cap in exceptional circumstances.

Learn more about the [worker retention payment](#).

### 2024–25 Christmas–New Year period

**We've published what you need to know about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) over the 2024–25 Christmas–New Year period.**

The key things to know are:

- the CCS Helpdesk will close at 12.30 pm AEDT Tuesday 24 December 2024 and reopen at 9 am AEDT Thursday 2 January 2025
- you must not submit session reports or claim absences when your service is closed, unless it is a public holiday or during a period of emergency
- you must report shorter hours if you close early on Tuesday 24 December



- session reports submitted on public holidays may experience short delays in processing or payment
- you must collect the gap fee when claiming absences on a public holiday
- you must tell us if you are closing your service or changing operating hours.

Read more about [CCS and the 2024–25 Christmas–New Year period](#) on our website.

## Our communication survey is still open

**Our yearly communication survey is still open. It's your opportunity to tell us what you think about our channels.**

Thank you to everyone who has completed our survey so far. We're already taking your feedback on board.

One of the things you told us is that you want more information about the types of grants we have available.

The Community Child Care Fund is a collection of grants that helps services address barriers to ECEC participation. [Visit our website](#) and [YouTube playlist](#) for more information.

If you haven't completed our survey yet, it only takes 5 to 10 minutes.

[Complete it today.](#)

## Facts from FAL

### Need a refresher on enrolments?

**You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS payments.**

Services Australia can only pay CCS if:

- the enrolment notice correctly identifies the person who made the CCS claim, and
- the family has confirmed the enrolment.

We have detailed information about [the enrolment process](#) on our website.

You can also complete the [Understanding enrolments course](#) in Geckko to learn more.

## Rules for Family Day Care educators providing care to relatives

**If you work in Family Day Care, there are rules you must follow about caring for children of educators and relatives.**

### Caring for an educator's child

You cannot claim CCS for your own children when you are working as an FDC educator on the same day that you provide care to children. This includes when your child attends another service. There are some exemptions to this rule.

### Caring for close family

You cannot claim CCS for a close family member.



## Caring for extended family

You must follow the less than 50% rule. This means you may be able to report CCS for extended members. However, your educators must not provide care for more relatives than non-relatives in a CCS fortnight.

To understand your obligations on [providing care to relatives](#), visit our website.

## News for families

### Parent Pathways is a service to help parents and carers with children under 6

If you're getting support through Parent Pathways, you may be able to get at least 36 hours of Child Care Subsidy per fortnight.

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

### You need to confirm your family income to get Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

If you got CCS in the 2022–23 or 2023–24 financial year, you need to confirm your family income so we can keep paying you.

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



## From the department

### ECEC staff – we want to hear from you!

We're inviting early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff to have a say in a national survey. The ECEC Staff Survey 2024 is open from 4 November to 16 December.

The survey is for directors, managers, coordinators, educational leaders, teachers and educators working in:

- Centre Based Day Care (Long Day Care and Occasional Care)
- Family Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Preschools/Kindergartens.

The survey will help us better understand the perceptions, satisfaction and needs of educators and managers. The findings will inform our policies on how to better attract and keep people working in the sector.

Find out more about the [ECEC Staff Survey 2024](#) on ORIMA's website.

### Preparing for an emergency



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

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

- Check the [support available in the event of a Child Care Subsidy \(CCS\) period of emergency](#) on our website.
- Make sure you have adequate insurance cover. You can insure against disasters and for business disruption – to cover your losses during the recovery period.
- Make sure you back up and store your important business documents in a secure offsite location or cloud-based storage.
- Make sure your contact details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important updates. Check your details via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.





- Make sure to tell us if you close your service due to an emergency. You can do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- [Join our Facebook group](#) and turn on post notifications to get the latest alerts.

## Complete our communication survey

**We've been asking for your thoughts on our communication channels – and it's been great getting your feedback.**

We want to give as many of you a chance to have your say, which is why our survey will be open for all November.

We craft our communications, like this newsletter, to help you better understand the Australian Government's ECEC policies and programs.

It's vital that we know if we're hitting the mark.

[Complete our 5–10-minute survey](#).

## Sector spotlight

### Access resources on the Disability Discrimination Act

**Did you know you can access a suite of resources to help understand your obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)?**

Understanding and meeting your obligations under the DDA supports children with disability to fully participate in ECEC in the same way as other children.

Find the resources on the [ACECQA website](#).

Find more on the [DDA and the Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) on our website.

### Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services now has almost 10,000 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:

- administering CCS
- complying with Family Assistance Law
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

## Facts from FAL

### How providers are notified of debts

**We may issue debt notices in some cases, such as for closed or non-compliant services.**



You may receive a debt notice if you:

- change a session of care to report a reduced fee, fewer hours or days
- withdraw a session report
- act in a non-compliant way
- close or transfer ownership of a service retrospectively
- cease operating your service while offsetting is occurring.

We may also issue you with an [infringement notice](#) if the debt is due to non-compliance.

Find out more about [debt notices](#) on our website.

## Support for families experiencing temporary financial hardship

**Do you have families experiencing temporary financial hardship at your service? They may be able to get extra help with the cost of child care.**

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) temporary financial hardship is for families who:

- are eligible for CCS
- are experiencing temporary financial hardship due to an event in the last 6 months
- have a substantially reduced ability to pay child care fees.

Eligible families can get 100 hours of subsidised care each fortnight. They'll get the lower of either:

- 100% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap
- up to 120% of the hourly rate cap where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.

The temporary financial hardship subsidy is paid for a maximum of 13 weeks per event.

Families can apply through their Centrelink online account or by visiting a Centrelink office.

We have information about [ACCS temporary financial hardship for providers](#) on our website.

## Workforce support

### Discounted care for staff

**Did you know you can offer a discounted fee to some staff whose children attend your service?**

You can offer discounts to employees who:

- are employed, contracted or engaged as an educator, early childhood teacher or cook
- are working at a Centre Based Day Care or Outside School Hours Care service, and
- have a child enrolled in an ECEC service where they work or that you own.

It's up to you how much you want to discount. The employee must still pay at least 5% of the gap fee.

The discount won't affect the employee's CCS entitlement.



Learn more about offering [discounted care](#).

## Share with families

### First Nations children can get more hours of subsidised care

**If you want to use child care, the Australian Government helps cover the costs. It's called Child Care Subsidy, or CCS. The government pays child care services, who pass the subsidy on to you as cheaper fees.**

You can get at least 36 hours of CCS per fortnight for each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child in your care. This is regardless of the amount of activity you do, such as work, training, study or volunteering.

- This may make your early childhood education fees cheaper.
- Young ones can prepare and be ready for big school.
- You have more access to subsidised care if you need it.

You can find out more about how to apply at [First Nations activity test](#).

You do not need to do anything if you already get more than 36 hours of subsidy. A family's CCS rate will continue to be based on their income.



## From the department

### Have your say on our channels

**We've been asking for your thoughts on our communication channels – and it's been great getting your feedback.**

One of the things you have told us is that you'd like more information about Family Assistance Law (FAL).

FAL is the basis for Commonwealth early childhood education and care (ECEC) fee assistance. It sets the rules for providers who administer the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). You can read all about [FAL on our website](#).

We also have an online learning platform, [Geccko](#), to help you comply with your obligations under FAL.

If you haven't done so, tell us what you think of our channels via [our short survey](#).

We want to know what you find helpful and where we can improve. Your feedback will stay anonymous.

### Worker retention payment

**Visit our website for the latest information about the worker retention payment.**

On our website, you'll find:

- a summary of the grant guidelines
- a guide with everything you need to know to apply for the payment
- information and resources about awards, workplace instruments and bargaining
- the recording, transcript, slides and Q&As from our recent webinar, and more.

We know providers have many questions about the payment. We're working hard to get you answers. Please keep an eye on our website because we update it regularly.

Learn more about the [worker retention payment](#).

### New course: Understanding ACCS

**Need a refresher on Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)? Check out our new course in Geccko.**

ACCS provides extra help with the cost of ECEC to families facing difficult or challenging circumstances.

The following is a case study about applying for the right type of ACCS from the new course.

Castle Rock OSHC applies for ACCS child wellbeing on behalf of 2 children at their service. The children's parent has been hospitalised and the family is struggling to cover the cost of ECEC.

Castle Rock OSHC provides the following evidence:

- a letter from the family GP stating the parent's condition and expected recovery time
- a letter from the service explaining that they are applying to help the family through this period of difficulty.



ACCS child wellbeing is for families who care for a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect. As there is not enough information to confirm whether the children are currently at risk of serious abuse or neglect, the application is rejected by Services Australia.

In this instance, Castle Rock OSHC should help the family apply for ACCS temporary financial hardship instead. ACCS temporary financial hardship gives families experiencing significant financial stress extra help with the cost of ECEC.

To continue learning, [go to Geccko](#).

## CCS period of emergency in NSW

**Earlier this week we declared a CCS period of emergency for parts of New South Wales impacted by a major electrical outage.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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

## Sector spotlight

### Educator wellbeing guide

**As Mental Health Month draws to a close, consider how your learning community can view educator wellbeing as a shared responsibility.**

Developed by Be You and Monash University, the *Beyond Self-care: An Educator Wellbeing Guide*, shares practical ways to take care of your own wellbeing and support your colleagues.

It includes discussion topics and reflection activities that can be adapted to your service.

To download the guide and find out more, visit the [Be You website](#).

## Facts from FAL

### Financial reporting deadline for some large providers is this Friday

**Large providers must report financial information, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements, to the department each year.**

If you do your financial reporting on the financial year, the deadline is **this Friday**.

Complete the [2023–24 Large Provider Financial Input Report](#) and email it to [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au) by 1 November 2024.

Please ensure you include financial statements and information as outlined in the important information tab.

Learn more about the [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).



## Collecting gap fees

Families who get CCS must make a co-contribution to their ECEC fees. This is a requirement under FAL.

They do this by paying the difference between the provider's fee and the CCS amount. This is known as the gap fee.

Families must pay the gap fee using electronic means, or EFT.

The requirement to pay the gap fee does not usually apply to families who get [ACCS](#) child wellbeing or grandparent. This is because this subsidy generally covers 100% of the fee charged.

Learn more about [collecting gap fees](#).

You can also complete our [online learning course](#) to refresh your knowledge about gap fees.

## Changes to working with children checks

You must notify us when the status of a working with children check (WWCC) changes for any of the following people:

- Family Day Care educators
- In Home Care educators
- persons with management or control (PMCs) and persons responsible at the service that are required to have a WWCC.

A change in status includes if a check is renewed, extended, suspended, revoked, lapsed or expired.

You must notify the change via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software within 24 hours of becoming aware.

Find out more about [your WWCC obligations](#).

## Workforce support

### Register for the practicum exchange network



Australian Government  
Department of Education

### Practicum exchange network

Connecting early childhood education and care services and educators in training

The practicum exchange network is a dedicated website where ECEC services and educators in training can search for and arrange practicum exchange opportunities.

Generally, practicums:



- are mandatory to become a qualified ECEC educator
- must be partly completed outside of an educator's primary ECEC service.

Registered users can:

- search for services and educators with availability in your area
- connect with each other and arrange practicums.

We appreciate your patience as users join the network. We encourage you to register and check back often for new opportunities.

Go to the [practicum exchange network](#).



## NSW storms: CCS period of emergency declared

**We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of New South Wales impacted by a major electrical outage.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from Monday 21 October to Tuesday 22 October 2024 in the following local government areas:

- Broken Hill City Council
- Central Darling Shire Council.

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

Support during the emergency

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

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

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

Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after an emergency](#).

Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [Service NSW](#).

For action





- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the PEP or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [Service NSW](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Understanding workplace instruments

**Providers must engage workers through a workplace instrument that meets grant conditions to be eligible for the [worker retention payment](#).**

We have information and resources to help you navigate this process.

What is a workplace instrument?

Workplace instruments are defined in the Fair Work Act.

They are legally enforceable and set out the terms and conditions of employment, like:

- pay rates
- penalties and loadings
- working hours
- leave entitlements.

Some examples of workplace instruments include, but are not limited to:

- single- or multi-enterprise agreements
- individual flexibility arrangements
- state industrial instruments.

### Resources

#### [Understanding employee pay and entitlements](#)

Most employers and employees in Australia are covered by the Fair Work system. This system sets and protects an employee's minimum pay and entitlements. This video explains where pay rates and entitlements come from, how they interact, and the role of the two Fair Work agencies.

#### [Understanding enterprise agreements](#)

Employers and employees in Australia's Fair Work system can tailor pay and entitlements to suit their workplace by making an enterprise agreement. This video explains what an enterprise agreement is and how they are made.

#### [Understanding bargaining](#)

Enterprise bargaining is a formal process that involves employers, employees and their representatives working together to make an enterprise agreement. This video explains the 3 key stages in a good bargaining process, and requirements for bargaining in the Fair Work system.

#### [Fair Work Commission \(FWC\) Online Learning Portal](#)

The FWC Online Learning Portal offers a growing catalogue of online learning modules about key workplace topics, including a two-part series on interest-based bargaining.



## Worker retention payment

To be eligible for the worker retention payment, your workplace instruments must:

- include an obligation to pay workers at or above the [minimum rates](#) in the grant guidelines and in accordance with section 4.3 of the grant guidelines
- apply for the full 2 years of the payment.

We understand that meeting this condition may take time.

That is why we will backdate payments to 2 December 2024 for providers who:

- apply by 30 June 2025
- meet the eligibility criteria from 2 December 2024.

## More information

Learn more about [awards, workplace instruments and bargaining](#).

Learn more about the [worker retention payment](#).

## Worker retention payment webinar Q&As

We received almost 2,000 questions during the worker retention payment webinar we held on 10 October 2024.

Most questions fell into one of 10 themes. We've provided detailed [information on each theme](#) on our website.

The [recording, transcript and slides](#) are also available if you missed the session.

## Join the practicum exchange network



Australian Government  
Department of Education

### Practicum Exchange network

Connecting early childhood education and care services and educators in training

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and educators in training can now connect with each other on our new practicum exchange network.

The practicum exchange network is a dedicated website where ECEC services and educators in training can search for and arrange practicum exchange opportunities.

Practicums help educators in training gain practical, workplace experience in an early childhood educational setting.

Generally, practicums:

- are mandatory to become a qualified ECEC educator
- must be partly completed outside of an educator's primary ECEC service.

Practicum exchanges can foster:

- diverse experience and knowledge
- networking and support opportunities
- skill and knowledge transfer.

Practicum exchanges can be challenging for some, particularly students in rural and remote areas with few or no other services nearby.

On our new website, you can:

- search for services and educators with availability in your area
- connect with each other and arrange practicums.

We appreciate your patience as users join the network. We encourage you to register and check back often for new opportunities.

Go to the [practicum exchange network](#).

## Connected Beginnings is expanding to Kempsey

**The Australian Government is expanding the Connected Beginnings program to Kempsey, New South Wales.**

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by 2025. There are now 48 sites across the country.

The new site will support about 700 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Kempsey, bringing the total number of children supported Australia-wide to about 23,700.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

## Our communication survey is still open

**Our yearly communication survey is still open. It's your opportunity to tell us what you think about our channels.**

Thank you to everyone who has completed our survey so far. We appreciate your insights.

One of the things you told us is that you weren't aware of all our different channels. Here's a summary of our channels:

- Get all the latest information via our [website](#).



- Subscribe to our [weekly newsletter](#) for the latest information and updates direct to your inbox.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for general information about Child Care Subsidy (CCS), Family Assistance Law (FAL) and other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.
- Check out our YouTube channel for a collection of [explainer videos](#) on key topics.
- Refresh your knowledge of FAL via our [online learning platform, Geccko](#).
- Get help administering CCS via the [CCS Provider Helpdesk](#).

If you haven't completed the survey yet, there is still time.

[Complete the survey now](#).

## Sector spotlight

### Celebrate Children's Week

**Children's Week runs from 19 to 27 October and celebrates the right of children to enjoy childhood. It is also a time for children to demonstrate their talents, skills and abilities.**

The 2024 theme is based on Article 24 from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: 'Children have the right to a clean and safe environment.'

Your service can:

- [download resources](#) from the Children's Week Council of Australia website
- participate in the events and celebrations [in your state or territory](#).

Learn more about [Children's Week](#).

## Facts from FAL

### Salary sacrificing ECEC fees

**Do you have families that pay their ECEC fees through salary sacrifice? Make sure you're reporting their fees correctly to avoid compliance action.**

Salary sacrificing is considered a third-party payment. There are rules you must follow when a third party contributes to a family's fees.

Generally, when a third party helps a family pay their ECEC fees, you must deduct the contribution from the total session fee.

The family's CCS rate will then be applied to the reduced session fee. This is because families are only entitled to CCS in relation to the amount they have to pay after any third-party payments.

The family must still pay a gap fee.

We have [examples on our website](#) to help you understand how to report different types of third-party payments, including salary sacrificing.



Reporting the correct fee information is a requirement under FAL. We may take compliance action if you fail to meet your obligations.

Read more about [third-party payments](#) on our website.

## Our compliance approach

**We undertake compliance activities to help make sure CCS goes to its intended beneficiaries – families.**

Any action we take will:

- be proportionate
- consider the risk to the integrity of CCS
- consider the severity of the non-compliance
- consider your past behaviour or compliance history
- consider your response to any earlier non-compliance action.

Read more about our [compliance approach](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Did you know your activity level affects your Child Care Subsidy?

**The hours of subsidised care you can get each fortnight depends on your activity level.**

There are a range of activities that count towards your activity level, including:

- paid work
- volunteering
- studying
- looking for work
- unpaid work in a family business.

Read the [step-by-step guide from Services Australia](#) on how to update your activity test to make sure you get the correct amount of Child Care Subsidy.

You can check your type of activity and hours:

- in your myGov account
- by contacting Services Australia on the [Centrelink families line](#).



## From the department

### Worker retention payment update

**Thank you to those who attended our worker retention payment webinar last week.**

If you missed out, the [recording and transcript](#) are now available on our website.

As mentioned in the session, information about [how we will calculate payments](#) is now available.

We will publish further questions and answers from the session soon.

### We want to hear from you

**Do you use our website? Read this weekly newsletter? Watch our explainer videos?**

We're running a short survey so you can tell us what you think about our communication activities.

Your responses will be anonymous, and the information you provide us will help us to improve how we communicate.

[Complete the survey now.](#)

## Sector spotlight

### Preschool Outcomes Measure national consultation underway

**The Australian, state and territory governments have started developing a tool to help enhance teachers' and educators' understanding of preschool children's learning in areas like problem-solving and language.**

The tool – known as the Preschool Outcomes Measure – will provide a research-based and free way for educators to understand and support children's learning. It is being developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), in partnership with Goodstart Early Learning and Ninti One.

To help design the tool, ACER is gathering feedback from:

- teachers and educators
- parents and carers
- sector leaders
- the wider community.

Share your insights via the [ACER questionnaire](#).

To find out more:

- subscribe to the [Preschool Measures Outcome Update](#)
- visit [our website](#)



- visit [the ACER website](#)
- email [preschooloutcomesmeasure@acer.org](mailto:preschooloutcomesmeasure@acer.org).

## Facts from FAL

### Changing session reports

You must update session reports if:

- you make a mistake
- the session report is incorrect.

You can change session reports through the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or via third party software.

You can update or withdraw session reports up to 28 days after the start of the week for which the report relates, unless the financial year ends before the 28 days are finished.

If a session report did not need to be submitted due to no care being provided in that week, you should withdraw it.

Failing to update or withdraw an incorrect session report within the required timeframe may result in compliance action or Child Care Subsidy (CCS) debts for providers or families.

Learn more:

- [how to update session reports](#)
- [Reporting sessions of care](#) course on Geckko.

### Gap fee audits

**Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically. We conduct audits by asking you to provide information using a section 158 notice.**

A person with management or control must respond to the notice within 14 days.

The types of information we may request about the collection of gap fees during an audit includes:

- bank statements showing that gap fees have been paid via EFT
- statements from third party software
- reconciliation statements
- policy/procedural documents that show evidence of how you are meeting your Family Assistance Law (FAL) obligations.

We may take compliance action if you do not comply with a section 158 notice.

Read about:

- [what to do if you get a section 158 notice](#)
- [guidance on collecting gap fees](#).





## Notify us of changes to your business

Under FAL, you must notify us about a range of matters relating to your business to maintain your CCS approval.

Notify us of changes to your:

- address
- legal entity
- name
- bank account details
- contact details.

We also publish information about your service to [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au). You need to notify us of changes to your:

- fees
- opening hours
- vacancies.

Visit the [notifications and reporting](#) page on our website to find out how.

## Financial reporting deadline for some large providers is 1 November

**Large providers must report financial information to the department each year, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements.**

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

If you do your financial reporting on the financial year, the deadline is on 1 November 2024.

Complete and submit the [2023–24 Large Provider Financial Input Report](#) to [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au) by the deadline.

The information you must report depends on your circumstances. Please make sure that you include financial statements and the information that is required in the important information tab.

Learn more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).



Improve your knowledge  
anywhere, anytime, with our  
free online courses.



## From the department

### Worker retention payment applications open

**Applications are now open for the worker retention payment.**

The worker retention payment will support a 15% wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce over 2 years.

Providers opt-in by applying for the payment. The payment will be issued to eligible providers through a grant agreement. Providers must pass the payment on to eligible ECEC workers.

You must read and understand the [grant guidelines](#) before applying. The application must be completed by a person with management or control (PMC).

You can apply at any time before 30 September 2026.

We understand for some providers meeting certain conditions, like having a workplace instrument, may take time. We will backdate payments to 2 December 2024 for providers that:

- apply by 30 June 2025
- meet the eligibility criteria from 2 December 2024.

First regular payments will be made to eligible providers in January 2025.

See [how to apply for the worker retention payment](#) for more information.

### Webinar on tomorrow

**Our [worker retention payment webinar](#) is on at 2 pm AEDT tomorrow.**

The webinar is for:

- ECEC providers and services
- persons with management or control (PMCs) who will be applying for the payment
- sector stakeholders such as peak bodies and industry groups.

The webinar will be recorded and published on our website, along with a transcript, for those who can't attend.

[Join the webinar at 2 pm AEDT tomorrow.](#)

### Share your views with us

**Every year we ask you to tell us what you think of our communication activities.**

We craft our communications to help you better understand the Australian Government's ECEC policies and programs.

Share your feedback on our:



- website
- weekly newsletter
- explainer videos
- Facebook group
- online learning platform, Gecko
- Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk.

The survey is anonymous and will take around 5 to 10 minutes to complete. You can also share the survey with your colleagues.

We read the survey results closely and respond to feedback to make incremental improvements to our communications.

[Have your say.](#)

## Report suspected fraud using our CCS tip-off form

**If you suspect a provider or service is committing fraud, you can tell us.**

We recently launched an online CCS fraud tip-off form. You can use it to share information related to people, providers or services who are not following the rules.

The form is anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete.

Find out more about [reporting CCS fraud](#) on our website.

## Are you emergency ready?

**Now is the time to prepare your service for an emergency or natural disaster.**

Having a plan in place can ensure the safety of children and staff and reduce damage to property.

Here are some practical ways you can plan and prepare:

Prepare your business

[Business.gov.au](#) has information and resources to help you develop an emergency management plan and keep your business running during tough times.

Check your insurance cover

It is a good idea to identify the types of disasters you are exposed to, the likelihood of these occurring, and to make sure you have an appropriate level of [business insurance](#) in place.

Back up and secure your data

Regularly back up and store important business documents in a safe location, including:

- registration records
- financial records
- customer data.



Find out [how to create a cyber security policy](#) on the business.gov.au website.

Understand emergency support

Familiarise yourself with the [support](#) we provide in the event of a CCS period of emergency.

Update your contact details

We let providers know when a period of emergency is declared in their region. We use the email addresses listed in the Child Care Subsidy System.

Check your details are up to date, via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.

If you close your service due to an emergency, you must tell us. You can do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#) and [join our Facebook group](#) to receive the latest alerts.

## Sector spotlight

### World Mental Health Day

**Tomorrow is World Mental Health Day.**

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

Be You provides educators with knowledge, tools and resources to create positive, inclusive and responsive learning communities where every child, young person, educator and family is empowered to achieve their best possible mental health.

Go to the [Be You website](#).

Learn more about [World Mental Health Day](#).

## Facts from FAL

### Providers may offer only certain inducements

**ECEC providers may not offer certain types of inducements. An inducement is an incentive to secure a child's enrolment.**

Inducements that are financial or not directly associated with the quality or provision of care are not allowed. This includes cash or vouchers, electronics devices, or gifts.

You can:

- offer discounted or free care
- advertise your service and offer free site visits or trial periods
- issue marketing merchandise to the value of \$30 per complying written arrangement
- include extra-curricular activities as part of a session fee



- advertise your social impact through activities like donations to a charity
- transport to or from your service, if this is part of your normal business practice.

Fee discounts must be reported correctly if CCS is claimed.

Read about [inducements and advertising at your service](#) on our website.

## Understanding shared care enrolments

**When relationships change, families must tell their ECEC service and Services Australia.**

If a child's parents are separated and both parents share responsibility for fees:

- both parents must make their own CCS claim
- you must establish separate care arrangements and enrolment notices for each parent.

You must do this even if you previously had a care arrangement in place before the separation.

Read more [about special arrangements](#) on our website.

## Reminder: 2023–24 CCS balancing

**Services Australia is balancing CCS for the 2023–24 financial year.**

Families who get CCS must confirm their income with Services Australia so their payments can be balanced, by:

- lodging their tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia they don't need to lodge a tax return, even if they've already told the ATO.

Once Services Australia has balanced a family's CCS, they will send them an outcome.

You may wish to display a [balancing basics factsheet](#) at your service.

We have [more information for providers](#) on our website.

## Becoming an approved provider

**Providers must be approved to operate an ECEC service and administer CCS in Australia. You must be approved by the Australian Government, and your state or territory government.**

We have step-by-step guidance on our website about the approval process, including:

- the 2 types of approval required
- eligibility rules
- evidence required
- how to submit your application
- what happens after you apply
- how to add, remove or relocate a service



- why we suspend approvals.

Applicants must read this information carefully before applying and ensure they submit a complete application.

If your application is incomplete, we'll ask for more information before we begin our assessment. If you don't provide this information your application will be rejected, and you'll need to reapply.

Learn more about [becoming an approved provider](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Understanding activity levels

#### Did you know your activity level affects your Child Care Subsidy (CCS)?

The hours of subsidised care you can get each fortnight depends on your activity level.

There are a range of activities that count towards your activity level, including:

- paid work
- volunteering
- studying
- looking for work
- unpaid work in a family business.

Read the [step-by-step guide from Services Australia](#) on how to update your activity test to make sure you get the correct amount of CCS.

You can check your type of activity and hours:

- in your myGov account
- by contacting Services Australia on the [Centrelink families line](#).



## From the department

### Update on the ECEC wage increase

The worker retention payment will support a 15% wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce over 2 years.

**Please see important updates about the worker retention payment below.**

### Guidelines now available

The worker retention payment guidelines are now available.

The guidelines contain important details about the payment, including:

- eligibility requirements
- grant conditions
- reporting requirements.

Download the guidelines on [GrantConnect](#).

Read a [summary of the guidelines](#) on our website.

### Applications open next week

See a [guide with everything you need to know to apply](#).

### Join us for a webinar

We're holding a webinar at 2 pm AEDT on Thursday 10 October 2024 to discuss key aspects of the payment.

The webinar is for:

- ECEC providers and services
- persons with management or control (PMCs) who will be applying for the payment
- sector stakeholders such as peak bodies and industry groups.

The webinar will be recorded and published on our website, along with a transcript, for those who can't attend.

Learn more about the [worker retention payment webinar](#).

### Get all the details

We've published comprehensive information about the worker retention payment on our website, including:

- a summary of the guidelines
- a guide with everything you need to know to apply
- information about our upcoming webinar
- information about awards, workplace instruments and bargaining



- a kit for ECEC stakeholders to help us spread the word, and more.

Visit our website for all the latest [worker retention payment details](#).

## Complete our communication survey

**Every year we ask you to tell us what you think of our communication activities.**

We craft our communications to help you better understand the Australian Government's ECEC policies and programs.

How did we do? We'd love you to complete our survey.

Share your feedback on our:

- website
- weekly newsletter
- explainer videos
- Facebook group
- online learning platform, Geckko
- CCS Provider Helpdesk.

The survey is anonymous and will take around 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

[Tell us what you think.](#)

## Latest Child Care Subsidy data now available

**We've published data about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in the June quarter 2024.**

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

Key findings from the June quarter 2024 include:

- 1,417,730 children from 1,000,130 families used CCS-approved care
- 14,835 CCS-approved services operated during the quarter
- on average, children attended 26.7 hours of care per week
- the average hourly fee was \$12.55
- the Australian Government paid \$3.65 billion in subsidies.

Go to the [June quarter 2024 report](#).

## Sector spotlight

### Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS-approved providers and services now has over 9,600 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:





- administering CCS
- complying with Family Assistance Law
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

## Facts from FAL

### CCS Provider Helpdesk closed Monday

**The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed because of the public holiday in most states and territories on Monday 7 October 2024.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 8 October.

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

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.

### Additional absences from ECEC

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

Families may be able to get additional absences once they have used their allowable absence days, in certain circumstances. A public holiday is not an additional absence reason.

These circumstances include:

- the child or a member of the immediate household is ill
- the child is attending preschool
- alternative arrangements have been made for the child on a pupil-free day.

Where evidence is not required, you must be reasonably satisfied the reason has been met.

Find a list of [additional absence reasons, including evidence required](#), on our website.

### Financial reporting deadline on 1 November

**Large providers must report financial information, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements, to the department each year.**

The reporting deadline depends on when you do your financial reporting.

If you do your financial reporting on the financial year, the deadline is 1 November 2024.

Complete the [2023–24 Large Provider Financial Input Report](#) and email it to [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au) by the deadline.




Please ensure to include financial statements and information as outlined in the important information tab.

If you report on a calendar year, your deadline will fall on 1 May 2025. We'll provide more information closer to the deadline.

This obligation only applies to providers who operate, or share operation of, 25 or more services.

If you're not sure whether these obligations apply to you, please email [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au).

Learn more about the [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#) on our website.

A purple banner with decorative elements including a red circle on the left, white asterisks, and yellow 'x' marks. The text reads: **CCS fraud tip-off form**  
If you suspect a provider or service is committing fraud, you can tell us.  
Click to find out more  
A yellow underline is positioned below the text.

**CCS fraud tip-off form**  
If you suspect a provider or service is committing fraud, you can tell us.  
Click to find out more



## From the department

### Connected Beginnings is expanding to Bairnsdale

**The Australian Government is expanding the Connected Beginnings program to Bairnsdale, Victoria.**

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by June 2025. There are now 47 sites across the country.

The new site will support about 100 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Bairnsdale, bringing the total number of children supported Australia-wide to about 23,000.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

### Last chance to apply for CCCF business support



**Do you get a Community Child Care Fund grant?**

This week is your last chance to apply for free business support. Applications close on Monday 30 September.

Watch our short video or [visit our website](#) to apply today.

### Intensive ECEC model trial update

**The Australian Government is providing \$9.5 million to support a trial of an intensive early childhood education and care (ECEC) model.**

The model is designed to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children to bridge the gap to school readiness, for children from birth up to 3 years.

Project Partners, including Parkville Institute and SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children, have co-developed 3 new reports about the Boori Milumba trial site in Nowra, New South Wales.



We have published these on our website:

- The [Boori Milumba Model: An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific service-led intensive ECEC model](#) introduces an intensive ECEC model co-developed with, by and for an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).
- [A Journey of Co-Development: The Boori Milumba Model](#) details the collaborative journey to develop the Boori Milumba Model.
- [Co-Development Framework for developing an intensive ECEC program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children](#) emerges from a collaborative project to co-develop an evidence-based, intensive and holistic ECEC program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Nowra, New South Wales.

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

## Sector spotlight

### Preschool Outcomes Measure national consultation underway

**The Australian, state and territory governments have started developing a tool to help enhance teachers' and educators' understanding of preschool children's learning in areas like problem-solving and language.**

The tool – known as the Preschool Outcomes Measure – will provide a research-based and free way for educators to understand and support children's learning. It is being developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), in partnership with Goodstart Early Learning and Ninti One.

To help design the tool, ACER is gathering feedback from:

- teachers and educators
- parents and carers
- sector leaders
- the wider community.

Share your insights via the [ACER questionnaire](#).

To find out more:

- subscribe to the [Preschool Measures Outcome Update](#)
- visit [our website](#)
- visit [the ACER website](#)

email [preschooloutcomesmeasure@acer.org](mailto:preschooloutcomesmeasure@acer.org).

## Facts from FAL

### How do I avoid an infringement notice?

**We can issue infringement notices to providers that don't follow the rules under Family Assistance Law (FAL). Providers must make sure that they, their employees and educators follow the rules.**



Infringement notices are issued for a range of reasons. Some examples include:

- not correctly reporting your fee information
- not meeting reporting requirements, like keeping contact details or details of persons with management or control up to date
- not submitting session reports on time.

See the [full list of FAL civil penalty provisions for which we can issue an infringement notice](#).

Our website has a range of resources to help you avoid an infringement notice, including:

- a free online learning module on Geckko, [our online learning platform](#)
- information about [provider obligations](#)
- a comprehensive list of [obligations, tasks and timeframes](#)
- a [series of short videos](#) covering common compliance issues
- [handbooks, guides and task cards](#) on key programs.

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

## Keep your WWCC records updated

**You must keep records of working with children checks (WWCCs) for any person required to have one.**

You must be able to provide these records to us if we ask you for it.

Find out more about [your WWCC obligations](#).

## Claiming CCS when your service is closed

**A reminder that you cannot claim Child Care Subsidy (CCS) when your service is closed, except:**

- on a public holiday
- during a CCS period of emergency.

Read more about [service closures](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### First Nations children can get more hours of subsidised care

**If you want to use child care, the Australian Government helps cover the costs. It's called Child Care Subsidy, or CCS. The government pays child care services, who pass the subsidy on to you as cheaper fees.**

You can get at least 36 hours of CCS per fortnight for each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child in care. This is regardless of the amount of activity you do, such as work, training, study or volunteering.

- This may make your fees cheaper.
- Young ones can prepare and be ready for big school.
- You have more access to subsidised care if you need it.



You can find out more about how to apply at [First Nations activity test](#).

You do not need to do anything if you already get more than 36 hours of subsidy.



## From the department

### Connected Beginnings is expanding to Ipswich

**The Australian Government is expanding the Connected Beginnings program to Ipswich, Queensland.**

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by June 2025. There are now 46 sites across the country.

The new site will support about 1,900 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Ipswich, bringing the total number of children supported Australia-wide to about 22,900.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

### We've launched a new Child Care Subsidy fraud tip-off form

**Child Care Subsidy (CCS) fraud is the dishonest administration of CCS. If you suspect a provider or service is committing fraud, you can tell us.**

Some examples can look like:

- claiming false absences
- offering banned incentives to secure enrolments
- accepting cash payments
- claiming CCS for types of care where CCS is not payable.

If you have information related to people, services or providers who are not following the rules, you can report it to us anonymously.

We treat all tip-offs seriously. We ask that you try to provide us with as much detail as you can, so we are able to fully assess the information provided in the form.

For more information about [reporting CCS fraud](#) or to access the tip-off form, visit our website.



## CCCF business support closing soon



**Time is running out to apply for free business support.**

Business support is available to Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) grant recipients. Applications close on 30 September 2024.

Watch our short video or [visit our website](#) to learn more and apply.

## Updating your details is important

**It's important to keep your details up to date in the [Child Care Subsidy System](#).**

This includes:

- identifying all [persons with management or control](#) (PMCs) and keeping their details up to date
- reporting changes to the bank account details for any service.

If this information is not correct:

- we cannot communicate essential information to you
- we cannot contact you in an emergency
- we cannot make payments to you
- families may not get their CCS payments
- we may issue an infringement notice.

Update your details through the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.

Find a [list of notifications and reporting requirements](#) on our website.

## Sector spotlight

### Productivity Commission final report released

Earlier this year, the Australian Government tasked the Productivity Commission with conducting an inquiry into Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) system.





The Productivity Commission has now released their final report: *A path to universal early childhood education and care*.

The report considers how to build a universal early learning system that is:

- affordable
- accessible
- inclusive
- high quality.

It says every child should be able to access at least 30 hours of high-quality early education and care by 2036.

Over the coming months, the Australian Government will consider the report's findings and recommendations, alongside those of the recent Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) inquiry.

To read the report, visit the [Productivity Commission website](#).

## How inclusive is your service?

**We're inviting services to complete a short survey on inclusion.**

We're seeking feedback on:

- your awareness of inclusion obligations
- what your service does to meet those obligations
- whether your service accesses assistance to implement inclusive practices
- any barriers your service faces.

ORIMA Research is conducting the survey on our behalf. They've sent a link to complete the survey to representatives from Centre Based Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care services.

If you received a link, please complete the survey by 30 September.

Learn more on [ORIMA's website](#).

## Share your insights on a new national preschool assessment tool

**The Australian, state and territory governments have started developing a tool to help enhance teachers' and educators' understanding of preschool children's learning in areas like problem-solving and language.**

The tool – known as the Preschool Outcomes Measure – will provide a research-based and free way for educators to understand and support children's learning. It is being developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), in partnership with Goodstart Early Learning and Ninti One.

To help design the tool, ACER is gathering feedback from:

- teachers and educators
- parents and carers



- sector leaders
- the wider community.

Share your insights via the [ACER questionnaire](#).

To find out more:

- subscribe to the [Preschool Measures Outcome Update](#)
- visit [our website](#)
- visit the [ACER website](#)

email [preschooloutcomesmeasure@acer.org](mailto:preschooloutcomesmeasure@acer.org).

## Facts from FAL

### Submitting accurate session reports

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

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided.

We've developed web content to help you get this process right and to answer your questions about:

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

Learn about [session reports](#).

### Service exceptions to electronic payment of gap fees

**Families using ECEC must pay the gap fee electronically. Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically.**

A service may be eligible for an exception if:

- the service is located in a remote or very remote area, and
- experiences poor internet or phone coverage, or
- has a significant number of families who have limited access to a financial institution, which poses a barrier to those families paying electronically.

You must apply on behalf of the service seeking exception and give supporting evidence of the exceptional circumstance.



Read more about exceptions and how to apply [on our website](#).

Complete the **Electronic payment of gap fees** course [in Geccko](#).

## Workforce support

### Workforce subsidies close Friday



**Applications for our professional development subsidies close on Friday.**

The professional development subsidy helps qualified staff complete one day of training.

The paid practicum subsidy helps early childhood teachers and educators in training complete their practicums.

Providers must apply on behalf of staff.

Staff cannot apply themselves. If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from these subsidies, please talk to a person with management or control (PMC) at your provider about applying.

To find out more, go to [professional development opportunities](#).

## Share with families

### Do you have more than one child in care?

**If you have more than one child aged 5 or under in care, you may get a higher Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for your second child and any younger children.**

You may get a higher subsidy for one or more of your children if all these apply:

- you get or will be eligible for CCS
- your family's combined income is under \$365,611
- your family has more than one CCS eligible child aged 5 or younger.

Services Australia will automatically work out if you're eligible. If you are, they'll automatically apply a higher subsidy to any eligible children in your family.



If your Centrelink online account is linked to myGov, you can check your CCS percentage online.

Find out more about [how your number of children in care can affect your Child Care Subsidy](#) on the Services Australia website.



## From the department

### Connected Beginnings in Port Adelaide

**The Australian Government is expanding the Connected Beginnings program to Port Adelaide in South Australia.**

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by June 2025. There are now 45 sites across the country.

The new sites will support around 350 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Port Adelaide, bringing the total number of children supported Australia-wide to about 21,000.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

### Wage increase for early childhood workforce

**We're supporting a wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce through a new worker retention payment.**

We understand that the sector is eager to know more about the payment and how it will work. We're working hard to finalise the details and we'll share them with you as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, stay informed by:

- [subscribing to our weekly newsletter](#)
- [joining our Facebook group](#)
- learning [about the payment](#)
- finding [answers to questions](#).

### Emergencies



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

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

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

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

## Sector spotlight

### Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services now has over 9,400 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:

- administering CCS
- complying with Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

### A conversation could change a life

**Tomorrow is R U OK? Day. It is a National Day of Action to remind everyone that every day is the day to ask, 'are you OK?' and support those struggling with life's ups and downs.**

Together we can create a world where everyone feels supported.

Find resources for [educators on the R U OK? Day website](#).

Educators can also find wellbeing resources on the [Be You website](#). Be You is the national mental health and wellbeing initiative for ECEC services and schools.



# Facts from FAL

## Do you record third-party payments correctly?

**There are rules you are required to follow when a third party contributes to a family's ECEC fees.**

When a third party contributes to a family's child care fees, you must deduct the contribution from the total session fee.

The family's CCS rate will then be applied to the reduced session fee. This is because families are only entitled to CCS in relation to the amount you charge them.

There are exceptions to this, in limited circumstances. These circumstances are known as prescribed third-party payments. We list all [prescribed third-party payments](#) on our website.

Reporting the correct fee information is a requirement under FAL. We can take compliance action if you don't follow the law.

Find examples about [how to report different types of third-party payments](#) on our website.

## Support for grandparent carers

**Do you have grandparent carers at your service? They may be able to get extra help with the cost of ECEC.**

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) grandparent is for grandparent carers who:

- are eligible for CCS
- get an [income support payment](#)
- are the grandparent of the child
- have 65% or more care of the child
- make the day-to-day decisions about the child's care, welfare and development.

Eligible grandparents can get 100 hours of subsidised care each fortnight. They'll get the lower of either:

- 100% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap
- up to 120% of the hourly rate cap where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.

Grandparent carers can apply through their [Centrelink online account](#) or by visiting a Centrelink office.

Grandparent carers who don't get an income support payment won't be eligible for ACCS grandparent. However, they may be eligible for CCS and an [activity test exemption](#).

We have more [information about ACCS grandparent for providers](#) on our website.

Grandparents should go to the [Services Australia website](#).

## Understanding your obligations: providing care to relatives

**Are you a Family Day Care or In Home Care provider?**

There are rules around claiming CCS for:



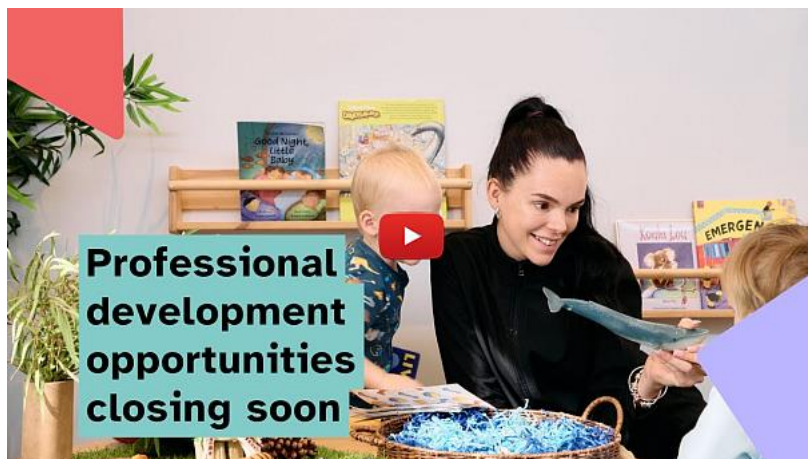
- close family
- extended family
- an educator's child.

This is because care that normally occurs in a family **is not** eligible for CCS.

Visit our website to understand your obligations on [providing care to relatives](#).

## Workforce support

### Workforce subsidies closing soon



**Applications for our professional development and paid practicum subsidies are closing soon.**

The professional development subsidy helps qualified staff complete one day of training.

The paid practicum subsidy helps early childhood teachers and educators in training complete their practicums.

Providers must apply on behalf of staff.

Staff cannot apply themselves. If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from these subsidies, please talk to a person with management or control (PMC) at your provider about applying.

Round one applications are closing soon.

Visit [our website](#) to learn more and apply by 20 September.





## From the department

### New Connected Beginnings site in Dubbo

**The Australian Government is expanding the Connected Beginnings program to Dubbo in New South Wales.**

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by June 2025. There are now 44 sites across the country.

The new site will support around 1,000 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Dubbo, bringing the total number of children supported Australia-wide to about 20,700.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

### Wage increase for early childhood workforce

**We're supporting a wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce through a new worker retention payment.**

We understand that the sector is eager to know more about the payment and how it will work. We're working hard to finalise the details and we'll share them with you as soon as possible.

While we do that, there are some steps you can take to get ready for the payment. These include:

- Do not increase your fees by more than 4.4%. This is a condition of the payment that started on 8 August and will last for 12 months.
- Prepare to pay your staff through a workplace instrument.
- Make sure you have your provider and service CRNs ready for when you apply. You can find these on the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.
- Stay informed by [subscribing to our weekly newsletter](#) and [joining our Facebook group](#).

Learn [about the payment](#) and find [answers to questions](#) on our website.



## Apply for CCCF business support before time runs out



### Do you get a Community Child Care Fund grant?

Apply for free business support before applications close on 30 September 2024.

Watch our short video or [visit our website](#) to learn more and apply.

## CCS period of emergency in Tasmania

A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency is in place for Derwent Valley Local Government Area in Tasmania following floods.

Visit our website to see:

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

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

## Sector spotlight

### Thank you, educators!

**Today, on Early Childhood Educators' Day, let's celebrate our ECEC educators.**

Early childhood educators touch children's lives in many ways. They play a key role in improving children's wellbeing, learning and development. That's why the government is supporting [a wage increase](#) for educators through a new worker retention payment.

Thank you, educators, for the important work you do. We encourage all providers to get involved and show your appreciation.

You can find ideas and resources to get involved on the [Early Childhood Educators' Day website](#).

## Indigenous Literacy Day

**Today is Indigenous Literacy Day, organised by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.**

Celebrate the stories, cultures and languages of First Nations peoples by:



- sharing First Nations stories and books
- hosting an event and inviting families
- inviting an Elder to share stories in their language and more.

Learn more about how you can support Indigenous literacy on [Indigenous Literacy Foundation's website](#).

## Facts from FAL

### Changes to fee reporting obligations

**From 1 September, you must notify us of your fees at least twice a year, in December and July, to ensure they are correctly updated or remain accurate.**

Providers will need to notify us of their fees 14 days after the end of the:

- financial year
- calendar year.

This also includes reporting no change to fees.

This reporting obligation is in addition to the current notification requirements to report the fees within 14 days of:

- receiving CCS approval (or opening the service if that occurs at a later date)
- changing your fees.

This change is part of the government's commitment to improving the transparency of child care fees. It will help families make informed financial decisions about early childhood education and care.

Read more about:

- [notifications and reporting](#)
- [how to report fees through the PEP or your third-party-software](#).

### Need a refresher on updating enrolments?

**All children who attend approved care must be enrolled, regardless of whether they get CCS. This is a requirement under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

When your care arrangements for children change, they must be recorded.

You must update an enrolment notice in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) when:

- the family disagrees with details of an enrolment and you agree an update is required
- the care arrangement between you and the family changes
- you realise the information in an enrolment is incorrect
- the care arrangement ends.

The enrolment notice must be updated within 7 days of the above event occurring.

You can update enrolment notices via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.



Read the task card on our website [for help updating enrolments](#) in the PEP.

## How we support compliance

**Our compliance approach recognises that many providers and services willingly comply with their obligations.**

To support willing compliance, we:

- provide information, education and resources to help you understand and comply with your obligations
- engage with stakeholders and the sector to support those who want to do the right thing
- regularly check you are complying with your obligations and take compliance action when you're not
- investigate tip-offs and reports of non-compliance.

We undertake compliance activities to help to make sure CCS goes to its intended beneficiaries – families. Before we take compliance action, we give you:

- a notice of our intended action
- opportunity to provide written submissions.

In some instances, FAL allows us to take compliance action without giving notice. For example:

- where a provider's approval under National Law is suspended or cancelled
- when imposing additional conditions of approval.

Read more about our [compliance approach](#) on our website.

## Workforce support

### Learn about our workforce subsidies

**Applications are open for our professional development and paid practicum subsidies. The subsidies can help your staff complete training and practicums.**

The professional development subsidy helps qualified staff complete 1 day of training. Watch the below video to learn how the professional development subsidy works.



The paid practicum subsidy allows providers to give staff paid leave while undertaking practicums. Watch the below video to learn how the paid practicum subsidy works.





Providers must apply for the subsidies on behalf of their staff.

Staff cannot apply themselves. If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from these subsidies, please talk to a person with management or control (PMC) at your provider about applying.

Round 1 applications close on 20 September.

Visit [our website](#) to learn more and apply.

## Webinar: ECEC workforce capacity study report launch

**Join Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) for an online webinar to discuss the future workforce needs for the ECEC sector.**

The Australian Government commissioned JSA to undertake a capacity study on the future ECEC workforce needs. The [Early Childhood Education and Care Capacity Study Report](#) made 28 findings and 41 recommendations.

JSA will hold an online webinar at 11.30 am AEST on 9 September to discuss key aspects of the report, its contribution and the future of the profession.

[Register for the webinar.](#)

## Share with families

### Child Care Subsidy balancing has started

**Services Australia has started balancing Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for the 2023–24 financial year.**

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

You can confirm your income by:

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

Once Services Australia has balanced your CCS, they will send you an outcome.

Find out more [about CCS balancing](#) on the Services Australia website.



## From the department

### Prepare for the ECEC wage increase

We're supporting a wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce through a new worker retention payment.

We have [information about the payment](#) and [answers to questions](#) on our website.

We'll provide more details soon. In the meantime, there are things you can do now to prepare for the payment. These include:

- Do not increase your fees by more than 4.4%. This came into effect on 8 August and will last for 12 months.
- Prepare to pay your staff through a workplace instrument.
- Make sure you have your provider and service CRNs ready for when you apply. You can find these on the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

Stay up to date with the latest information by [subscribing to our weekly newsletter](#) and [joining our Facebook group](#).

### Child Care Subsidy Financial Integrity Strategy

We've published our Child Care Subsidy Financial Integrity Strategy: 2023–2027.

This strategy outlines the department's approach to maintaining the financial integrity of Child Care Subsidy (CCS). It describes how we identify, prioritise, coordinate, implement, respond to and measure integrity activities and operations.

#### Identify

- We use a range of approaches to identify non-compliant and fraudulent behaviour in real-time.
- We use data and analytics to identify emerging integrity risks and support earlier interventions.

#### Prioritise and coordinate

- We prioritise risks and target our work to the highest areas of value.
- Our compliance approach uses interventions to support and respond to providers at different levels of compliance.

#### Respond efficiently and effectively

- We manage our data and reporting to provide reliable information on risks.
- We measure how our activities lead to outcomes.
- We collaborate with states, territories and other regulators to better understand provider behaviours and risks.
- We collaborate with the sector to understand and prevent non-compliant behaviour.

Read our [CCS Financial Integrity Strategy](#).



## CCS Provider Helpdesk will close early on Friday

The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed from 4 pm AEST on Friday 30 August.

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Monday 2 September.

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

## Sector spotlight

### 2024 Early STEM Education Awards announced

Congratulations to all the recipients of the Little Scientists 2024 Early STEM Education Awards.

The awards recognise educators and services driving STEM education for children 0 to 7 years across Australia.

State, territory and national winners were announced across 2 categories.

The **Excellence in Early STEM Education Award** recognises early learning services & early primary classrooms. The educator team at Bagdad Education and Care in regional Tasmania was selected as the national winner for their project 'Will the ropes break under our weight?'.

The **Outstanding Early STEM Education Leader Award** recognises early childhood educators & early primary teachers. Early childhood teacher Esther Christian from Seedlings & Co ELC Calamvale in Brisbane was selected as the national winner.

See the full list of [state, territory and national winners](#)

### Have your say on inclusion

How does your service implement inclusive practices? Have you accessed assistance to do so? Share your feedback with us.

We're working with ORIMA Research to conduct a survey on inclusive practice in ECEC.

The survey is for service representatives from:

- Centre Based Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Family Day Care.

We want your feedback on:

- your awareness of inclusion obligations
- what your service does to meet those obligations
- whether your service accesses assistance to implement inclusive practices
- any barriers your service faces.

**Please keep an eye out for an email from ORIMA with a link to complete the survey from Monday 2 September.**

Learn more on [ORIMA's website](#).



## Wear it Purple Day

Wear purple this Friday 30 August.

This year's theme, 'Your passion, your pride', celebrates LGBTQIA+ people achieving their dreams in sport, art, science and more

You can [download resources](#) for use in the lead up to Wear it Purple Day.

[Learn more about Wear It Purple Day.](#)

## Facts from FAL

### You must notify us about working with children checks

In certain circumstances, you must notify us about working with children checks (WWCCs) in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

You must do this for:

- Family Day Care educators
- In Home Care educators
- persons with management or control (PMCs) and persons responsible at the service that are required to have a WWCC.

For these people, you must notify:

- new checks within 7 days
- changes to existing checks within 24 hours of becoming aware of the change.

Notify WWCCs via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.

Find out more about your [WWCC obligations](#).

### Streamline your application process

When buying or adding a new child care service, there is a lot of information and evidence you need to provide so that you can operate a service and administer CCS.

You'll need two types of approvals to run a service that offers CCS:

- Your state or territory government – known as National Law approval. You must be suitable to ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.
- The Australian Government (that's us). We deem you suitable to administer CCS.

You can apply for both approvals at the same time and via the [National Quality Agenda IT System](#).

Find out more about [getting ready to apply](#) on our website.





## Workforce support

### Apply for professional development subsidies



Applications are open for our professional development and paid practicum subsidies. The subsidies can help your staff complete training and practicums.

All providers can now apply.

Providers must apply on behalf of their staff. A PMC must submit the application.

If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from these subsidies, please talk to your provider about applying.

Round one applications close on 20 September.

To find out more, go to [professional development opportunities](#).

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### Track the progress of your Child Care Subsidy balancing online

We'll start balancing your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) from mid-August when we get all the information we need from your child care provider.

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

#### If you owe us money at tax time, we may recover it from your Families payments

The way we recover debts at tax time is different if you get family assistance payments.

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



## From the department

### Get the latest on the ECEC wage increase

Subscribe to our channels for the latest information and updates about the wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce.

Earlier this month, we announced the government will support a wage increase for the ECEC workforce through a new worker retention payment.

We have [information about the payment](#) and [answers to questions](#) on our website.

We will provide more details, including grant guidelines, soon.

To get the latest updates:

- [subscribe to our weekly newsletter](#)
- [join our Facebook group](#).

### Apply for CCCF business support before time runs out



**Do you get a Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) grant? Apply for free business support before applications close.**

Business support has been available for CCCF recipients since July 2023. Applications for business support close on 30 September 2024.

Watch our short video or [visit our website](#) to learn more and apply.



# Spotlight on the sector

## New resource: inclusion together

**Inclusion Together is a new free online resource with practical tools for supporting children with disability or developmental differences in an ECEC setting.**

The resource is designed to support the inclusion of children with disability or developmental differences through building an inclusion team that works well together.

It has information, ideas, strategies and videos that will support:

- the inclusion team to work together to strengthen inclusion
- children to play, learn, develop and thrive.

We funded the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency to develop the resource.

Check out the [Inclusion Together resource](#).

## Celebrating the love of reading

**This week is Children's Book Week. The 2024 theme 'Reading is magic' celebrates the amazing power of stories to transport minds.**

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

Your service can celebrate Book Week by:

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

Children's Book Week is promoted by the Children's Book Council of Australia. You can learn more on their [website](#).

# Supporting the workforce

National workforce strategy update

**ACECQA has updated the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy dashboard.**

The 10-year strategy, *Shaping our Future*, aims to ensure a sustainable and high-quality ECEC workforce. The strategy outlines 21 short, medium and long-term actions across 6 focus areas.

The dashboard tracks:

- progress against the 21 strategy actions
- a range of complementary initiatives that support the 6 focus areas
- a set of overarching evaluation indicators to measure progress over the lifetime of the strategy.

Explore the dashboard on [ACECQA's website](#).



## Apply now for professional development subsidies

**All Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers can apply for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies.**

The professional development subsidy helps qualified staff complete training. The paid practicum subsidy helps early childhood teachers and educators in training complete their practicums.

**Staff cannot apply themselves.** Providers must apply on behalf of staff.

If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from these subsidies, please talk to your provider about applying.

Providers can check the [subsidy guidelines](#) to find out if they are eligible.

Round 1 applications close on 20 September.

To find out more, go to [professional development opportunities](#)

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Reporting absent sessions

**Families can get CCS when their child is unable to attend child care up to 42 days a year. Families can get extra absence days in certain circumstances.**

You can report an absence in your session reports if:

- the child was enrolled in a session of care but did not attend, and
- the family has been charged a gap fee for that session of care.

If a child is absent from a booked session of care, you:

- must report an absence
- can offer their place to another child
- can also claim CCS for both sessions.

You must keep a record of absences and adhere to any state or territory-imposed limits on places and educators.

Learn more about [absences from child care](#) on our website.

### Paying CCS before families are eligible

**Services Australia may occasionally pay CCS directly to a family. This occurs when care is provided before a family has been assessed as eligible for CCS.**

Generally, families should make a CCS claim and establish their eligibility before their child attends care.

When this occurs, you may provide care to a child before their claim has been finalised.

In this situation, you should charge the family full fees. You should not estimate CCS entitlements.

Services Australia will pay any backdated CCS directly to the family if they are assessed as eligible.

Read more about [payments to families](#) on our website.



## Keep your personnel details up to date

Under Family Assistance Law (FAL), you have to tell us certain things about your staff, including:

- adverse background checks
- changes to fit and proper findings
- changes to working with children checks
- conflicts of interest
- conflicts of interest related to educator qualifications
- financial administration events
- serious convictions.

You also need to notify us:

- about new Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) educators
- about new persons with management or control and persons responsible at the service
- changes to name or contact details of FDC and IHC educators
- changes to name or contact details of persons with management or control and persons responsible at the service
- when a person stops having management or control.

Visit our [notifications and reporting](#) page on our website to find out how to notify us and the timeframes within which you must notify us.

## Share with families

### Finding early learning for your child

**Did you know [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) is the one place where you can find and compare all early childhood education and care services?**

On [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#), you can:

- find local services
- view fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- compare services side-by-side
- get information and advice about education, children's development and parenting.

Visit [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to start searching.



## From the department

### Wage increase for early childhood workforce

**Last week we announced a wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce.**

The government will provide funding through a new worker retention payment.

The payment will support a wage increase of:

- 10% on top of the current national award rate in the first year
- 15% above the current national award rate in the second year.

The payment will start in December 2024 and run for 2 years.

You can [read more about the wage increase](#) on our website.

We have published a [new page with answers to questions](#) you had following the announcement. We will update this page regularly.

We will provide more details over the coming weeks via our official channels, including our website, this weekly newsletter and [our Facebook group](#).

We encourage you to get your information from these authoritative sources.

### Thank you for completing the National Workforce Census

**We wanted to say a huge thank you for taking part in the 2024 National Workforce Census.**

The completion rate was 97%. Your responses will help inform future policies and programs for the sector.

We'll let you know when results are available [on our website](#)

## Spotlight on the sector

### 90% of services are meeting National Quality Standards

**For the fourth consecutive quarter, the proportion of children's education and care services rated Meeting National Quality Standard (NQS) or above has remained at 90%.**

The NQF Snapshot is a national report on children's education and care services operating under the NQF. It provides information on the sector and the quality ratings of services against the NQS.

The number of services with a quality rating increased 2% from Q2 2023.

Read the [latest NQF snapshot](#) on ACECQA's website.

### Are you aware of your inclusion obligations?

**Inclusion is everybody's responsibility.**



All ECEC services have a legal obligation to ensure inclusion under:

- the National Quality Framework
- the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Inclusion means that every child can:

- access a service
- participate meaningfully
- experience positive outcomes.

Inclusion is not about changing a child so that they fit into the environment. It is about changing what we do so that all children can participate.

Find [resources to help embed inclusion](#) at your service on our website.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Individual exceptions to electronic payment of gap fees

**Families using ECEC must pay the gap fee electronically. Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically.**

An individual may be eligible for an exception if paying the gap fee using electronic funds transfer might put them or their child at risk of family or domestic violence.

To apply for an individual exception, you must:

- apply on behalf of the individual
- provide supporting evidence.

The form must be completed by a person with management or control.

Read more about [how to apply for exceptions](#) on our website.

### Learn about your Family Assistance Law obligations

**Are you interested in learning about your Family Assistance Law (FAL) obligations?**

We have a range of short courses to help you understand your obligations under FAL. These are available for free on our online learning platform, Gecko.

Since its launch last December, Gecko has had more than:

- 4,400 user registrations
- 7,500 course completions.

The courses are suitable for all staff across all approved care types.

Browse courses, videos, and tip sheets and improve your knowledge today.

[Find out more and register for Gecko.](#)



## 2023–24 Child Care Subsidy balancing has started

Services Australia has started balancing Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for the 2023–24 financial year.

Families who get CCS must confirm their income with Services Australia so their payments can be balanced.

Families confirm their income by:

- lodging their tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia they don't need to lodge a tax return, even if they've already told the ATO.

Once Services Australia has balanced a family's CCS, they will send them an outcome.

You may also wish to display a [balancing basics factsheet](#) at your service.

We have [more information for providers](#) on our website. Please direct families with questions to the [Services Australia website](#).

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### What to do if you didn't get the balancing outcome you expected at tax time

To get the correct amount of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) or Child Care Subsidy (CCS), you need to keep your details up to date. It's important you check and update your details throughout the financial year to avoid a debt when Services Australia balances your payments.

Learn more on [Services Australia website](#).





## Wage increase for early childhood workforce

**The Australian Government will support a wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce.**

The government will provide funding through a **new worker retention payment**.

The payment will support a wage increase of:

- 10% on top of the current national award rate in the first year
- 15% above the current national award rate in the second year.

The payment will start in December 2024 and run for 2 years.

The payment is on top of the 3.75% increase to award wages that started on 1 July 2024 following the 2024–25 annual wage review.

Providers will need to apply for the payment. It will be paid in the form of a grant.

**Grant applications are expected to open in October 2024, with the wage increase taking effect from December 2024.**

The payment will be conditional on providers:

- limiting fee growth to no more than 4.4% over the next 12 months
- engaging staff through a workplace instrument that meets grant conditions
- passing on all funding to eligible workers through increased wages.

ECEC workers who work in a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved service will benefit from this funding. More detail on the eligibility requirements will be available soon.

We will consult with the Family Day Care and In Home Care sectors to understand how support can be extended to their workforce.

This wage increase recognises the value and importance of the ECEC workforce in delivering high quality ECEC to children.

We will provide more details, including grant guidelines, over the coming weeks. To get information and updates:

- [visit our website](#)
- [subscribe to our weekly newsletter](#)
- [join our Facebook group](#).



## From the department

### Disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant outcomes

**More than 430 early childhood education and care (ECEC) services have been offered funding under the latest round of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant.**

Today we announced \$80 million in grants for the successful services to help them:

- stay open
- increase the number of children accessing ECEC in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities.

Under the grant's fourth round, providers could apply for 2-year grants of up to \$400,000 in sustainability support and \$300,000 in capital support.

A total of 475 applicants were successful. We offered:

- sustainability support to 385 applicants to help services remain viable and sustainable
- capital support to 90 applicants to help with the cost of renovating, extending, or building new facilities.

Funding will be allocated until June 2026.

Find out more about the [CCCF disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant](#)

### New Connected Beginnings sites on the Central Coast

**We're expanding the Connected Beginnings program to Gosford and Wyong on the Central Coast in New South Wales.**

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by June 2025. There are now 43 sites across the country.

The new sites will support about 2,400 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Gosford and Wyong, bringing the total number of children supported Australia-wide to about 19,600.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### Early Learning Matters Week 2024





**Early Learning Matters Week celebrates the importance of early learning for the development and wellbeing of children.**

Early Learning Matters Week is an annual event organised by Early Childhood Australia. This year, it runs from 5 to 9 August. It is an opportunity to spread the word on how high-quality early education and care supports children to be confident and enthusiastic learners.

You can play an active role by:

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

Explore [resources](#) or learn more on the [Early Learning Matters Week](#) website.

## Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers and services now has over 9,000 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about CCS, Family Assistance Law and other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#)

## Supporting the workforce

### Apply for a workforce subsidy

**All providers can now apply for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies.**

Subsidies are no longer limited to regional and remote areas and First Nations educators.

The professional development subsidy covers one day of training for qualified staff.



The paid practicum subsidy covers up to 8 weeks of practicum, per semester, for early childhood teachers and educators in training.

Providers must apply for these subsidies on behalf of staff. If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from this subsidy, please talk to your provider about applying.

Round one applications close on 20 September.

To find out more, go to [professional development opportunities](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Inducements and advertising

**ECEC providers may not offer certain types of inducements. An inducement is an incentive offered by a provider to secure a child's enrolment.**

Inducements that are financial or not aligned with the quality or delivery of education or care services are not allowed.

Some examples of inducements that you cannot offer include:

- cash or vouchers
- iPads, tablets or other devices
- other gifts.

Find out more about [inducements and advertising at your service](#).

### Avoiding an overpayment

**When you receive more CCS than you're entitled to, this is called an overpayment.**

Overpayments can occur if you withdraw or change a session report, such as recording fewer hours of care.

If this happens, we'll use your future CCS payments to pay back the difference. This is called offsetting. You can see if offsetting has occurred in your payment advice in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

The best way to avoid an overpayment is to submit accurate and timely session reports.

Find out more about [overpayments](#) and [session reports](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### 2023–24 Child Care Subsidy balancing starts soon

**Services Australia will start balancing Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for the 2023–24 financial year from this week.**

You must confirm your income with Services Australia so your CCS can be balanced, by:

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



For more information about the balancing process, go to the [Services Australia website](#).



## From the department

### Changes to the Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules

From July, changes to the *Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017* (Minister's Rules) were made to provide families with greater access to affordable wrap around care and help families make informed financial decisions about early childhood education and care (ECEC).

#### From 22 July

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services can provide care primarily to preschool aged children either side of preschool sessions. Previously, an OSHC service could only provide care primarily to school aged children.

This change means families can get Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for care provided before and after preschool. It will provide families with preschool children more options for affordable before-and-after hours care to help meet families' needs.

Large providers will have an additional month to report financial information, increasing from 3 to 4 months from the end of their reporting period. This change helps to reduce regulatory burden by aligning due dates with other government reporting requirements.

Providers can advertise their charitable activities to prospective families. This new exemption to the ban of certain types of inducements allows providers to advertise their social impact.

Family Day Care (FDC) providers will need to notify us:

- of the location where care is provided by their FDC educators
- when an FDC educator is no longer engaged by their service.

This change will improve the accuracy of the information held by the department relating to educators engaged by the provider.

#### From 1 September

Providers must notify us of fees twice a year. This change is part of the government's commitment to improving fee transparency. The changes will help families make informed financial decisions about ECEC.

Read more about the changes in our [announcement](#).

### Apply now for professional development subsidies

**Applications for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies are now open.**

The **professional development subsidy** helps qualified staff complete training. It covers 1 day of training per staff member.

The **paid practicum subsidy** helps early childhood teachers and educators in training complete practicums. It covers up to 8 weeks of practicum per staff member, per semester.

All providers can apply. Subsidies are no longer limited to regional and remote areas and First Nations educators.



Providers must apply for these subsidies on behalf of staff. If you work in the sector and think you'd benefit from this subsidy, please talk to your provider about applying.

To find out more, go to [professional development opportunities](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### OSHC for preschool children

Previously, an OSHC service must provide care primarily to school aged children.

From 22 July 2024, OSHC services can also provide care primarily to preschool aged children either side of preschool sessions.

This means families can get CCS for care provided before and after preschool, for children who attend a preschool program. Preschool programs are delivered to children in the year before they start full-time school.

To be eligible to provide preschool OSHC, the care provided must differ from a preschool service. Some of the key factors we consider include:

- **Type of care program delivered.** An OSHC service should not deliver the same type of educational program to the preschool service.
- **Hours of operation.** Preschool and OSHC services must be separate.
- **Staffing.** Roles and duties performed by staff can be clearly distinguished.

Providers who want to establish a preschool OSHC as will need to:

- Obtain approval from their state or territory regulatory authority to operate a Centre Based Day Care service at the preschool premises. This must be a separate approval where the preschool OSHC provider is the same as the preschool provider.
- Apply for CCS approval for the new OSHC service.

Find out more and read examples on our website at [Outside School Hours Care](#).

### Early childhood learning trajectories

**The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has released new videos as part of its early childhood learning trajectories resource suite.**

The resource suite is for teachers and educators working in ECEC. It's designed to help them use the learning trajectories to:

- strengthen their curriculum
- inform their pedagogical decision-making.

The new videos introduce each of the learning trajectories, including a visual summary of each of the key domains:

- executive functions
- social and emotional learning
- mathematical thinking
- language and communication



- physical development.

The resources align with the Early Years Learning Framework V 2.0 and the National Quality Standard.

Go to the resource suite on [AERO's website](#)

## Celebrating our Out of School Hours Care educators

**It is National OSHC Educators Day.**

We encourage all services to recognise the positive impact OSHC educators have on our children. Thank you educators for the important work you do.

The 2024 theme, 'Limitless Possibilities', recognises the limitless possibilities for innovative educators.

National OSHC Educators Day is coordinated by the Network of Community Activities and member organisations of NOSHSA.

Visit [their website](#) to learn more.

## National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

**National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is celebrated every year on 4 August.**

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is an initiative of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

The 2024 theme is 'Strong in Culture, Stronger Together'. The theme focuses on the strength of our children that comes from their connection to culture and mob.

To celebrate, your service can organise events such as:

- family fun day
- games and activities
- sporting events and competitions and more.

Services can hold these events on Friday 2 August as Children's Day falls on a Sunday this year.

Download posters and activity kits for your service on the [SNAICC website](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Submit all 2023–24 session reports by this Sunday

**Make sure you have submitted all session reports for the 2023–24 financial year by 11.59 pm AEST this Sunday 4 August 2024.**

You must submit session reports in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS). Access the CCSS via the Provider Entry Point (PEP) or your third-party software.

CCSS will close for the 2023–24 financial year from 5 August 2024. You will not be able to submit, vary or withdraw session reports for any sessions of care between 10 July 2023 and 7 July 2024.





Submitting your session reports by this deadline is essential so Services Australia can balance family payments. Submitting accurate session reports on time is required under Family Assistance Law (FAL). Failure to comply with your obligations may result in compliance action.

Find guidance on submitting session reports [on our website](#).

## The enrolment process in 4 steps

**All children who attend approved care must be enrolled, regardless of whether they get CCS. This is a requirement under FAL.**

There are 4 steps in the enrolment process.

### Step 1

Families must first lodge a CCS claim using their [Centrelink online account](#). They should do this before their child starts at your service.

### Step 2

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

### Step 3

Once the care arrangement has been established, the provider submits an enrolment notice in the [CCSS](#).

### Step 4

Once you've submitted an enrolment notice, the family will be prompted to confirm the enrolment via their [Centrelink online account](#). CCS payments will not start until the enrolment is confirmed.

Find out more about [enrolling children](#) on our website.

## Establishing eligibility for ACCS child wellbeing

**If you identify a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect at your service, they may be eligible for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing.**

Unlike other subsidies, providers apply on behalf of a family. There are important steps to take to ensure the family can get the subsidy. Families may miss out on payments if they delay claiming CCS or are not aware of the immunisation requirements.

### CCS eligibility

Families can only get ACCS child wellbeing once they've:

- lodged a CCS claim, and
- been assessed as CCS eligible.

Services Australia can only backdate payments up to 28 days before the family lodged their successful claim. Families can lodge a CCS claim via their [Centrelink online account](#).



## Immunisation requirements

Children must meet [immunisation requirements to be eligible for CCS](#). If a child does not meet the immunisation requirements, the claim will not be approved. The family will need to make a new claim once the child has met the immunisation requirements.

## When to use a Provider Eligible Arrangement

In the rare case that you cannot identify a CCS-eligible parent or carer, you – the provider – may be able to get the subsidy on behalf of the child. This is known as a provider eligible arrangement or 'PEA'. A PEA enables Services Australia to pay the subsidy directly to you. It can only be used in very limited circumstances.

Find detailed guidance about [establishing eligibility for ACCS child wellbeing](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Have you confirmed your 2023–24 income?

**Families who get Child Care Subsidy (CCS) must confirm their income with Services Australia so their payments can be balanced.**

Before Services Australia can balance your CCS payments for 2023–24, both you and your partner (if you have one) need to confirm your family income for the financial year.

Families can confirm their income by:

- lodging their tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia they don't need to lodge a tax return, even if they've already told the ATO.

Families can find more [about balancing and what to do](#) on the Services Australia website.



## From the department

### Professional development subsidies now open

**Applications for our professional development subsidies are now open. All providers can apply.**

The **professional development subsidy** helps qualified staff complete training. It covers 1 day of training per staff member.

The **paid practicum subsidy** helps early childhood teachers and educators in training complete practicums. It covers up to 8 weeks of practicum per staff member, per semester.

We pay the subsidies to providers. You must pass funding on to staff through professional development opportunities.

**In 2024–25, all providers can apply.** Subsidies are no longer limited to regional and remote areas and First Nations educators.

The 2024–25 subsidy guidelines and an online application form are available now on our website.

We encourage you to read the guidelines to check if you're eligible before applying.

To find out more, go to [professional development opportunities](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### Help families find your service

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

We publish your fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#). We may also publish some financial information, such as profits and revenue, about large providers.

This information helps parents choose the best ECEC for their family.

You must keep your details up to date to ensure they display correctly on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#).

You must report:

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

Check and update your fee and vacancy details via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.



Large providers must report financial information to us by the deadline each year. Find out more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).

## Review of best practice in early childhood intervention

**The Department of Social Services has engaged the University of Melbourne and consortium partners to review best practice in early childhood intervention and develop a best practice framework.**

The framework will support children with developmental concerns, delay or disability to have the best possible start in life. The project is part of the [Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan](#) under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.

The review will involve in-depth stakeholder consultations to capture:

- the needs of parents and carers of children with developmental concerns, delay or disability
- the views of the broader sector.

Find out more about the project on the [DSS website](#).

To stay informed or be consulted, [register your interest](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### 2023–24 session reports close on 4 August

**Please submit all session reports for the 2023–24 financial year by 11.59 pm AEST on Sunday 4 August 2024.**

You must submit session reports in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS). Access the CCSS via the PEP or your third-party software.

The CCSS will close for the 2023–24 financial year from 5 August. You will not be able to submit, vary or withdraw session reports for any sessions of care between 10 July 2023 and

7 July 2024.

Submitting your session reports by this deadline is essential so Services Australia can balance family payments.

Read more about [submitting session reports](#) on our website.

Learn about Reporting sessions of care [in our Geckko course](#).

### Collection of gap fees

**You must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees from families electronically. This is a requirement under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

All providers should have policies and procedures that set out how you will responsibly administer Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and comply with FAL. These are known as your governance arrangements.

We conduct audits by asking you to provide information using a section 158 notice.



We may take compliance action if you do not comply with a s158 notice. Not complying can include:

- not responding to the notice within 14 days
- not providing the requested information or documents
- redacting documents.

Compliance actions may include:

- suspension or cancellation of your approval
- prosecuting you.

See our [guidance on collecting gap fees](#) and find out more about [our audit process](#) on our website.

## Salary sacrificing early childhood education and care fees

**Do you have families who pay their ECEC fees through salary sacrifice? Make sure you're reporting their fees correctly.**

Salary sacrificing is considered a third-party payment. There are rules you must follow when a third party contributes to a family's fees.

Generally, when a third party helps a family pay its ECEC fees, you must deduct the contribution from the total session fee.

The family's CCS rate will then be applied to the reduced session fee. This is because families are only entitled to CCS in relation to the amount they have to pay after any third-party payments.

The family must still pay a gap fee.

We have [examples on our website](#) to help you understand how to report different types of third-party payments.

Reporting the correct fee information is a requirement under FAL. We may take compliance action if you fail to meet your obligations.

Read more [about third-party payments](#) on our website.

## Avoiding an infringement notice

**Many providers comply with their obligations under FAL. When certain rules are not being followed, we can use infringement notices to address non-compliance and help providers to change their behaviour.**

An infringement notice is a fine and can be expensive. Some infringement notices are more than \$15,000.

However, an infringement notice can help providers to avoid a larger penalty. They allow a provider to pay a small fine rather than go to court, where they may get a much larger penalty.

Infringement notices are issued for a range of reasons, including:

- not correctly reporting your fee information
- not submitting enrolment notices or session reports on time
- not passing on or remitting a fee reduction amount



- not meeting notification requirements
- not keeping records.

See the [list of FAL provisions for which we can issue an infringement](#).

The best way to avoid an infringement notice is to understand and comply with your [provider obligations](#) under FAL.

## Share with families

### First Nations children can get more hours of subsidised care

**If you want to use child care, the Australian Government helps cover the costs. It's called Child Care Subsidy, or CCS. The government pays child care services, who pass the subsidy on to you as cheaper fees.**

You can get at least 36 hours of CCS per fortnight for each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child in your care. This is regardless of the amount of activity you do, such as work, training, study or volunteering.

- This may make your child care fees cheaper.
- Young ones can prepare and be ready for big school.
- You have more access to child care if you need it.

You can find out more about how to apply at [First Nations activity test](#).

You do not need to do anything if you already get more than 36 hours of subsidy. A family's CCS rate will continue to be based on their income.

Share this post with families at your service.



## From the department

### Latest Child Care Subsidy data now available

**We've published data about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in the March quarter 2024.**

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

Key findings from the March quarter 2024 include:

- 1,425,210 children from 1,001,660 families used CCS-approved care
- 14,732 CCS-approved services operated during the quarter
- on average, children attended 27.3 hours of care per week
- the average hourly fee was \$12.40
- the Australian Government paid \$3.36 billion in subsidies.

[Go to the March quarter 2024 report.](#)

### National Workforce Census deadline extended

**Under Family Assistance Law (FAL), all CCS approved providers and their associated services must complete the National Workforce Census (NWC).**

The NWC has been extended by 1 week and now closes on **Sunday 21 July 2024**. To avoid compliance action, [login and complete the census](#).

We use the information you provide us in the NWC to inform programs and policies for the sector.

If you need help or have questions, contact the helpline on 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au).

### Inclusion Support Program applications

**The Inclusion Support Program (ISP) is receiving many incomplete applications. Here's what you can do to ensure you submit your application correctly.**

ISP helps early childhood education and care (ECEC) services address barriers to inclusion. The program is receiving a high volume of incomplete applications, in particular for additional educators. This has a direct impact on processing timeframes.

The Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) has developed a [checklist for additional educator applications](#). Please use the checklist when submitting to ensure your application can be processed.

We have also made changes to the [family consent form](#).

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



# Spotlight on the sector

## Using electronic devices in early childhood settings

**A new National Model Code released earlier this month outlines a set of recommended child-safe practices for using electronic devices in ECEC.**

ACECQA developed the code, in partnership with all governments, as part of a range of actions in response to last year's [child safety review](#).

It recommends that:

- only service-issued devices can be used when photographing and filming children
- personal devices can only be carried or used in limited circumstances
- strict controls must be in place for taking, sharing and storing images or videos.

Many providers already have similar practices in place. If you don't, we encourage you to consider and adopt the recommended practices.

Find out more on [ACECQA's website](#)

# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## 2023–24 session reports close soon

**You are required to submit all session reports for the 2023–24 financial year by 11.59 pm AEST on Sunday 4 August 2024.**

The Child Care Subsidy System will close for the 2023–24 financial year from 5 August 2024. You will not be able to submit, vary or withdraw session reports for any sessions of care between 10 July 2023 and 7 July 2024.

Submitting your session reports by this deadline is essential so Services Australia can balance family payments.

Submitting accurate session reports on time is required under FAL. Failure to comply with your obligations may result in compliance action.

Find guidance on submitting session reports [on our website](#).

## Caring for an educator's child in Family Day Care

**Do you have a child that attends your Family Day Care (FDC) service whose parent also works as an FDC educator?**

You cannot claim CCS for your own children when you are working as an FDC educator on the same day that you provide care to children. This includes when your child attends another service. There are some exceptions that apply to this rule.

To understand your obligations on providing care in FDC, [visit our website](#).

## Information for prospective providers

**Are you thinking about becoming an approved ECEC provider? Read our top tips about the approval process.**





## Understand the two approval types

You need approval to operate a service from your state and territory government. You also need approval to administer CCS from the Australian Government.

## Apply for both approvals at the same time

You do not need to wait for approval from your state or territory government to submit your CCS application. Both applications can be assessed at the same time. Approval will be granted separately.

## Apply as early as possible

Approval is not automatic. We have a rigorous assessment process to ensure ECEC is delivered correctly, by responsible and law-abiding people.

## Include all the mandatory information

We cannot assess incomplete applications. If your application is incomplete or inconsistent, we'll ask for more information before we begin our assessment.

## Do not assume approval will be granted

It's up to you whether to operate before you know the outcome of your CCS application. We outline the business and financial risks if you choose to operate before you're approved [on our website](#).

## Complete e-learning

ACECQA has [e-learning about the approval process](#) to ensure you have a good understanding of what is required before you apply.

## Read the information on our website

We have [step-by-step guidance on the process](#). We recommend all prospective providers read this information carefully.

# Share with families

## Do you have more than one child in care?

**If you have more than one child aged 5 or under in care, you may get a higher Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for your second child and any younger children.**

You may get a higher subsidy for one or more of your children if all of these apply:

- you get or will be eligible for CCS
- your family's combined income is under \$365,611
- your family has more than one CCS eligible child aged 5 or under.

Services Australia will automatically work out if you're eligible. If you are, they'll automatically apply a higher subsidy to any eligible children in your family.

If your Centrelink online account is linked to myGov, you can check your CCS percentage online.

Find out more about [how your number of children in care can affect your CCS](#) on the Services Australia website.



## From the department

### 2024–25 hourly rate caps

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) hourly rate caps and family income thresholds went up on 8 July.

The hourly rate caps and income thresholds are adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

See the [2024–25 hourly rate caps and new income thresholds](#) on our website.

### Join our online community

Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services now has over 8,800 members.

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:

- administering CCS
- complying with Family Assistance Law
- other Australian Government-led early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### It's NAIDOC Week



NAIDOC Week celebrates and recognises the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The 2024 NAIDOC theme is 'Keep the fire burning! Blak, loud and proud'.

The theme recognises the role Elders have played and continue to play in our communities.

It is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about the oldest, continuous living culture on earth.

Download the [2024 National NAIDOC poster Urapun Muy](#) to display at your service. The poster is by Samuawgadhgal artist and educator Deb Belyea.

You can also find educational resources on the [NAIDOC website](#).

## In Home Care quality and safety surveys close Friday

**Don't miss your chance to have a say on In Home Care (IHC) quality and safety. Surveys close this Friday.**

ACECQA is working with the IHC sector to develop a refreshed national approach to quality and safety for IHC. If you're involved in IHC, you can help inform the development of the framework.

Please encourage the relevant people at your service to complete the following surveys by Friday:

- [educator survey](#)
- [family survey](#).

Learn more about the [IHC quality and safety project](#) on ACECQA's website.

## Understanding your obligations to support children with disability

**Did you know you can access a suite of resources to help understand your obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)?**

The DDA supports children with disabilities to fully access and participate in early education.

All ECEC services must comply with the DDA.

A factsheet, poster, and lots more are available on [ACECQA's website](#).

Find more on the [DDA and the Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) on our website.

## Supporting the workforce

### Connect with First Nations organisations in your area

**Be You has guidance on connecting with First Nations organisations in your area.**

Connecting can be the start of educators learning about the history, culture and language of local First Nations communities and embedding this knowledge in the curriculum.

This will enable the development of a culturally safe and culturally responsive learning community in your setting.

Explore [Be You's culturally respectful resources](#).

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



# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Identifying PMCs at your organisation

**Providers have specific legal obligations under Family Assistance Law. These obligations are imposed upon certain people at your organisation known as persons with management or control (PMCs).**

PMCs take part in the decision-making or management of the provider. They:

- are a member of the group that makes executive or legal decisions on behalf of the provider
- have authority, responsibility, or significant influence over planning, directing or controlling the provider
- are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the provider
- are in charge of the day-to-day operations of a service.

You must identify all PMCs and keep their details up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System.

You must notify us when a PMC:

- joins your organisation
- leaves your organisation
- changes their name or contact details
- has changes to their working with children check.

If PMC details are not up to date:

- we cannot communicate essential information to you
- families may not get their CCS payments
- we may issue an infringement notice.

Visit our website to see [who is considered a PMC at your organisation](#) and ensure their details are up to date in the [Child Care Subsidy System](#).

## New Geccko course can help you understand WWCCs

**The following case study is from our new Working with children checks (WWCC) course in Geccko, our online learning platform.**

Stirling Street Early Education (SSEE) operates child care services in the ACT. SSEE provides Outside School Hours Care and Centre Based Day Care services. Many SSEE staff live in NSW and travel each day to work in the ACT.

Merrilee is a PMC for SSEE. To meet her obligations, she:

- mandates staff to get an ACT Working with Vulnerable People Card
- puts up information about working with vulnerable people on her tearoom noticeboards
- records staff WWCC details in a register and through PEP
- reminds team leaders about maintaining the currency of WWCCs for their staff
- reminds staff 3 months before their WWCCs expire
- records these reminders in a register
- only uses educators with valid WWCC



- ensures staff are aware of their WWCC obligations by publishing information in staff newsletters.

Learn more about **Working with children checks** in the course. The course is available for free on our online learning platform, Geckko.

[Find out more and register for Geckko.](#)

## Share with families

### Have you confirmed your 2023–24 income?

**Families who get Child Care Subsidy (CCS) must confirm their income with Services Australia so their payments can be balanced.**

Before Services Australia can balance your CCS payments for 2023–24, both you and your partner (if you have one) need to confirm your family income for the financial year.

Families can confirm their income by:

- lodging their tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia they don't need to lodge a tax return, even if they've already told the ATO.

Families can find more [about balancing and what to do](#) on the Services Australia website.



## From the department

### Time is running out: complete the National Workforce Census

**Complete the National Workforce Census (NWC) before it closes on 14 July 2024.**

The information you provide us is crucial for informing programs and policies for the sector, like the [National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy](#).

Access the login portal to [complete the census](#). Your login code is in your invitation email from the Social Research Centre (SRC).

If you need help or have questions, contact the helpline on 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au)

Further information on the NWC is available on the [SRC website](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### Using electronic devices in early childhood settings

**ACECQA has released a set of recommended child-safe practices for using electronic devices in early childhood education and care (ECEC).**

The new voluntary National Model Code represents best practice. It recommends that:

- only service-issued devices can be used when photographing and filming children
- personal devices can only be carried or used in limited circumstances
- strict controls must be in place for taking, sharing and storing images or videos.

The code was developed in partnership with all governments. It forms part of a range of actions in response to the 16 recommendations of the [child safety review](#).

The code is designed to:

- promote a child safe culture when it comes to taking, sharing and storing images or videos of children
- support ECEC educators, as champions of child safety
- complement child safety activities and strategies already in place across the sector.

Many providers already limit or restrict the use of electronic devices. If you don't, we encourage you to consider and adopt the recommended practices.

The code has been designed for centre-based ECEC services approved under the National Quality Framework (NQF), whose primary purpose is to educate and care for children 0 to 5 years old. However, all care types are encouraged to adopt similar practices within their own contexts.

Find out more on [ACECQA's website](#).



## Complete an In Home Care quality and safety survey

**Calling all In Home Care (IHC) providers, services and educators – we need your help.**

We've engaged ACECQA to work with the IHC sector to develop a refreshed national approach to quality and safety for IHC.

The new framework will:

- include quality and safety standards based on best practice
- provide a better way to measure and monitor quality and safety practices
- be supported by professional development.

To help inform the new framework, ACECQA is asking IHC educators and families who use IHC to complete the following surveys:

- [educator survey](#)
- [family survey](#).

The surveys take approximately 20 minutes to complete and close on 12 July.

Learn more about the [IHC quality and safety project](#) .

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Who must have a working with children check?

**Broadly, anyone who has contact with children at an ECEC service must have a current working with children check (WWCC).**

This will usually include:

- all educators
- persons with management or control (PMCs)
- persons responsible for the day-to-day operation of a service.

Each state and territory has different requirements. In some jurisdictions, PMCs must have a WWCC even if they do not have direct contact with children.

Find out who needs a WWCC and apply for one via [the WWCC regulator in your state or territory](#).

Find out more about [your WWCC obligations](#).

### Have you enrolled in our course on reporting sessions of care?

**The Reporting sessions of care course explains your obligations regarding sessions of care.**

This short course will help you:

- understand what a session of care is
- submit accurate and timely session reports



- understand what happens when you submit inaccurate reports.

Our online learning courses help you follow your obligations under Family Assistance Law. You can find them on Gecko.

Gecko is our online learning platform for the ECEC sector.

[Find out more and register for Gecko.](#)

## Claiming CCS when your service is closed

A reminder that you cannot claim Child Care Subsidy (CCS) when your service is closed, except:

- on a public holiday by law
- during a period of emergency.

See more about [claiming CCS](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Get prepared for FTB and CCS balancing this tax time

If you get Family Tax Benefit (FTB) or Child Care Subsidy (CCS), there may be things you need to do to balance your payments.

To balance your FTB and CCS, you need to either:

- lodge a tax return with the Australian Taxation Office
- tell Services Australia online if you don't need to lodge a tax return and confirm any income you got in the financial year.

Families can learn more on the [Services Australia website](#).





## From the department

### New Connected Beginnings site in Ballarat

**Last week the Minister for Early Childhood Education, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, launched a new Connected Beginnings site in Ballarat, Victoria.**

Connected Beginnings is an Australian Government grants program that helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

It's for children from birth to school age and pregnant women. Through it, children can get steady, wrap-around support. This helps them meet the learning and development milestones needed for a smooth start to school.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites by June 2025. There are now 41 sites across Australia, supporting more than 16,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Connected Beginnings is community owned and led. This means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a say in how activities funded by the grant are delivered to their people, in their own places and on their Country.

The program supports all Closing the Gap priority reforms and focuses on targets 2, 3 and 4. It's jointly funded by us and the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### Have your say on In Home Care quality and safety

**Are you involved with In Home Care (IHC)? We want your views on quality, safety, and areas for improvement.**

ACECQA is working with the IHC sector to develop a refreshed national approach to quality and safety for IHC. The new framework will:

- include quality and safety standards based on best practice
- provide a better way to measure and monitor quality and safety practices
- be supported by professional development.

ACECQA is seeking feedback from IHC educators and families who use IHC to help inform the development of the framework.

Please encourage educators and families to complete the following surveys:

- [educator survey](#)
- [family survey](#).

The surveys take approximately 20 minutes to complete. They will close on 12 July.

Learn more about the [IHC quality and safety project](#) on ACECQA's website.



## Linking quality and child development in early childhood education and care

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has published new research, *Linking quality and child development in early childhood education and care*.

The research found that service quality ratings consistently predicted children's developmental vulnerability on each of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains.

Children in services rated as Exceeding National Quality Standard (NQS) (or above) had consistently lower rates of developmental vulnerability than children in services rated Working Towards NQS or Significant Improvement Required.

AERO is Australia's independent education evidence body. They conduct research into how children learn and develop in the years prior to school. The resources are created to support teachers and educators.

Read the research on [AERO's website](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Need a refresher on electronic payment of gap fees?

**Electronic payment of gap fees was one of our first short courses on Geckko. This course will help you understand the new obligations that came into effect last year.**

Get early childhood compliance knowledge online, or Geckko, is our free online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector.

You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- download course certificates upon completion.

We have a range of short courses to help you understand your obligations under FAL. We will also launch new courses throughout the year.

Browse courses, videos, and tip sheets and improve your knowledge today.

[Find out more and register for Geckko.](#)

### 2024-25 hourly rate caps

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) hourly rate caps and family income thresholds will go up from 8 July 2024.**

The hourly rate caps and income thresholds are adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

See the [2024–25 hourly rate caps and new income thresholds](#) on our website.



## Approval applications – what you need to know

**Did you know that you can save time in the approval process by submitting both your applications at the same time?**

You need 2 types of approvals to run a service that offers CCS:

- National Law approval from your state or territory government. This deems you suitable to ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.
- CCS approval from the Australian Government (that's us). This deems you suitable to administer CCS.

You can apply for both approvals at the same time via the [National Quality Agenda IT System](#).

Find out more about [how to complete and submit your application](#) on our website.

## Got a question about CCS enrolments?

**Check out our website, we've got everything you need to know about having the right enrolment in place for payments to be made.**

An enrolment links:

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

Read the [step-by-step guide to enrolling children](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Did you know your activity level affects your CCS?

**The hours of subsidised care you can get each fortnight depends on your activity level.**

There are a range of activities that count towards your activity level, including:

- paid work
- volunteering
- studying
- looking for work
- unpaid work in a family business.

Read the [step-by-step guide from Services Australia](#) on how to update your activity test to make sure you get the correct amount of Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

You can check your type of activity and hours:

- in your myGov account
- by contacting Services Australia on the [Centrelink families line](#).



## Finding early learning for your child

Did you know [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) is the one place where you can find and compare all early childhood education and care services?

On [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au), you can:

- find local services
- view fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- compare services side-by-side
- get information and advice about education, children's development, and parenting.

Visit [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) to start searching.



## From the department

### Reminder: complete the National Workforce Census

**It's time for all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers and services to complete the National Workforce Census (NWC). Completing the NWC is a requirement under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

We strongly encourage preschools and kindergartens to take part to ensure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven't already, [visit our website to complete the census](#). Your login code is in your invitation email from the Social Research Centre.

If you need help or have questions, contact the helpline on 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au)

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the [Social Research Centre website](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### Have you seen our new inclusion resources?

**A reminder that we have information and resources to help you be inclusive.**

We've got information to help you:

- understand what inclusion looks like in early childhood education and care (ECEC)
- learn where your inclusion obligations come from
- find programs, initiatives and resources to help you embed inclusive practices.

Go to the new [inclusion in ECEC](#) page on our website.

## Supporting the workforce

### Supporting STEM professional development

**We fund Little Scientists, a not-for-profit organisation, to support early childhood educators with inquiry-based STEM professional development.**

Little Scientists conducts workshops, in-person, in-service, or online.

The workshops are aligned with the National Quality Framework, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, and the Early Years Learning Framework.

The workshops are aimed to help early childhood educators develop the skills and confidence to administer age-appropriate STEM learning.

Learn more on the [Little Scientists website](#).



# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Submit session reports on time

**You must submit accurate and timely session reports – it's the law.**

Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process CCS payments.

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided.

Read more about [submitting session reports](#).

## Allowable absences

**Allowable absences will reset on 1 July 2024.**

If you are noticing that absences are not paying when submitting session reports, check the family's absence count. Many families have used their 42 allowable absences by this time of year.

Families may be able to get additional absences once they have used their allowable absence days, in certain circumstances. Find out more about the circumstances for allowable absences on our [website](#).

Families can find out more about absences on [Service's Australia website](#) and check their year-to-date absence count:

- in their Centrelink online account via [myGov](#)
- on the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#)

## Keep up to date with notification and reporting obligations

**Under FAL, you have to notify us about a range of matters including fees, vacancies, closures and changes to details.**

You must perform these tasks to maintain your CCS approval.

Most tasks must be completed by a person with management or control (PMC). Some tasks can be completed by a person responsible at the service.

Visit our [notifications and reporting page](#) on our website to keep up to date with your notification types and timeframes.

## Share with families

Families facing tough times may get more child care support

If you are facing difficult or challenging circumstances, you can sometimes get free child care. This is called Additional Child Care Subsidy, or ACCS. It usually covers all fees.

There are 4 types of ACCS:

**Child wellbeing**



The child wellbeing subsidy is for families who need practical help to support their child's safety and wellbeing. Your child care service applies for this on behalf of families. Families cannot apply.

### **Grandparent**

The grandparent subsidy is for grandparents on income support who are the primary carer of their grandchild.

### **Temporary financial hardship**

The temporary financial hardship subsidy is for families experiencing temporary, significant financial stress.

### **Transition to work**

The transition to work subsidy is for parents or carers transitioning to work from income support.

Except for ACCS child wellbeing, you apply on the [Services Australia website](#) or through your myGov account.



## From the department

### Child Care Subsidy hourly rate caps are changing soon

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) hourly rate caps and family income thresholds will go up from 8 July 2024.

The hourly rate caps and income thresholds are adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The maximum hourly rate we subsidise is based on the type of care you provide. The 2024–25 hourly rate caps for each care type are outlined below.

Care type	Hourly rate cap for children below school age	Hourly rate cap for school-age children
Centre Based Day Care	\$14.29	\$12.51
Outside School Hours Care	\$14.29	\$12.51
Family Day Care	\$13.24	\$13.24
In Home Care (per family)	\$38.87	\$38.87

Learn more about hourly rate caps [on our website](#).

The family income thresholds will also change according to CPI, as outlined below:

Family income	Subsidy rate
Up to \$83,280	90%
More than \$83,280 to below \$533,280	Decreasing from 90% The percentage decreases by 1% for every \$5,000 of income a family earns
\$533,280 or more	0%

A family's CCS percentage is the amount the government will subsidise.

Read more about [how much CCS a family can get](#) on our website.

### CCS period of emergency in NSW

A CCS period of emergency was recently in place in parts of New South Wales due to flooding.

Visit our website to see:

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

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





# Spotlight on the sector

## Inclusion in early childhood education and care

**We've published information and resources to help you embed inclusion at your early childhood education and care (ECEC) service.**

In an ECEC setting, inclusion means that every child can:

- access a service
- participate meaningfully
- experience positive outcomes.

**All ECEC services must be inclusive.**

We've got information to help you:

- understand what inclusion looks like in ECEC
- learn where your inclusion obligations come from
- find programs, initiatives and resources to help you embed inclusive practices.

Go to the new [inclusion in ECEC](#) page on our website.

# Supporting the workforce

## Support employees with discounted care

**Did you know you can offer a discounted fee to some staff whose children attend your service?**

You can offer discounts to employees who:

- are employed, contracted or engaged as an educator, early childhood teacher or cook
- are working at a Centre Based Day Care or Outside School Hours Care service, and
- have a child enrolled in an ECEC service where they work or that you own.

It's up to you how much you want to discount. The employee must still pay at least 5% of the gap fee.

The discount won't affect the employee's CCS entitlement.

Learn more about the [child care discount for the early childhood workforce](#).

# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Our top tips about the enrolment process

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

You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS payments.



Below are our hottest tips about the enrolment process:

- Families should make a CCS claim before their child starts at your service.
- You must use the correct enrolment type. In most cases, children must be enrolled under a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) to get CCS.
- You must identify the person who made the CCS claim. If you don't identify this person, Services Australia cannot make CCS payments.
- Families must confirm the enrolment via their [Centrelink online account](#). Services Australia cannot make CCS payments until the enrolment is confirmed.

Head to our website to [read more about enrolments](#).

## Passing payments on to families

**You must pass payments on to families, as a fee reduction, within 14 days of receiving it.**

If you cannot pass on a payment within this timeframe, you must pay it back to Services Australia via the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

Failure to pass payments on to families may result in compliance action.

You must provide a statement of entitlement to families who get CCS every fortnight.

Find out what [a statement of entitlement](#) must include.

## Learn how to prevent, detect, and report fraud

**Our course on fraud awareness provides information on your responsibilities under FAL.**

The short course, **Fraud awareness**:

- helps you understand fraud and corruption
- explains what you can do to prevent, detect, and report fraud.

Find the course on Geckko. Geckko is our online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector.

You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about FAL
- download course certificates upon completion.

[Find out more and register for Geckko.](#)

## Know your obligations: working with children checks

**All providers have obligations regarding working with children checks (WWCCs) under both state and territory law and FAL.**

To meet your obligations, you must:

- ensure any person required by state or territory law to hold a WWCC, has a current check
- notify some checks in the CCSS within specific timeframes



- notify changes to checks in the CCSS within specific timeframes
- keep records of all checks and provide these to us on request.

Notify new checks within 7 days and notify changes to existing checks within 24 hours.

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

Find more detailed information [about WWCC obligations](#) on our website.

## Collecting gap fees

**Families who get CCS must make a co-contribution to their ECEC fees by paying the gap fee.**

Families must pay the gap fee using electronic funds transfer (EFT).

### Your policies should include information about EFT payment options

This information should be included in your fee policies or enrolment forms. Your fee policy should include:

- how often gap fees will be collected
- the steps you will take if the gap fees are not paid
- when you will take these steps.

### Collect gap fees at regular intervals

CCS is usually paid every 2 weeks. We recommend that your collection of gap fees follows this same cycle.

Without regular gap fee collection, families may end up with a large debt. This can be difficult to recover.

### Gap fees must be collected

You cannot waive the gap fee for a family, except in specific circumstances.

Some families may need help paying the gap fee. We encourage you to talk to families who are in need of help about the available [financial support options](#).

Find out more about [collecting gap fees](#).

## Share with families

### Allowable absences

Allowable absences will reset on 1 July 2024. Find out more about absences on [Service's Australia website](#) and check your year-to-date absence count:

- in your Centrelink online account via [myGov](#)
- on the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#).



## NSW floods: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of New South Wales due to flooding.

The CCS period of emergency applies from Friday 7 June 2024 to Tuesday 11 June 2024 in the following local government areas:

- Camden Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Penrith City Council
- The Hills Shire Council
- Wollondilly Shire Council.

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

### Support during the emergency

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

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

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

### Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after an emergency](#).

### Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [Emergency | NSW Government](#)



## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [Emergency | NSW Government](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### CCCF business support

**We are offering free business support to Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) grant recipients.**

CCCF business support is a free business review and advice service. Support is delivered through business advisors who work with you to help you identify ways to improve your service's financial viability and sustainability.

Learn more about [CCCF business support](#).

### Help families find your service

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

We publish your fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#). We may also publish some financial information, such as profits and revenue, about large providers.

This information helps parents choose the best ECEC for their family.

You must keep your details up to date to ensure they display correctly on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#).

You must report:

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

Check and update your fee and vacancy details via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.

Large providers must report financial information to us by the deadline each year. Find out more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).

### CCS Provider Helpdesk closed Monday

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed because of the public holiday in most states and territories on Monday 10 June.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Tuesday 11 June.

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

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.



# Spotlight on the sector

## Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services now has over 8,600 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:

- administering CCS
- complying with Family Assistance Law
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

## Teach numeracy through music

**Join Little Scientists for an online workshop for early childhood educators and teachers.**

In the 2-hour workshop, educators will learn how to introduce mathematical concepts to young children in an engaging and age-appropriate manner. It will explore:

- the connection between music and mathematics
- the rhythmic patterns that form the foundation of both disciplines
- how to use music and rhythm to facilitate mathematical understanding.

The workshop will take place online from 3 pm AEST on 11 June.

The workshop is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework 2.0.

We provide funding to Little Scientists, helping early childhood educators build their skills and confidence in introducing STEM ideas and concepts.

[Book tickets now to secure your place.](#)

# Supporting the workforce

## Get help finding staff

**Did you know we have a range of programs and initiatives to help you attract, recruit and retain staff?**

We have programs to:

- help you identify and prepare job seekers to fill entry level roles
- help you find job seekers in your region
- get wage support for apprentices and trainees.

Explore our [initiatives to help you find staff](#).



# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Persons with management or control

**Do you know who is considered a person with management or control (PMC) at your organisation?**

We have detailed guidance about [who is considered a PMC](#) on our website.

We encourage you to check this information and ensure to identify all PMCs at your organisation in the Child Care Subsidy System. You must also keep their contact details up to date.

Complete the Family Assistance Law notification requirements course in [Geccko](#) to learn more.

## Are you reporting third-party payments correctly?

**There are rules you are required to follow when a third-party contributes to a family's fees. Make sure you report third-party payments correctly to avoid compliance action.**

Generally, when a third-party contributes to a family's fees, you are required to deduct the contribution from the total session fee.

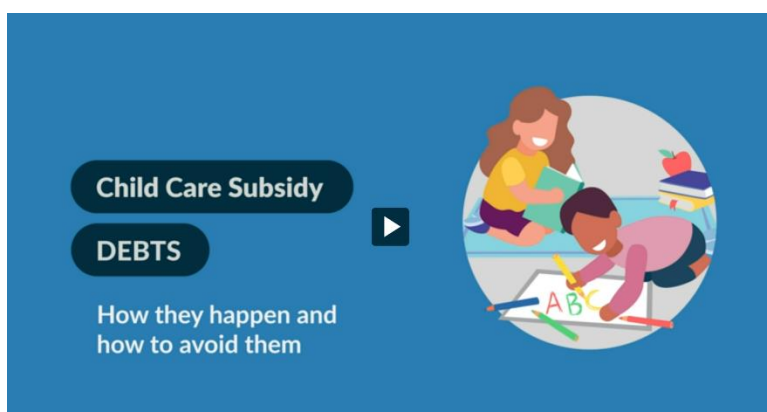
The family's CCS rate will then be applied to the reduced session fee. This is because families are only entitled to CCS based on the amount you charge them.

There are exceptions to this rule in limited circumstances. These circumstances are known as [prescribed third-party payments](#).

Reporting the correct fee information is a requirement under Family Assistance Law. We may take compliance action if you fail to meet your obligations.

Find examples about [how to report different types of third-party payments](#) on our website.

## How providers are notified of debts



**We issue debt notices in some cases, such as for closed or non-compliant services.**

Notices have official departmental letter head, featuring the department's logo and the Commonwealth crest.

A debt notice will tell you:

- how much you owe





- what caused the debt
- how to pay and when it is due
- how to ask for an extension to pay the debt, or for a review of the debt
- action that we will take if the debt is not paid within the timeframe, such as formal recovery via a debt collection agency, charging interest or legal proceedings.

For overpayments, we won't send you a notice that we have started offsetting. You can stay informed by checking your payment advice – all offset amounts appear there.

You can find more information at [overpayments and debts](#).

## What it takes to become an approved child care provider

**Providers must be approved to operate a child care service and administer CCS in Australia. You must be approved by the Australian Government and your state or territory government.**

The good news is, you can apply for both approvals at the same time.

We have [step-by-step guidance on the process](#) on our website. Please read this information carefully before applying. We can only assess applications with all the required information and evidence.

You can complete an online course about the approval process to ensure you have a good understanding of what is required before you apply.

Find out what you need to know [about opening \(or adding\) a new service](#) on the ACECQA website.

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

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### Update your CCS activity levels online

We need to know about your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity level. It's important you check your activity level details regularly to make sure you're getting the right amount of CCS.

The quickest way to check and update this is using your Centrelink online account through myGov. Select 'Activity Test' then 'Update Activity Test' – it only takes a few minutes.

Find out more about activity levels on [Services Australia website](#)



## From the department

### Parents can have their say on child care

**We're inviting parents and carers to have a say on child care in a national survey.**

On Friday 24 May, we invited 12,000 randomly selected parents and carers to be part of the survey. These parents and carers will receive a letter over the next week with a QR link to the online survey. They will also receive a link via SMS and/or email.

The survey closes at 10 am AEST Monday 1 July 2024.

Please encourage parents and carers at your service to complete the survey.

The survey will help us to evaluate child care policies and how they impact child care quality, availability and affordability.

If you have any questions about this survey, email the department at [sps@education.gov.au](mailto:sps@education.gov.au).

### Reminder: complete the National Workforce Census

**It's time for all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers and services to complete the National Workforce Census (NWC). Completing the NWC is a requirement under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

We strongly encourage preschools and kindergartens to take part to ensure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven't already, [visit our website to complete the census](#). Your login code is in your invitation email from the Social Research Centre.

If you need help or have questions, contact the helpline on 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au).

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the [Social Research Centre website](#).

### Inclusion Support Portal enhancements

**We've made enhancements to the Inclusion Support Portal.**

The Inclusion Support Portal is the online platform where providers and services interact with the [Inclusion Support Program](#).

We've summarised the changes below for those who use the portal:

- **We've improved the Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) experience.** The SIP has a new, user-friendly layout. We've also made it easier to create a SIP, breaking down the process into logical steps.
- **We've made changes to the Family Day Care environment.** You can now plan, document and review at the service level, not just an educator level.
- **We've made changes to barriers and strategies.** You can now view actions at the same level as barriers and strategies. We've also clarified barrier end dates.



- **We've made progress notes easier to find, view and record.** You can now make draft notes. Progress notes will only appear in the SIP report once submitted. You will now also receive a reminder email if a progress note has not been created for a specified period.
- **We've enhanced access controls.** You can now grant staff access to the SIP, without giving them access to cases, claims or payments.
- **We've introduced help text in some areas to help you understand what is required.**

If you need help using the portal, [contact your local Inclusion Agency](#)

## Spotlight on the sector

### It's National Reconciliation Week



National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about shared histories, cultures and achievements.

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2024 is 'Now More Than Ever'. It is a reminder to all of us that no matter what, the fight for justice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will —and must — continue.

Read more about what you can do for NRW 2024 on the [National Reconciliation Week website](#).

### Closing the Gap

We're investing in targeted measures to improve the lives of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children through better access to quality early childhood education and care (ECEC).

In the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) targets 3 and 4 focus on the early years. They aim to ensure:

- children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate ECEC
- children thrive in their early years.

We're investing in the following measures that support targets 3 and 4:



- the **Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership** brings together governments and First Nations representatives to develop recommendations to improve early childhood outcomes
- **Connected Beginnings** is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life
- the **Community Child Care Fund restricted expansion grant** aims to increase participation rates of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in ECEC settings
- an **intensive ECEC model trial** designed to help bridge the gap to school readiness includes a dedicated First Nations site
- a new **early learning teaching pilot** aims to help Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get ready for school
- families can now get at least **36 hours of CCS** per fortnight for each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child in their care, regardless of the family's activity level.

Learn more about [how we're working to Close the Gap in early childhood](#).

## Services continue to meet National Quality Standard

**For the third consecutive quarter, the proportion of children's education and care services rated Meeting National Quality Standard (NQS) or above has remained at 90%.**

The National Quality Framework (NQF) Snapshot is a national report on children's education and care services operating under the NQF. It provides information on the sector and the quality ratings of services against the NQS.

Since the introduction of the NQF in 2013, quality ratings have increased from 56% Meeting NQS and above to 90% today.

The number of approved services increased 2% from Q1 2023.

Read the [latest NQF snapshot](#) on ACECQA's website.

## Nominate for Early STEM Education Awards by Friday

**The Little Scientists Early STEM Education Awards recognise educators and services driving STEM education for children aged 0 to 7 across Australia. Nominations close this Friday.**

You can nominate across 2 categories:

- early learning services can nominate by developing and submitting an inquiry-based STEM project
- early childhood educators can nominate via a questionnaire that explores your STEM leadership.

The 2024 theme is **overcoming gender bias in early STEM education**.

You will need to demonstrate how you're promoting gender inclusivity and overcoming gender stereotypes that hold young girls back in STEM education.

Every eligible nominee will receive a prize. Prizes will also be awarded to each state and territory winner and to the national winner.

Each category will have 1 overall national winner and 8 state and territory winners. Winners will be announced in August.

Learn more on the [Little Scientists website](#).



# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Avoiding an infringement notice

**We may issue an infringement notice to providers that don't follow the rules under FAL. Providers must make sure that they, their employees and educators follow the rules.**

Many providers comply with the law and do the right thing. However, where certain rules are not being followed, we can use infringements to address non-compliance and help change provider behaviour.

An infringement notice is a fine and can be expensive. Some infringement notices are more than \$15,000.

Infringement notices help providers avoid more severe penalties. They allow a provider to pay a small fine rather than go to court, where they may get a much larger penalty.

Infringement notices are issued for a range of reasons, including:

- not correctly reporting your fee information
- not submitting enrolment notices or session reports on time
- not passing on or remitting a fee reduction amount
- not meeting notification requirements
- not keeping records.

See the [list of FAL provisions for which we can issue an infringement](#).

We send infringement notices by email and by post. If you do get an infringement, you have 28 days to pay the fine. Find out [what to do if you get an infringement](#).

The best way to avoid an infringement notice is to be aware of and comply with your obligations under FAL. Read more about [your obligations](#).

## Got a question about how much CCS a family is entitled to?

**Check out our website, we've got everything you need to know about [family eligibility and entitlement](#).**

The amount of CCS a family can get depends on their:

- income
- number of children in care
- activity level
- type of care they use.

If a child's parents are separated, both parents may be eligible for CCS if they:

- share care responsibilities, and
- are each liable for child care fees.

Each parent must lodge their own CCS claim. They will each need to meet the eligibility criteria outlined above.

You must establish a separate care arrangement and enrolment notice for each parent. Learn more about [enrolments](#).



You must identify which parent is responsible for each session of care in your session reports. Learn more about [session reports](#).

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### Confirm your 2021–22 income for CCS by 30 June 2024

You need to confirm your income by 30 June 2024 if you got Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in the 2021–22 financial year.

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

#### Confirm your 2022–23 income for CCS by 30 June 2024

You need to confirm your income by 30 June 2024 if you got CCS in the 2022–23 financial year.

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



## From the department

### More funding for Inclusion Support Program

**The Australian Government is investing a further \$98.4 million in the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) to meet expected demand for services to support children with additional needs.**

The government announced the additional funding in last week's Federal Budget.

While all services must be inclusive, some need extra support. ISP helps services implement inclusive practices. One way it does this is by helping services engage additional educators to address barriers to inclusion.

Demand for the program has grown significantly over the last 4 years, with more than 19,000 children and about 5,600 services supported in 2022–23.

This additional funding will ensure the program continues to support services to include children with additional needs.

The government will also consider access and inclusion in its response to the [Productivity Commission inquiry into Australia's early childhood education and care \(ECEC\) system](#).

Learn more about the [Inclusion Support Program](#).

Read [our Budget announcement](#).

### Enrol in our new accurate fee reporting course

**We have launched our new course on accurate fee reporting. It provides information on your responsibilities under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

Our short course, **Accurate fee reporting**, will help you:

- understand your fee reporting obligations
- explain the importance of reporting and updating fees
- report your service's fees using the appropriate method, and more.

Get early childhood compliance knowledge online, or simply Geckco, is our online learning platform for the ECEC sector.

You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about FAL
- download course certificates upon completion.

Complete the [Accurate Fee Reporting](#) course on Geckco

### CCS Provider Helpdesk closed Monday

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed for a public holiday in the ACT on Monday 27 May.**



The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Tuesday 28 May.

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

## Spotlight on the sector

### Reminder: complete the National Workforce Census

**It's time for all CCS approved providers and services to complete the National Workforce Census (NWC). Completing the NWC is a requirement under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

We strongly encourage preschools and kindergartens to take part to ensure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven't already, please [visit our website to login and complete the census](#). Your login code is in your invitation email from the Social Research Centre.

If you need help or have questions, contact the helpline on 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au).

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the [Social Research Centre website](#).

### Help families find your service

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

We publish your fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#). We may also publish some financial information, such as profits and revenue, about large providers.

This information helps parents choose the best ECEC for their family.

You must keep your details up to date to ensure they display correctly on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#).

You must report:

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

Check and update your fee and vacancy details via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.

Large providers must report financial information to us by the deadline each year. Find out more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Do you know the rules around advertising and inducements?

**ECEC providers may not offer certain types of inducements. An inducement is an incentive offered by a provider to secure a child's enrolment.**

You may not offer inducements such as cash, electronics, or gift-vouchers. What you can offer and advertise to families includes:





- discounted or free care
- free site visits or trial periods
- transport to or from your service if this is part of your normal business practice.

You can also issue marketing merchandise to the value of \$30 per complying written arrangement and include extra-curricular activities as part of a session fee.

You must ensure the correct billing practices are used and fee discounts are reported correctly if CCS is claimed.

If you have questions, email the CCS Provider Helpdesk at [CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au).

Find out more about [inducement and advertising at your service](#)

## Streamline your application process

**Whether you are buying an existing service, or opening a new one, you'll need two types of approvals to run a service that offers CCS:**

- Your state or territory government – known as National Law approval. This deems you suitable to ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.
- The Australian Government (that's us!). We deem you suitable to administer CCS.

The good news is, you can apply for both approvals at the same time.

While we cannot grant CCS approval until you have your state or territory government approval, applying for both approvals means both applications can be assessed at the same time. This will help avoid delays in your approval process.

You can learn more [about the approval process](#) on our website.

Complete an e-learning course on [opening \(or adding\) a service](#) on the ACECQA website.

## Understanding activity levels

**The hours of subsidised care a family can get each fortnight depends on their activity level.**

Services Australia looks at both parents' activity level. They use the parent with the lower activity level to determine a family's hours of subsidised care. The hours of subsidised child care you can get per fortnight applies to each child.

The higher the level of activity, the more hours of subsidised care families can get.

Families need to do a recognised activity to get CCS. There are a range of activities that count towards your activity level, including:

- paid work
- volunteering
- studying
- looking for work
- unpaid work in a family business.

[Exemptions](#) apply for parents who cannot meet activity test requirements.

More information about [family eligibility and entitlement](#) is available on our website.



# News for families

## The latest updates from Services Australia

### Estimate your 2024–25 family income now

It's important you estimate your family income, so Services Australia can pay you the right amount of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) and Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

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



## From the department

### Budget 2024–25: Next steps to building universal early childhood education and care

**The Australian Government's investment last year in Cheaper Child Care has seen out-of-pocket costs fall and benefitted more than one million families. The 2024–25 Budget continues to build on these initiatives by investing in building strong and sustainable foundations for future reforms.**

The new measures are expected to deliver **net savings of \$410.7 million** over 4 years from 2024–25 by strengthening the payment and accuracy of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) program.

The government has committed to provide funding towards a wage increase for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce. Details will be finalised following consideration of relevant Fair Work Commission processes. The government will invest **\$30 million** over 2 years from 2024–25 in IT and payment services to deliver on this commitment.

The government will consider the recommendations of the [ACCC's report into the costs of ECEC](#) alongside the [Productivity Commission's inquiry](#), which is due to government by 30 June 2024.

#### Strengthening payment and accuracy

Funding over 4 years from 2024–25 for integrity measures includes:

**\$84.2 million** (and \$18.4 million per year ongoing) for the Department of Education to:

- bolster education, audit and compliance activities
- mandating direct collection of gap fees by Family Day Care and In Home Care providers from 1 July 2025.

**\$8.3 million** (and \$1.2 million per year ongoing) for Services Australia to upgrade the Child Care Subsidy System to support new compliance measures.

**\$4.8 million** for the Australian Taxation Office to ensure satisfactory engagement by ECEC providers with the Australian tax system.

**\$1.3 million** (and \$0.3 million per year ongoing) for the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre to help identify people who have high unexplained wealth with connections to the ECEC sector.

[Learn more about strengthening payment and accuracy.](#)

#### Support for children with additional needs

A further **\$98.4 million** will be provided through the Inclusion Support Program (ISP). This funding will help meet expected demand for services to support children with additional needs.

While all ECEC services must be inclusive, some need extra support. ISP helps services implement inclusive practices. One way it does this is by helping services engage additional educators to address barriers to inclusion.

Demand for the program has grown significantly over the last 4 years, with more than 19,000 children and about 5,600 services supported in 2022–23.



This additional funding will ensure the program continues to support services to include children with additional needs.

The government will also consider access and inclusion in its response to the [Productivity Commission inquiry into Australia's ECEC system](#).

Learn more about the [Inclusion Support Program](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### Early Years Strategy launch



Last week the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, and the Minister for Early Childhood Education, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, launched the Early Years Strategy 2024–2034.

The strategy sets out the government's vision that all children in Australia thrive in their early years.

The strategy recognises how critical the early years are for setting children up for lifelong success. It outlines how, over the next 10 years, the government will:

- prioritise and support child-centred policy development
- target investment in early years supports and services.

Pictured at the launch are the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP and the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, alongside early years representatives including Emma Watkins and other members of the Early Years Strategy Expert Advisory Panel.

Read the Early Years Strategy on the [Department of Social Services website](#)

### Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services now has over 8,500 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:

- administering CCS



- complying with Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

## Supporting the workforce

### Be You culturally responsive resources

**Be You has published new resources to support culturally respectful engagement with First Nations communities.**

The resources have been designed for educators who wish to invite genuine connection and deepen engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, and communities.

Explore the resources on the [Be You website](#).

You can also watch [a recorded webinar](#) to hear about cultural safety and responsiveness in practice.

[Be You](#) is the national mental health and wellbeing initiative for ECEC and schools.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Balance of allowable absences

**Many families have used their 42 allowable absences by this time of year. If you are noticing that absences are not paying when submitting session reports, check the family's absence count.**

Allowable absences will reset on 1 July 2024.

Families can find out more about absences on [Services Australia website](#) and check their year-to-date absence count:

- in their Centrelink online account via [myGov](#)
- on the [Express Plus Centrelink mobile app](#).

### Are you submitting session reports on time?

**You must submit accurate and timely session reports – it's the law.**

Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process CCS payments.

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided.

You must submit session reports for all children enrolled at your service, even if a child is not eligible for CCS.

Find detailed guidance about session reports [on our website](#).



## Understand enrolments through our online course

We have developed a short course on enrolments to help improve your knowledge.

The course, **Understanding enrolments**:

- will help you understand the enrolment process
- explains your enrolment responsibilities.

This course and more are available for free on Geckco. Geckco is our online learning platform for the ECEC sector.

Browse courses, videos, and tip sheets to improve your knowledge. You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about FAL
- download course certificates upon completion.

[Find out more and register for Geckco.](#)

## Got a question about CCS percentage or activity test result on session reports?

Some common reasons session reports can show a child's CCS percentage at 0% include:

- that the family is above the current [income threshold](#)
- there's a change in [entitlement](#)
- that the family has not [confirmed a previous year's income](#), known as balancing.

In these situations, the family will need to contact Services Australia to check their CCS entitlement.

A family's [activity level](#) can also impact their entitlement.

Families can check their type of activity and hours they do for CCS:

- in their myGov account
- by contacting Services Australia on the [Centrelink families line](#).

Families can learn more about how their activity level affects CCS on the [Services Australia website](#).

## Share with families

### Is your family eligible for higher CCS?

**If you have more than one child aged 5 or under in care, you may get a higher Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for one or more of your children.**

You can get a higher subsidy for one or more of your children, if all of these apply:

- you get or will be eligible for CCS
- your family's combined income is under \$362,408
- your family has more than one CCS eligible child aged 5, or younger.



If your family has more than one child aged 5 or under, Services Australia will assess which children get a higher subsidy by working out both:

- the 'standard rate child'
- the 'higher rate child' or the 'higher rate children'.

The 'standard rate child' is usually your eldest CCS eligible child aged 5 or under. This child will get the [standard CCS percentage](#).

The 'higher rate child' is any CCS eligible child younger than your standard rate child. You'll get a higher subsidy rate for them.

For children born on the same date, such as twins, Services Australia will automatically determine one child as the 'standard rate child'. They'll then apply a higher rate to other eligible children.

Combined families are where both members of a couple get CCS for different children in their family. Services Australia counts all CCS-eligible children in a combined family when determining entitlement to the higher rate for second and younger children.

[In Home Care](#) (IHC) sessions do not attract the higher subsidy. This is because IHC is subsidised per family, rather than per child.

If your family is eligible, Services Australia will apply the changes automatically.

For more information, go to [Services Australia website](#)



## From the department

### Early Years Strategy launched

**On Tuesday, the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, and the Minister for Early Childhood Education, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, launched the Early Years Strategy 2024–2034.**

The strategy sets out the government’s vision that all children in Australia thrive in their early years.

The strategy recognises how critical the early years are for setting children up for lifelong success. It outlines how, over the next 10 years, the government will:

- prioritise and support child-centred policy development
- target investment in early years supports and services.

The strategy has 4 priority focus areas:

- value the early years
- empower parents, caregivers and families
- support and work with communities
- strengthen accountability and coordination.

The strategy is informed by the views of:

- children, parents and families
- early childhood providers, services and educators
- academics
- peak organisations.

Read the Early Years Strategy on the [Department of Social Services website](#).

### National Workforce Census reference week

**This week is National Workforce Census (NWC) reference week. It runs from 6 to 12 May 2024.**

What does this mean for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers and services?

1. Note child attendance and details of your workforce.
2. Start entering data for the NWC from 13 May 2024.

If you haven’t already, [please register](#) to complete the census. Your login code is in your invitation email from the Social Research Centre.

If you need help or have questions, contact the helpline on 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au)

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the [Social Research Centre website](#).





## How to acquit professional development subsidies

We're contacting providers with information about how to acquit the professional development and paid practicum subsidies.

You must acquit funding you receive under the:

- professional development subsidy
- paid practicum subsidy.

We've emailed providers who have received funding with information about how and when you need to acquit. Look for an email from [ECECworkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECworkforce@education.gov.au).

We also have instructions about [how to acquit professional development and paid practicum subsidies](#) on our website.

If you have questions, contact [ECECworkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECworkforce@education.gov.au).

## Free business support for CCCF services

**Do you get a Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) grant? Apply for free business support.**

CCCF business support is a free business review and advice service.

Support is delivered through business advisors who work with you to help identify ways to improve your service's financial viability and sustainability.

This may include helping you to:

- implement sound business practices
- identify cost drivers and potential savings
- transition to a more appropriate business model and/or service delivery model.

Find out more and [apply for CCCF business support](#) on our website.

## Spotlight on the sector

### 2024 ECA Reconciliation Symposium



**This year, we were again proud sponsors of Early Childhood Australia's (ECA) [Reconciliation Symposium](#).**

ECA, a peak early childhood advocacy organisation, hosted approximately 350 attendees for the 2-day program in Canberra on Ngunnawal Country.

We sponsored 6 educators from across the country so they could attend the event.

Pictured above are departmental representatives Amber Horne and Ashton Tayba, and sponsorship recipients Alyssa Harvey, Polly Rushen, Joanne Potts, Fiona Bradley and Andrea Fallon. Sponsorship recipient, Mandavi Thapa, also attended the symposium.

In its 10th year, the symposium brings the matter of reconciliation in early childhood into the spotlight and works towards a better future for all Australians.

## National Family Day Care Week

**This week is National Family Day Care week. The week is a celebration of the vital role family day care plays in the development and wellbeing of over 75,000 children across Australia.**

National Family Day Care week runs until 12 May and this year marks its 12th birthday.

Read more on the [Family Day Care Australia website](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Need a refresher on enrolments?

**You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS payments.**

Services Australia can only pay CCS if:

- the enrolment notice correctly identifies the person who made the CCS claim, and
- the family has confirmed the enrolment.

We have detailed information about [the enrolment process](#) on our website.

You can also complete the [Understanding enrolments](#) course in Geckko to learn more.

### Did you know you can lose your approval if the right people don't have working with children checks?

**We take your compliance with your child safety obligations very seriously. Complying with your working with children check (WWCC) obligations is a condition of your approval to get CCS under Family Assistance Law.**

If you fail to meet your WWCC obligations, we may:

- deny your application for approval
- place conditions on your approval
- issue an infringement notice
- suspend, vary or cancel your approval.

Make sure you're familiar with your obligations to avoid compliance action.



We have detailed information about [your WWCC obligations](#) on our website.

## What you need to know about payment adjustments

**Did you know that you can update or withdraw session reports up to 28 days after the start of the week for which the report relates?**

Failure to update incorrect session reports within 28 days may result in compliance action.

If you update or withdraw a session report, any payment adjustments made after 9 pm Sunday will be processed when received in the CCS system.

Read more about [payments and fees](#) on our website.

Find out more about [session reports](#) on our website.

Complete the [Reporting sessions of care](#) course in Geckco to learn more.

## Gap fee audits

**Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically. We conduct audits by asking you to provide information using a section 158 notice.**

The types of information we may request about the collection of gap fees during an audit includes:

- bank statements showing that gap fees have been paid via EFT
- statements from third party software
- reconciliation statements
- policy/procedural documents showing evidence of how you are meeting your FAL obligations.

We may take compliance action if you do not comply with a s158 notice. Not complying can include:

- not responding to the notice within 14 days
- not providing the requested information or documents
- redacting documents.

Compliance actions may include:

- suspension or cancellation of your provider approval
- prosecuting you.

Read more about:

- [what to do if you get a section 158 notice](#)
- [guidance on collecting gap fees.](#)



# Share with families

## Finding early learning for your child

Did you know [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) is the one place where you can find and compare all early childhood education and care services?

On [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au), you can:

- find local services
- view vacancies, costs, quality ratings and inclusions
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- compare services side-by-side
- get information and advice about education, children's development, and parenting.

Visit [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) to start searching.



## From the department

### Having a conversation about ACCS child wellbeing

**Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing provides help with the cost of early childhood education and care (ECEC). It's for families who care for a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect. Unlike other subsidies, providers apply for the child wellbeing subsidy on behalf of a family.**

You must have the family's informed consent before applying.

You should have open and transparent conversations with families about ACCS child wellbeing and what it means for them. Exactly what to say and how to frame the conversation will depend on:

- your relationship with the family
- whether there is a sense of urgency.

For more information, read our guide on [Talking with the family](#).

### The importance of sharing culture

Our [video series](#) celebrates the valuable work of ECEC educators.

'The teachers that I had when I was younger, they really had an impact in my life and the direction that I took.'

Hear from Monique, an ECEC educator, on why she chose to become an educator and how she shares her culture with children.



You can find more [videos celebrating our ECEC educators](#) on our website.



# Spotlight on the sector

## The 2024 Australian Early Development Census is now open



**The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide census of early childhood development.**

The AEDC takes place every 3 years. It's a national data collection that:

- examines how young children have developed by the time they start school
- provides evidence to support health, education, community for policy and planning for children.

The data collection will take place from 1 May 2024 to 31 July 2024.

Teachers of children in their first year of school complete the AEDC for children in their class.

Teachers answer questions that measure early childhood development across 5 key areas, referred to as domains:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

The 2024 AEDC National results will be published in 2025. For early childhood educators, the AEDC data can be a useful predictor of future development and learning. Alongside other data sources, the AEDC data can help educators to:

- discover how well early childhood programs are preparing children for school
- develop target resources and services to support children's and families' wellbeing.



Visit the [AEDC website](#) to learn more.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Exceptions to electronic payment of gap fees

**Families using ECEC must pay their gap fee electronically. Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically.**

Exceptions are available in the following limited circumstances:

- for individuals at risk of family or domestic violence
- for services experiencing exceptional circumstances.

A service may be eligible for an exception if:

- the service is in a remote area, and
- experiences poor internet or phone coverage, or
- has a significant number of families who have limited access to a financial institution, which poses a barrier to those families paying electronically.

Providers must apply on behalf of the service seeking exception and give supporting evidence.

Read more [about exceptions](#) on our website.

Complete [Electronic payment of gap fees course in Geckco](#) to learn more.

### Persons with management or control obligations

**Persons with management or control of the provider (PMCs) have obligations and tasks they must perform.**

We have a [comprehensive list of PMC responsibilities, tasks and timeframes](#) on our website.

If these tasks aren't completed within certain timeframes, the provider risks:

- not being approved to run a service
- losing approval to run a service
- receiving an infringement.

Check the list on our website and make sure you're following the rules to avoid compliance action.

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### Confirm your child's enrolment details for Child Care Subsidy

We can only pay your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) if your child's enrolment is current.

Read more on how to check and confirm your child's enrolment details for CCS on [the Services Australia website](#).



## Estimate your 2024–25 family income

You need to estimate your family income, so we pay you the right amount of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) and CCS. If you get FTB or CCS, you need to tell us how much your and your partner's income will be for the 2024–25 financial year.

Read more on how to estimate your 2024–25 family income online on [the Services Australia website](#).





## From the department

### CCS Provider Helpdesk closed on Anzac Day

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed tomorrow for the Anzac Day public holiday.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEST on Friday 26 April.

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

You may experience short delays in CCS payments due to the public holiday.

## Spotlight on the sector

### Let's Count has been relaunched

**The Smith Family has relaunched the popular Let's Count program to meet the needs of busy early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators.**

Let's Count is an Australian Government funded mathematics program for children aged 3 to 5.

The program helps ECEC educators develop the maths skills of children in their care by noticing, exploring, and talking about mathematics using everyday activities.

The program has been updated to:

- align with the Early Years Learning Framework V2.0
- be accessible to as many ECEC professionals as possible.

Let's Count is a practical and tangible professional development opportunity available via:

- face to face workshops
- an online learning portal.

Let's Count is free for all ECEC professionals.

Learn more about Let's Count on [The Smith Family website](#) .

## Supporting the workforce

### Have you applied for our paid practicum subsidy?

**You may be eligible for a subsidy to support your early childhood teachers to complete the practicum components of their degree.**

If eligible, you can use the subsidy to give educators paid leave while undertaking their practicum. We will pay a service \$1120.04 per week per staff member for eligible practicums.



Initially, the subsidy prioritises:

- services and staff in regional, remote and very remote locations
- First Nations services and educators.

We have sent invitations to eligible providers. If you can't find the email, try searching for "DocuSign". If you believe your service is eligible but you have not received an invitation, send an email to [ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au).

Remember to submit your paperwork along with the application.

Find out more about the [paid practicum subsidy](#) on our website.

## Supporting children's learning

**Our video series celebrates the valuable work of ECEC educators.**

The videos showcase:

- a snapshot of their lives
- why they took up teaching
- the moments that shaped them.

Hear from Greta, an ECEC educator, below.



You can find more [videos celebrating ECEC educators](#) on our website.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Becoming an approved provider

**Providers must be approved to operate a child care service and administer CCS in Australia. You must be approved by the Australian Government and your state or territory government.**

We have step-by-step guidance on our website about the approval process, including:



- the 2 types of approval required
- eligibility rules
- evidence required
- how to submit your application
- what happens after you apply
- how to add, remove or relocate a service
- why we suspend approvals.

Applicants must read this information carefully before applying and ensure they submit a complete application.

If your application is incomplete, we'll ask for more information before we begin our assessment. If you don't provide this information your application will be rejected and you'll need to reapply.

Find out more [becoming an approved provider](#) on our website.

## Do you know the notification requirements under Family Assistance Law?

**We have a short course on Family Assistance Law (FAL) notification requirements.**

The course will help you:

- identify matters you need to tell us and your state regulatory authority
- understand the notification process, and more.

This course is available on Geckko, our online learning platform for the ECEC sector.

You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about FAL
- download course certificates upon completion.

[Find out more and register for Geckko](#)

## Share with families

### First Nations children can get more hours of subsidised care

**If you want to use child care, the Australian Government helps cover the costs. It's called Child Care Subsidy, or CCS. The government pays child care services, who pass the subsidy on to you as cheaper fees.**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children each get 36 hours of CCS per fortnight. This is regardless of the amount of activity families do, such as work, training, study or volunteering.

- This may make your child care fees cheaper.
- Young ones can prepare and be ready for big school.
- You have more access to child care if you need it.

Families can find out more about how to apply at [First Nations activity test](#).



Families do not need to do anything if you already get more than 36 hours of subsidy. A family's CCS rate will continue to be based on their income.



## From the department

### What it means to be a teacher

We have released a video series to celebrate the valuable work of early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators.

The videos present a snapshot of their lives and why they became educators.

Hear from Jay, an ECEC educator below:



You can find more [videos](#) celebrating our ECEC educators on our website.

## Spotlight on the sector

### Update your details for [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au)

[StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) has a new look! Check it out and make sure your details are up to date for families.

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

We publish your fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au).

We may also publish some financial information, such as profits and revenue, about large providers.

You must keep your details up to date to ensure they display correctly on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au).

You must report:

- your current hourly or session fees before any subsidies, discounts or reductions



- any changes to your fees within 14 days of the change
- your current vacancies by 8 pm AEST/AEDT each Friday.

Check and update your fee and vacancy details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software.

Large providers must report financial information to us by the deadline each year. Find out more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).

These are requirements under [Family Assistance Law \(FAL\)](#). We may take compliance action if you fail to meet [your obligations](#).

## Nominate now for the Early STEM Education Awards

**Are you passionate about early STEM education? Submit a nomination for the Little Scientists Early STEM Education Awards.**

The awards recognise educators and services driving STEM education for children 0 to 7 years across Australia.

Nominations are open for:

- early learning services and early primary classrooms
- early childhood educators and early primary teachers.

The 2024 theme is overcoming gender bias in early STEM education.

You will need to demonstrate how you're promoting gender inclusivity and overcoming gender stereotypes that hold young girls back in STEM education.

Nominations close on 31 May. Each category will have 1 overall national winner and 8 state and territory winners. Winners will be announced in August.

Every eligible nominee will receive a prize. Prizes will also be awarded to each state and territory winner and to the national winner.

Learn more on the [Little Scientists website](#).

## Enrolled in your first or final year of a birth-5, birth-8, or birth-12 teaching degree?

**Complete a 20-minute online survey about your career motivations and plans.**

You could win one of ten \$100 gift cards!

This Australian Research Council funded study will inform initiatives to support the early childhood teacher workforce.

[Find out more and complete the survey.](#)

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Submitting session reports



**You must submit accurate and timely session reports – it's the law.**

Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments.

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided.

Read more about [submitting session reports](#) on our website.

## Are you reporting third-party payments correctly?

**There are rules you must follow when a third party contributes to a family's fees. Make sure you're reporting third-party payments correctly to avoid compliance action.**

When a third party contributes to a family's fees, you must deduct the contribution from the total session fee.

The family's CCS rate will then be applied to the reduced session fee. This is because families are only entitled to CCS in relation to the amount you charge them.

There are exceptions to this rule in limited circumstances. These circumstances are known as prescribed third-party payments. We list all [prescribed third-party payments](#) on our website.

Reporting the correct fee information is a requirement under FAL. We may take compliance action if you fail to meet your obligations.

Find examples about [how to report different types of third-party payments](#) on our website.

## What you need to know about gap fees

**Families who get CCS must make a co-contribution to their child care fees. This is a requirement under FAL.**

They do this by paying the difference between the provider's fee and the CCS amount. This is known as the gap fee.

Families must pay the gap fee using electronic means, or EFT. Learn more about [electronic payment of gap fees](#).

The requirement to pay the gap fee does not usually apply to families who receive [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) child wellbeing or grandparent subsidy. This is because this subsidy generally covers 100% of the fee charged.

Read more about [collecting gap fees](#) on our website.

Complete the **Electronic payment of gap fees** course in [Geccko](#) to learn more.

## Share with families

### Families facing tough times may get more child care support

If you are facing difficult or challenging circumstances, you can sometimes get free child care. This is called Additional Child Care Subsidy, or ACCS. It usually covers all child care fees.

There are 4 types of ACCS:

#### Child wellbeing

The child wellbeing subsidy is for families who need practical help to support their child's safety and wellbeing. Your child care service applies for this on behalf of families. Families cannot apply.



## **Grandparent**

The grandparent subsidy is for grandparents on income support who are the primary carer of their grandchild.

## **Temporary financial hardship**

The temporary financial hardship subsidy is for families experiencing temporary, significant financial stress.

## **Transition to work**

The transition to work subsidy is for parents or carers transitioning to work from income support.

Except for ACCS child wellbeing, you apply on the [Services Australia website](#) or through your myGov account.

Share this post with families at your service.

Families can find more details at [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#).





## From the department

### National Workforce Census reference week

**Do you operate a vacation care service? It's time to note child attendance and details of your workforce for upcoming National Workforce Census (NWC) Reference Weeks.**

- **Monday 8 April to Sunday 14 April** for Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory.
- **Monday 15 April to Sunday 21 April** for Tasmania, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.

**If you don't operate a vacation care service, this is your reminder to register for the NWC now if you haven't already.**

You need to register before **5 May**, if you operate a:

- Centre Based Day Care
- In Home Care
- Family Day Care
- OSHC services that offer Before and After School Care
- Preschool or Kindergarten.

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the [Social Research Centre website](#).

### Free business support for CCCF services

**Don't forget – Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) grant recipients can get free business support.**

The support helps grant recipients maintain and operate financially viable and sustainable services.

A total of 60 CCCF services have so far used business support. They have used it to:

- conduct a business review
- identify cost drivers and savings
- get advice on the best business and service delivery models to use.

Find out more and [apply for CCCF business support](#) on our website.

### Online learning for PMC obligations

**Early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers have specific legal obligations. These obligations are imposed upon certain people. They are called persons with management or control (PMC).**

Our **Persons with management or control** course explains the PMC obligations under Family Assistance Law (FAL). The course is available on Geckko. Geckko is our online learning platform for the ECEC sector.

Learn about:

- who a PMC is



- the requirements of a PMC under FAL
- how to update PMC details.

If you haven't already, [register](#) today.

We'll add more courses in the future. Make sure to [subscribe to our newsletter](#) and [join our Facebook group](#) to find out when a new course launches.

## A message from our helpdesk

**If you need support from the CCS Provider Helpdesk, there are some specific details we need so we can best help you.**

### Provider CRN

Your provider CRN is a 9-digit number followed by a capital letter (e.g. 190000000A). It can be found in your third-party software, via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#), or on a family statement.

### Personnel ID

Your personnel ID is a ten-digit number (e.g. 0000000000) issued to any Persons with management or control (PMC) for the provider. You can find your personnel ID in the [PEP](#).

### Enrolment ID

Your enrolment ID is a 10-digit number preceded by a capital 'E' (e.g. E8000000000). This is unique to every child who attends a service. You can find enrolment IDs in the [PEP](#) under 'Enrolment Notices'.

### Please check:

An important email has been sent to your nominated provider email address. Check your provider email address in [PEP](#) regularly to make sure it is up to date. Our task card explains [how to add, remove or update child care personnel details in the PEP](#).

## CCS period of emergency in NSW

**A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency is in place in parts of NSW following due to flooding.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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

## Spotlight on the sector

### Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services has grown to over 8,300 members.**

Our group is a space to get information about:

- administering CCS



- complying with FAL
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

## Supporting the workforce

### Discount for early childhood workforce

**Did you know you can offer a discounted fee to some staff whose children attend your service?**

You can offer discounts to employees who:

- are employed, contracted or engaged as an educator, early childhood teacher or cook
- are working at a Centre Based Day Care or OSHC service, and
- have a child enrolled in a service where they work or that you own.

It's up to you how much you want to discount. The employee must still pay at least 5% of the gap fee.

The discount won't affect the employee's CCS entitlement.

Learn more and see an example about the [child care discount for the early childhood workforce](#) on our website.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### The enrolment process in 4 steps

**You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS payments.**

There are 4 steps in the enrolment process.

**Step 1:** The family must first lodge a CCS claim via their [Centrelink online account](#). Families should do this before their child starts at your service.

**Step 2:** The provider and the family then agree on care arrangements for the child. Families must agree to the care arrangements in writing. They can do this electronically or in hard copy. Care arrangements can cover more than one child attending the same service.

**Step 3:** Once the care arrangement has been established, the provider submits an enrolment notice in the [Child Care Subsidy System](#) (CCSS). You must submit an enrolment notice for each child covered by the arrangement. You must do this within 7 days after the end of the week in which you made the agreement.

**Step 4:** Once you've submitted an enrolment notice, the family will be prompted to confirm the enrolment via their [Centrelink online account](#). CCS payments will not start until the enrolment is confirmed.

Find out more about the enrolment process at [enrolling children](#).



## Working with children check obligations

**Did you know you may get an infringement notice if you don't comply with your working with children check (WWCC) obligations?**

An infringement notice is a fine and can be expensive.

We have detailed information about [your WWCC obligations](#) on our website. Make sure you're familiar with your obligations to avoid compliance action.

We also have information about [what to do if you get an infringement notice](#)

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### **Get Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for school holiday care**

CCS can help with the cost of child care, before and after school care and holiday care.

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

#### **Check your family details are up to date**

Your family details need to be up to date so you get the right amount of CCS and Family Tax Benefit.

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



## NSW floods: CCS period of emergency declared

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

The CCS period of emergency applies from 5 April to 16 April 2024 in the following local government areas:

- Blue Mountains City Council
- Camden Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- The Council of the Municipality of Kiama
- Liverpool City Council
- Penrith City Council
- Shellharbour City Council
- Shoalhaven City Council
- Sutherland Shire Council
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council
- Wingecarribee Shire Council
- Wollondilly Shire Council
- Wollongong Shire Council

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

### Support during the emergency

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

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

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

### Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after an emergency](#).



## Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [Emergency | NSW Government](#).

## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the PEP or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [Emergency | NSW Government](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Have you registered for the National Workforce Census?

**The 2024 National Workforce Census (NWC) is taking place soon. Register now if you haven't already.**

The Social Research Centre has emailed you with login details so you can register for the census.

You need to register before 5 May 2024 if you operate a:

- Centre Based Day Care
- In Home Care
- Family Day Care
- Before and After School Care services
- Preschool or Kindergarten.

Vacation care services need to register before:

- Sunday 7 April 2024 for Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory
- Sunday 14 April 2024 for Tasmania, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.

If you require help or have questions, call 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au)

Further information and regular updates on the NWC are available on the [Social Research Centre website](#).

### Got a question about CCS?

**Our website has everything you need to know about [Child Care Subsidy \(CCS\)](#). You'll find most answers to your questions there!**

If you need specific help administering CCS, our CCS Provider Helpdesk is the best place to go.

The helpdesk is our frontline support centre for providers and services seeking answers. The helpdesk can answer questions about:

- CCS and ACCS payments
- enrolments
- session reports
- gap fees
- absences.

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

If your query relates to CCS, please include your CCS Provider/Service ID in your email.



## Talking with families about ACCS child wellbeing

**If you think a family is eligible for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) child wellbeing, it's important to have a conversation with them before applying on their behalf.**

You must have the family's informed consent before applying.

Engaging with vulnerable families can:

- prevent issues from escalating
- support families to be decision makers in the process
- provide families with an opportunity to explore the benefits of the child wellbeing subsidy
- ensure families are aware of support services and agencies.

Read our guidance on why, how and when to have the conversation with families at [talking with the family](#).

## Spotlight on the sector

### StartingBlocks.gov.au has a new look

[StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) is still the one place where families can find and compare early childhood education and care (ECEC) services.

On the new look website, it is now easier for families to:

- find local services
- view fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- compare services side-by-side
- get information and advice about education, children's development and parenting.

The website also has new transparency features, including:

- historical fee information for services
- financial information about some large providers.

This information helps:

- improve the transparency of ECEC costs
- increase the amount of information available to families when choosing a service.

Check out the new and improved [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) today.

## Understanding your obligations to support children with disability

**Did you know you can access a suite of resources to help understand your obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)?**

Meeting your obligations under the DDA supports children with disability and their families to access and participate in ECEC in the same way as other children.





All ECEC services must comply with the DDA.

The resources are available on [ACECQA's website](#).

Find more details on the [DDA and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 website](#)

## Supporting the workforce

### Join our practicum exchange network

**We're building an online community to help early childhood teachers (ECTs) in training and services arrange practicum exchange opportunities.**

Practicums help ECTs in training gain practical, work-place experience in an early childhood educational setting.

Practicums:

- are mandatory to become a qualified ECT
- must be partly completed outside of an educator's primary ECEC service.

Practicum exchanges can foster:

- diverse experience and knowledge
- networking and support opportunities
- skill and knowledge transfer.

From July 2024 a dedicated website will:

- allow ECTs in training and services to submit expressions of interest
- allow ECTs in training and services to connect with each other
- provide information and case studies detailing how exchanges could work.

You can now [register to join the network](#) when it launches.

We will send more details to those who register closer to the date.

Find out more about the [practicum exchange network](#) on our website.

### Free mental health initiative

**Be You is the national mental health and wellbeing initiative for ECEC services and schools.**

Be You equips educators with knowledge and resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people from birth to 18 years.

Be You is a free mental health initiative that offers:

- accredited professional learning
- online sessions and events
- fact sheets
- evidence-informed resources.



These resources can support educators to meet national, state and territory requirements relating to mental health and wellbeing.

Individual registration is open to educators who:

- work in early learning services
- are in pre-service or training.

You can also register your service as a Be You learning community and access resources, online events and a network of consultants at no cost.

Find out more on the [Be You website](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Avoiding an overpayment

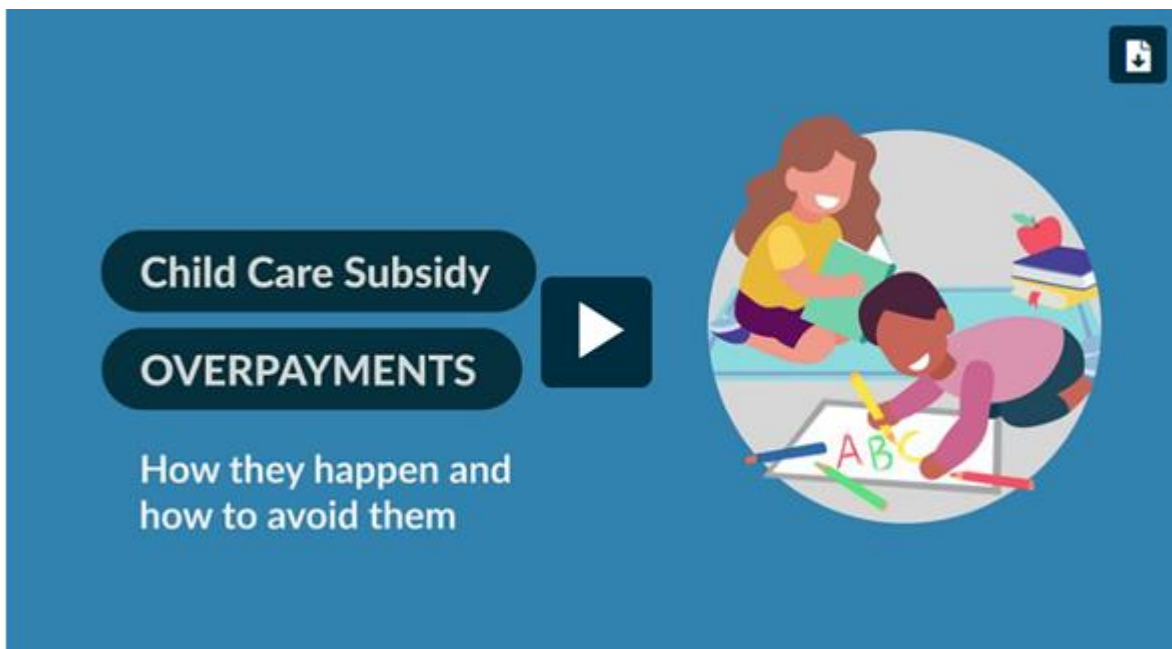
**Sometimes you may receive more CCS than you're entitled to. This is known as an overpayment.**

Overpayments generally occur if you withdraw or change a session report, such as amending to record fewer hours of care.

If this happens, we'll use a portion of your future CCS payments to pay back the difference. This is called offsetting. You can see if offsetting has occurred in your payment advice in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

The best way to avoid an overpayment is to submit accurate and timely session reports.

Find out more about [overpayments](#) and [session reports](#) on our website.



### Who is a person with management or control?

**Do you know who is considered a person with management or control (PMC) at your organisation? Make sure to identify all PMCs and keep their details up to date in the CCSS.**

PMCs take part in the decision-making or management of the provider. They:



- are a member of the group that makes executive or legal decisions on behalf of the provider
- have authority, responsibility, or significant influence over planning, directing or controlling the provider
- are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the provider
- are in charge of the day-to-day operations of a service.

Broadly, PMCs can be:

- executive officers
- board members
- company office holders
- partners in a partnership
- members of the body corporate
- partners or members of the organisation's governing body
- service directors
- service managers
- authorised supervisors
- people from external management agencies
- people in management positions
- anyone listed as a 'responsible person' on behalf of a registered charity.

Any person who performs these roles for a provider is automatically considered a PMC. You cannot choose to omit someone as a PMC if they perform these roles.

Read more about [PMCs](#) and check this table for [PMCs in different organisation types](#).

Check you have identified all PMCs in the [CCSS](#) and make sure their details are up to date.

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

Check and confirm your child's enrolment details

We can only pay your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) if your child's enrolment is current.

Read more on how to check and confirm your child's enrolment details for CCS on the [Services Australia website](#).



## From the department

### Latest Child Care Subsidy data now available

**We've published data about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) in the December quarter 2023.**

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

Key findings from the December quarter 2023 include:

- 1,419,380 children from 998,760 families used CCS-approved care
- 14,584 CCS-approved services operated during the quarter
- on average, children attended 27 hours of care per week
- the average hourly fee was \$12.35
- the Australian Government paid \$3.54 billion in subsidies.

Go to the [December quarter 2023 report](#).

### Do you operate a vacation care service?

**Time is running out for vacation care services to register for the National Workforce Census (NWC).**

Registration for vacation care services close:

- Sunday 7 April 2024 for Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory.
- Sunday 17 April 2024 for Tasmania, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.

The Social Research Centre has emailed you login details to register for the NWC.

**Contact information correction:**

We're sorry! Last week we gave you the wrong number to call. Please phone 1800 800 996 to reach the NWC helpline. You can also send an email to [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au).

Further updates and information are on the [Social Research Centre website](#).

### Understand your fit and proper person obligations for reporting

**Providers, persons with management and control (PMC), and persons responsible at the service must be considered 'fit and proper' to handle public money.**

Family Assistance Law (FAL) sets out the criteria to determine if a person is fit and proper.

Examples of matters that may be considered include:

- evidence of law-breaking
- court proceedings and convictions or findings of guilt
- past administrative decisions relating to a person's suitability to be involved in child care



- evidence of fraud or dishonesty, and more.

You can learn more through our short course, **Fit and proper person requirements**.

Geccko is our online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector.

You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about FAL
- download course certificates upon completion.

[Find out more and register for Geccko.](#)

## CCS Provider Helpdesk closed for Easter

**The CCS Provider Helpdesk will be closed on Friday 29 March and Monday 1 April for the holiday period.**

The helpdesk will reopen at 9 am AEDT next Tuesday 2 April.

You can contact the helpdesk anytime [by email](#) and we will respond during business hours.

## Spotlight on the sector

### NQA IT system upgrade from 5 pm AEDT Thursday

**The system upgrade is scheduled for the Easter long weekend.**

This means that the system will be unavailable for CCS approval applications from **5 pm AEDT on Thursday 28 March 2024** until **8 am AEDT Tuesday 2 April**.

**IMPORTANT:** Draft CCS approval applications must be submitted before **5 pm AEDT on Thursday 28 March**. If you do not submit your draft application by then, you will need to start a new CCS application in the upgraded system.

You don't need to do anything if you have already submitted a CCS approval application. We will assess your application as soon as possible.

Users will need to complete a new application and use new log in procedures from Tuesday.

A range of guidance materials and help articles are available at the [NQA ITS Help Centre](#).

For more information, see ACECQA's [National Quality Agenda IT System](#).

## Supporting the workforce

### Support for early childhood teachers to complete their practicum

**You may be eligible for a subsidy to support your early childhood teachers to complete the practicum components of their degree.**

If eligible, you can use the subsidy to give educators paid leave while undertaking their practicum. We'll pay you \$1,120.04 per week per staff member for eligible practicums.



Initially, the subsidy prioritises:

- services and staff in regional, remote and very remote locations
- First Nations services and educators.

We have sent invitations to eligible providers. If you can't find the email, try searching for "DocuSign".

If you believe your service is eligible but you have not received an invitation, send an email to [ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au).

Find out more about the [paid practicum subsidy](#) on our website.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Financial reporting deadline for some large providers is next week

**Large providers must report financial information, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements, to the department.**

The statutory deadline for large providers who report on the calendar year is normally 1 April. As this is a public holiday in 2024, large providers can lodge by 2 April.

Complete the [2022–23 Large Provider Financial Input Report](#) and email it to [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au) by 2 April.

Please include financial statements and information as outlined in the important information tab.

If you report on a financial year your deadline will fall on 1 October 2024. We'll provide more information about what you need to do closer to the deadline.

This obligation only applies to providers who operate, share operation of, or plan to operate 25 or more services. If you're not sure whether these obligations apply to you, please email [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au).

Learn more about the [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#) on our website.

### What happens if you get an infringement notice?

**We issue infringement notices to providers that don't follow the rules under Family Assistance Law (FAL). Providers must make sure that they, their employees and educators follow the rules.**

An infringement is a fine and can be expensive. Some infringement notices are more than \$15,000. We send infringements by email and by post. Emails will come from [ccinfringements@education.gov.au](mailto:ccinfringements@education.gov.au). Please add this address to your safe list and check your mail often.

Infringements are issued for a range of reasons. Some examples include:

- not correctly reporting your fee information
- not meeting reporting requirements, like keeping contact details or details of persons with management or control up to date
- not submitting session reports on time.

See the [full list of FAL civil penalty provisions for which we can issue an infringement notice](#).



Our website has a range of resources to help you avoid an infringement notice, including:

- a free online learning module on Geccko, [our online learning platform](#)
- information about [your obligations](#)
- a [comprehensive table of reporting obligations, tasks and timeframes](#)
- a [series of short videos](#) covering common compliance issues
- [handbooks, guides and task cards](#) on key programs.

## Limited exceptions to electronic payment of gap fees

**Families using early childhood education and care must pay the gap fee electronically. Providers must take all reasonable steps to collect gap fees electronically.**

Exceptions are available in the following limited circumstances:

- for individuals at risk of family or domestic violence
- for services experiencing exceptional circumstances.

In both cases, you must apply on behalf of the individual or service seeking exception.

An individual may be eligible for an exception if paying the gap fee using EFT might put them or their child at risk of family or domestic violence. You must apply on behalf of the individual seeking exception and give supporting evidence.

Read more [about exceptions](#) on our website.

Complete the **Electronic payment of gap fees** course in [Geccko](#) to learn more.

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

Your child needs to be immunised to get a family payment

If your child doesn't meet their immunisation requirements, your Family Tax Benefit (FTB) may reduce, or Child Care Subsidy (CCS) may stop.

Find out more on the [Services Australia website](#)



## From the department

### Register for the National Workforce Census

It's time to register for the 2024 early childhood education and care (ECEC) National Workforce Census.

Look out for an email from the Social Research Centre. It contains important information about the census and how to register.

The National Workforce Census helps us develop and measure policies and programs for the sector.

The census is:

- mandatory for all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers under Family Assistance Law
- the only large-scale collection of ECEC services that includes preschools and kindergartens.

We strongly encourage preschools and kindergartens to take part to ensure we get an accurate picture of the sector.

If you haven't heard from the Social Research Centre, check your junk/spam folder. If you still can't find the email, call 1800 800 996 or email [nwc@srcentre.com.au](mailto:nwc@srcentre.com.au)

Further information and regular updates on the National Workforce Census are available on the Social Research Centre website.

### CCS period of emergency in the Northern Territory

**A CCS period of emergency is in place in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of Severe Tropical Cyclone Megan.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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

## Spotlight on the sector

### NQA IT system upgrade: dates confirmed

**Important notice regarding the National Quality Agenda (NQA) IT system upgrade.**

Providers use the NQA IT system to apply for CCS approval.

The system upgrade is scheduled for the Easter long weekend.

This means that the system will be unavailable from **5 pm AEDT on Thursday 28 March 2024 until 8 am AEDT Tuesday 2 April.**

Users will need to use a new log in procedure from Tuesday 2 April.





Users will receive email advice about the steps required, before the upgrade.

For more information, see [ACECQA's website](#).

## It's Harmony Week!

**Harmony Week is the celebration that recognises our diversity and brings together Australians from all different backgrounds.**

It's about inclusiveness, respect, and a sense of belonging for everyone.

The 2024 theme is '**Everyone belongs**'.

You can:

- wear orange to show your support
- find out what's happening near you
- register an event at your service
- find resources on the [Harmony Week website](#)

## Supporting the workforce

### Join our practicum exchange network

**We're building an online community to help early childhood teachers (ECTs) in training and services arrange practicum exchange opportunities.**

Practicums help ECTs in training gain practical, work-place experience in an early childhood educational setting.

Practicums:

- are mandatory to become a qualified ECT
- must be partly completed outside of an educator's primary ECEC service.

Practicum exchanges can foster:

- diverse experience and knowledge
- networking and support opportunities
- skill and knowledge transfer.

From July 2024 a dedicated website will:

- allow ECTs in training and services to submit expressions of interest
- allow ECTs in training and services to connect with each other
- provide information and case studies detailing how exchanges could work.

You can now [register to join the network](#) when it launches.

We will send more details to those who register closer to the launch.

Find out more about the [practicum exchange network](#) on our website.



# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Need a refresher on submitting session reports?

**Remember to submit accurate session reports on time – it's the law.**

You must:

- submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided
- submit a session report for each child at your service, for each week a session of care is provided
- include at least one session of care a week, recorded as either an attendance or absence
- only include sessions of care for which you charge a family a fee for providing care to their child.

Submit session reports through the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software.

Learn more about [session reports](#) on our website.

## Financial reporting obligations for large providers

**Don't forget – new financial reporting obligations for large providers who report on the calendar year is approaching.**

Large providers must report financial information to the department each year, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements.

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

The information you must report depends on your circumstances.

The reporting deadline depends on when you do your financial reporting:

- if you do your financial reporting on a calendar year, your deadline will occur on 1 April each year
- if you do your financial reporting on a financial year, your deadline will occur on 1 October each year.

2023 calendar year reporters must submit a completed report to [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au) by 2 April 2024, due to the public holiday on 1 April 2024.

Please make sure that you include financial statements and the information that is required in the important information tab.

Learn more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).

## Do you know the rules around advertising and inducements?

**ECEC providers may not offer certain types of inducements. An inducement is an incentive offered by a provider to secure a child's enrolment.**

You may not offer inducements such as cash, electronics or gift vouchers.

What you may offer families includes:

- discounted or free care



- free site visits or trial periods
- transport to or from your service, if this is part of your normal business practice.

You can also issue marketing merchandise to the value of \$30 per complying written arrangement. You can also include extra-curricular activities as part of a session fee.

You must ensure the correct billing practices are used and fee discounts are reported correctly if CCS is claimed.

If you have questions, contact the CCS Provider Helpdesk by email: [ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au).

Find out more about [inducement and advertising at your service](#).

## Share with families

### Do you have more than one child in care?

**If you have more than one child aged 5 or under in care, you may get a higher Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for your second child and younger children.**

You can get a higher subsidy for one or more of your children if all of these apply:

- you get or will be eligible for CCS
- your family's combined income is under \$362,408
- your family has more than one CCS eligible child aged 5 or under.

Services Australia will automatically work out if you're eligible. If you are, they'll automatically apply a higher subsidy to any eligible children in your family.

If your Centrelink online account is linked to myGov, you can check your CCS percentage online.

Find out more about how your number of children in care can affect your CCS on the [Services Australia website](#).



## NT cyclone: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of the Northern Territory due to the impact of Severe Tropical Cyclone Megan.

The CCS period of emergency applies from Sunday 17 March to Tuesday 26 March 2024 in the following local government areas:

- East Arnhem Regional Council
- Roper Gulf Regional Council.

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

### Support during the emergency

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

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

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

### Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after an emergency](#)

### Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

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

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

### For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).



- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.

Keep an eye on [nt.gov.au/emergency/cyclones](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Increase your knowledge of the laws

**We have developed a short course on Family Assistance Law (FAL) and National Law. This is available on Geckko.**

Get early childhood compliance knowledge online, or Geckko, is our online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector.

Our course on FAL and National Law explains the state and federal roles in administering early childhood education and care.

The course will help you:

- develop your knowledge of FAL and the National Law
- identify the similarities and differences between FAL and the National Law in obtaining and maintaining provider approval
- understand the consequences of non-compliance, and more.

Through Geckko, you can:

- complete this course at your own pace
- download course certificates upon completion
- access other resources, like videos and tip sheets.

[Find out more and register for Geckko.](#)

### Information for prospective providers

**Know anyone thinking about becoming an approved early childhood education and care provider? Share our top tips about the approval process.**

#### Understand the two approval types

You need approval to operate a service from your state and territory government. You also need approval to administer Child Care Subsidy (CCS) from the Australian Government.

#### Apply for both approvals at the same time

You do not need to wait for approval from your state or territory government to submit your CCS application. Both applications can be assessed at the same time. Approval will be granted separately.

#### Apply as early as possible

CCS approval is not automatic. We have a rigorous assessment process to ensure early childhood education and care is delivered correctly, by responsible and law-abiding people.



## Include all the mandatory information

We cannot assess incomplete applications. If your CCS application is incomplete or inconsistent, we'll ask for more information before we begin our assessment.

## Do not assume CCS approval will be granted

It's up to you whether to operate before you know the outcome of your CCS application. We outline the business and financial risks if you choose to operate before you're approved on [our website](#).

## Complete e-learning

ACECQA has [e-learning about the approval process](#) to ensure you have a good understanding of what is required before you apply.

## Read the information on our website

We have [step-by-step guidance on the process](#). We recommend all prospective providers read this information carefully.

# Spotlight on the sector

## Nominations open for Early STEM Education Awards

**Nominations are now open for the Little Scientists Early STEM Education Awards.**

The [Little Scientists Early STEM Education Awards](#) are Australia's only dedicated awards to celebrate STEM excellence in early childhood education and care.

The awards recognise educators and services driving STEM education for children 0 to 7 years across Australia.

You can nominate across 2 categories:

- the **excellence in Early STEM Education Award** recognises early learning services and early primary classrooms
- the **outstanding Early STEM Education Leader Award** recognises early childhood educators and early primary teachers.

The 2024 theme is **overcoming gender bias in early STEM education**.

You will need to demonstrate how you're promoting gender inclusivity and overcoming gender stereotypes that hold young girls back in STEM education.

Nominations close on 31 May. Each category will have 1 overall national winner and 8 state and territory winners. Winners will be announced in August.

Every eligible nominee will receive a prize. Prizes will also be awarded to each state and territory winner and to the national winner.

Learn more on the [Little Scientists website](#).



# Supporting the workforce

## Get help finding staff

**Did you know we have a range of programs and initiatives to help you attract, recruit and retain staff?**

We have programs to:

- help existing staff get professional development opportunities
- help you identify and prepare job seekers to fill entry level roles
- help you find job seekers in your region
- get wage support for apprentices and trainees.

[Explore our initiatives to help you find staff.](#)

# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Avoid common enrolment mistakes

**You must enrol children correctly so families can get Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Avoid common mistakes when enrolling children.**

### Families should make a CCS claim first

Families should [lodge a CCS claim](#) before their child starts at your service.

If a child starts at your service before the family has lodged a claim, or while their claim is being assessed, you must charge full fees. If the family is assessed as eligible, any backdated CCS will be paid directly to the family.

### Use the correct enrolment type

Except in very limited circumstances, children must be enrolled under a Complying Written Arrangement to get CCS payments.

### Identify the person who made the CCS claim

Enrolment notices must identify the person who made the CCS claim. If you don't identify this person, Services Australia cannot make CCS payments.

### Families must confirm the enrolment

Once you've submitted an enrolment, the family must confirm the details via their [Centrelink online account](#). Services Australia cannot make CCS payments until the enrolment is confirmed.

Read more about [enrolling children](#).

## Check your educators meet working with children check requirements

**Did you know you may be liable for a debt if your educators don't meet the working with children check (WWCC) requirements?**





A session of care is not eligible for CCS if the educator that provided the care does not hold a current WWCC.

For Family Day Care and In Home Care, sessions of care are only eligible for CCS if you have **also** reported the educator's WWCC in the Child Care Subsidy System.

If an educator does not have a current WWCC, or if you fail to report the check when required, any sessions of care provided by the educator will not be eligible for CCS.

We may raise a CCS debt with the provider in this circumstance.

Find out more about [your WWCC obligations](#).



## From the department

### CCCF round 4 grant applications close on Friday

**Applications for the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant will close this Friday 8 March 2024 at 9 pm AEDT.**

The disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant helps services stay open and increase the number of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC). This is the grant's fourth round.

The grant is part of the CCCF. CCCF helps services address barriers to ECEC participation.

If you think you may be eligible, we encourage you to review the requirements and apply before the deadline.

We can't extend the application period or accept late applications.

Check your eligibility, find grant guidelines, and apply on [GrantConnect](#). You will need to register on GrantConnect to access relevant grant documentation.

Learn more about the [CCCF grant](#) on our website.

### Free business support for CCCF services

**Do you get a CCCF grant? If so, you may be eligible for free business support.**

CCCF business support is a free business review and advice service. It's available to eligible CCCF grant recipients.

Support is delivered through business advisors who work with you to help identify ways to improve your service's financial viability and sustainability.

To apply, fill out the [CCCF business support online application form](#).

You can apply for business support anytime until 30 June 2024.

Learn more about [CCCF business support](#) on our website.

### CCS Provider Helpdesk closed on Monday

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed for a public holiday on Monday 11 March.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 12 March.

You can contact the Provider Helpdesk anytime [by email](#) and we will respond during business hours.

### CCS period of emergency in Victoria

**A CCS period of emergency was in place on Wednesday 28 February 2024 in parts of Victoria where some services were directed to close due to fire risk.**

Visit our website to see:

- [regions and timeframes where the period of emergency applies](#)



- [details of support available during and after a period of emergency.](#)

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

## Spotlight on the sector

### Join our online community

**Our Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services now has over 8,000 members.**

Our group is a space to get information and ask questions about:

- administering CCS
- complying with Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [join the group](#).

### NQA IT system upgrade coming soon

**The National Quality Agenda (NQA) IT system will be upgraded in early 2024.**

Providers use the NQA IT system to apply for CCS approval. It will be closed to CCS applications for a short period during the upgrade.

After the upgrade, the system will:

- have a new modern look and feel
- provide better security through two factor authentication.

Comprehensive instructions will be provided by ACECQA to help you log into the system following the upgrade.

For more information about the upgrade, including things you need to do now, see ACECQA's [NQA IT System](#).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Claiming CCS when your service is closed

A reminder that you cannot claim CCS when your service is closed, except:

- on a public holiday by law
- during a period of emergency.

[Learn more about claiming CCS.](#)



## Identifying PMCs at your organisation

**Providers have specific legal obligations under FAL. These obligations are imposed upon certain people at your organisation known as persons with management or control (PMCs).**

PMCs take part in the decision-making or management of the provider. They:

- are a member of the group that makes executive or legal decisions on behalf of the provider
- have authority, responsibility, or significant influence over planning, directing or controlling the provider
- are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the provider
- are in charge of the day-to-day operations of a service.

You must identify all PMCs and keep their details up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System.

You must notify us when a PMC:

- joins your organisation
- leaves your organisation
- changes their name or contact details
- has changes to their working with children check.

If PMC details are not up to date:

- we cannot communicate essential information to you
- families may not get their CCS payments
- we may issue an infringement.

Visit our website to see [who is considered a PMC at your organisation](#) and ensure their details are up to date in the [Child Care Subsidy System](#)

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

Keep up to date with the latest news

- [Services Australia News](#)
- [Family Update Facebook page](#).



## Victorian fires: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Victoria where some services have been directed to close due to fire risk.

The CCS period of emergency applies for 28 February 2024 in the following local government areas:

- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council
- West Wimmera Shire Council
- Yarriambiack Shire Council.

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

### Support during the emergency

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

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

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

### Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after an emergency](#).

### Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [VicEmergency](#).



## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [VicEmergency](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Apply for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant

**Time is running out to apply for the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant.**

This grant provides funding to help early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities:

- stay open
- increase the number of children in care.

The grant has two funding activities:

- sustainability support grants help improve the service's sustainability and viability
- capital support grants help improve existing ECEC facilities.

Since 2018, the Australian Government has provided over \$208 million to around 1,060 services under the grant. This is the grant's fourth round.

**Don't miss out – applications are closing soon.** You must apply by 8 March 2024. We can't extend the application period or accept late applications.

Check your eligibility, find grant guidelines, and apply on [GrantConnect](#).

Learn more about the [CCCF grant](#) on our website.

### ACER to lead development of Preschool Outcomes Measure

**We are pleased to announce that the [Australian Council for Educational Research \(ACER\)](#), in partnership with Goodstart and Ninti One, has been selected to lead the development of the Preschool Outcomes Measure.**

Nous Group has been contracted to undertake an independent evaluation of the development and trial of the Preschool Outcomes Measure.

Visit [our website](#) for more information on:

- how the measure will work
- who will use it
- how children will benefit.

## Spotlight on the sector

### Check out our case studies

**Did you know we have case studies about successful ECEC initiatives?**



Read about:

- how Jenny's Early Learning Centres in Bendigo employs trainees and supports them to become qualified
- a pre-traineeship program in Tasmania giving educators a taste of life in ECEC
- a leadership program inspiring educators across Australia
- how Ngroo Education Aboriginal Corporation is leading change through Connected Beginnings.

Read these [case studies](#) on our website.

## Supporting the workforce

### Child care discount for early childhood workforce

**Did you know you can offer a discounted fee to some staff whose children attend your service?**

You can offer discounts to employees who:

- are employed, contracted or engaged as an educator, early childhood teacher or cook
- are working at a Centre Based Day Care or Outside School Hours Care service, and
- have a child enrolled at a service where they work or that you own.

It's up to you how much you want to discount, but the employee must still pay at least 5% of the gap fee.

The discount won't affect the employee's CCS entitlement.

Learn more about the [child care discount for the early childhood workforce](#) on our website.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Financial reporting obligations for large providers

**Don't forget – new financial reporting obligations for large providers who report on the calendar year is approaching.**

Large providers must report financial information to the department each year, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements.

A large provider is one that operates, or shares operation of, 25 or more services.

The information you must report depends on your circumstances.

The reporting deadline depends on when you do your financial reporting:

- if you do your financial reporting on a calendar year, your deadline will occur on 1 April each year
- if you do your financial reporting on a financial year, your deadline will occur on 1 October each year.

2023 calendar year reporters must submit a completed [report](#) to [ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECFinancialViability@education.gov.au) by 1 April 2024.





Please make sure that you include financial statements and the information that is required in the important information tab.

Learn more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#).

## Salary sacrificing early childhood education and care fees

**Do you have families who pay through salary sacrifice? Make sure you're reporting their fees correctly to avoid compliance action.**

Salary sacrificing is considered a third-party payment. There are rules you must follow when a third party contributes to a family's fees.

Generally, when a third party helps a family pay its fees, you must deduct the contribution from the total session fee.

The family's CCS rate will then be applied to the reduced session fee. This is because families are only entitled to CCS in relation to the amount they have to pay after any third-party payments.

The family must still pay a gap fee.

We have [examples on our website](#) to help you understand how to report different types of third-party payments. We have published a new example about salary sacrificing.

Reporting the correct fee information is a requirement under Family Assistance Law. We may take compliance action if you fail to meet your obligations.

Read more about third-party payments [on our website](#).

## Share with families

### Find child care

**Did you know [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) is the one place where you can find and compare early childhood education and care services?**

On [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#), you can:

- find local services and view vacancies, costs, quality ratings and inclusions
- compare services side-by-side
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- get information and advice about education, children's development, and parenting.

Visit [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to start searching.



## From the department

### Closing the Gap annual report and implementation plan

The Australian Government has released the Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2023 annual report and 2024 implementation plan.

The report:

- assesses progress against Closing the Gap targets over 2023
- outlines strategic priorities to improve Closing the Gap targets over 2024.

Closing the Gap targets 3 and 4 aim to ensure children:

- engage in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education
- thrive in their early years.

Key achievements from 2023 included:

- strengthened engagement with SNAICC through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership
- changes to the activity test for First Nations families.

Key actions that we're focusing on in 2024 include:

- developing a formal partnership agreement between the Commonwealth and SNAICC
- continuing the work of the [Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership](#)
- expanding [Connected Beginnings to 50 sites by 2024–25](#)
- finalising the [Early Years Strategy in early 2024](#)
- developing the [Preschool Outcomes Measure for trial in 2025](#)
- driving [improved participation in preschool](#) in the year before full-time schooling.

The report also recognises Connected Beginnings as a case study of progress against Priority Reform 4.

Connected Beginnings is a grants program that helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life. The program supports self-determination through community level Data Dashboards. The dashboards give communities access to accurate, current and meaningful data about children's and families' health and early childhood services.

Read the [Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2023 annual report and 2024 implementation plan](#).

See how we're working to [close the gap in early childhood education and care](#).

### Trial site in Nowra to help First Nations children prepare for school

The Australian Government is supporting a trial of an intensive early childhood education and care model, with a dedicated First Nations site opening today in Nowra, NSW.



The model is designed to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children bridge the gap to school readiness for children from birth up to 3 years.

The trial will benefit up to 200 children across 4 sites.

Among 4 sites selected for the trial, the dedicated First Nations site, Boori Milumba, officially opened today. Boori Milumba is located at Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre on Wadi Wadi Wandandian country in Nowra, New South Wales.

Cullunghutti is an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation. Cullunghutti provides culturally safe services for children and families in the Shoalhaven community.

To ensure it is culturally safe, SNAICC – the National Voice for our Children, is leading the co-development of the site, in partnership with local communities and First Nations leaders.

The Parkville Institute is leading the trial.

The trial builds on a research project by the University of Melbourne. The project found that targeted, intensive early childhood education and care (ECEC) can lead to extraordinary improvements in a child's cognitive skills, resilience and socio-emotional development.

The trial contributes to Closing the Gap Targets 3 and 4.

The Minister for Early Childhood Education, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, attended the launch today.

[Read the Minister's media release.](#)

[Learn more about an intensive early childhood education and care model trial.](#)

## Apply for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant

**The disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant is open for applications.**

The disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant helps services stay open and increase the number of children in ECEC. This is the grant's fourth round.

The grant is part of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF). CCCF helps services address barriers to ECEC participation.

To be eligible, providers must:

- be Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved, and
- operate a service in an identified priority area, or
- located in, or servicing families in, a regional, remote or very remote area, or
- provide specialised care services to disadvantaged or vulnerable families, or
- currently receive CCCF funding under [round 1 or round 3](#).

**Applications are closing soon.** You must apply by 8 March 2024. We can't extend the application period or accept late applications.

Check your eligibility, find grant guidelines, and apply on [GrantConnect](#).

Learn more about the [CCCF grant](#) on our website.



# Spotlight on the sector

## Educator STEM workshop

**Join Little Scientists for an online workshop for early childhood educators and teachers.**

The workshop is about nurturing STEM dispositions in children aged 0 to 3 years. It will:

- introduce the concepts, methods, and skills of inquiry-based STEM education
- focus on nurturing STEM dispositions in infants and toddlers
- examine the role of STEM in exploratory play and more.

The workshop will take place online on 27 February. It will align with the Early Years Learning Framework 2.0.

We provide funding to the Little Scientists program. Little Scientists helps early childhood educators build their skills and confidence in introducing STEM ideas and concepts.

[Book tickets now to secure your place.](#)

# Supporting the workforce

## Support for early childhood teachers to complete their practicum

**You may be able to get a subsidy to support early childhood teachers to complete the practicum components of their degree.**

If you are eligible, you can use the subsidy to give educators paid leave while undertaking their practicum. We will pay a service \$1120.04 per week per staff member for eligible practicums.

Apply now for:

- practicums completed since 1 July last year.
- practicums that start this financial year and continue beyond 30 June 2024.

If your practicum starts after 1 July this year, don't apply now. We'll let you know when applications for next financial year open.

Initially, the subsidies will prioritise:

- services and staff in regional, remote and very remote locations
- First Nations services and educators.

We have sent invitations to eligible providers. If you can't find the email, try searching for "DocuSign". If you believe your service is eligible but you have not received an invitation, send an email to [ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au).

Learn more about the [paid practicum subsidy](#) on our website.

## Have your say on regional and remote workforce programs

**There is one week left to have your say on programs that support people in regional and remote areas to complete ECEC qualifications.**



We're reviewing programs and initiatives that support the enrolment and completion of ECEC qualifications in regional and remote areas.

You can contribute to the review by completing a [10-minute survey](#). The survey closes on 28 February 2024.

We encourage the following groups to complete the survey:

- ECEC teachers and educators in regional and remote areas
- current and prospective ECEC students in regional and remote areas
- organisations that support the ECEC workforce in regional and remote areas.

The review is a key action from [Shaping our Future, the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy](#).

We've engaged Scyne Advisory to undertake the review. If you have questions, please email [ecec\\_targeted\\_programs\\_review@scyne.com.au](mailto:ecec_targeted_programs_review@scyne.com.au).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Claiming CCS when your service is closed

A reminder that you cannot claim CCS when your service is closed, except:

- on a public holiday by law
- during a period of emergency.

See more about CCS payments during [service closures](#).

### Submitting session reports

**You must submit accurate and timely session reports – it's the law.**

Services Australia uses session reports to calculate and process CCS payments.

You must submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided.

Read more about [submitting session reports](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Are you eligible for more hours of subsidised care?

**Changes made to the CCS activity test have seen more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families get access to early learning.**

The Australian Government increased the CCS base hours to 36 hours of subsidised care each fortnight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Many families are already benefiting from this change, although some are missing out.

The changes mean that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- can get early childhood education and care

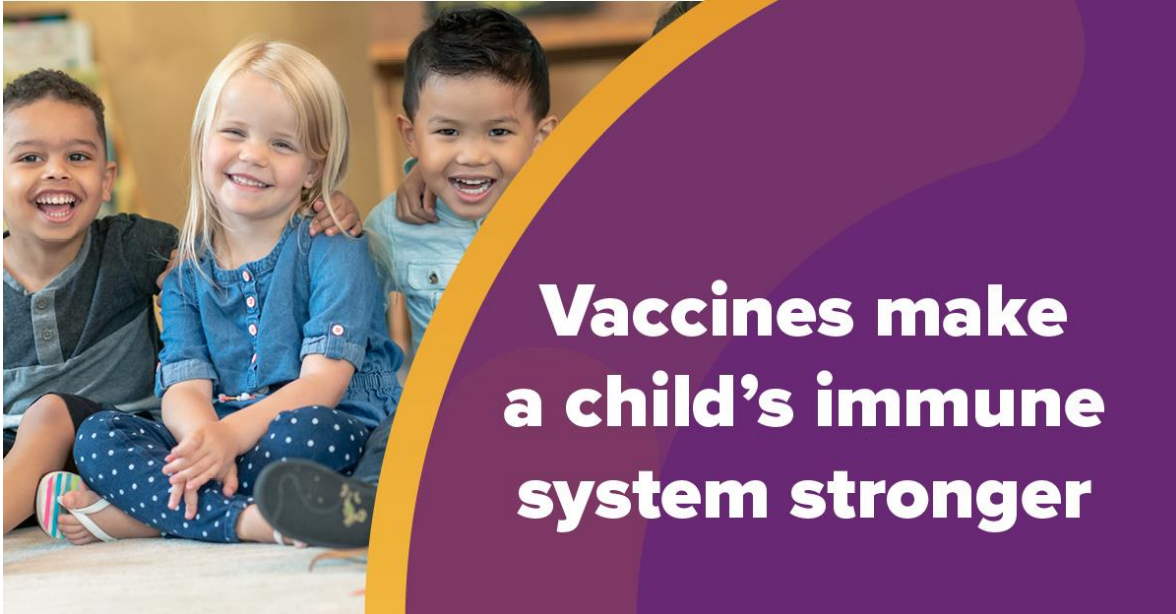


- are ready for big school.

We continue to base a family's CCS rate on their income. This means that some families may get more than 36 hours of CCS per fortnight. This won't change.

Families can find out more on the [Services Australia](#) website.

## Check your child's vaccination status



**The Department of Health and Aged Care is reminding parents and carers to check their child's vaccination status.**

The National Immunisation Program protects children from contagious diseases such as whooping cough, measles, and chickenpox.

- For the best protection, we are encouraging parents and carers to:
- vaccinate in line with the [childhood immunisation schedule](#)
- check their child's vaccination status [online](#)
- chat with a health professional to book any catch up vaccinations.

There are a range of resources available to help remind parents to vaccinate this year:

- [Childhood vaccinations consumer brochure](#)
- [National Immunisation Program childhood schedule fridge magnet card](#)
- [One more way you can keep them safe poster](#)
- [Questions about vaccination brochure](#)
- [Translated resources](#)

Children [must meet immunisation requirements](#) to get Child Care Subsidy



## From the department

### Grant for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities now open

**Applications are now open for the disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant.**

The disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant helps services stay open and increase the number of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC). This is the grant's fourth round.

The grant is part of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF). CCCF helps services address barriers to ECEC participation.

The grant has two funding activities:

- sustainability support grants help improve the service's sustainability and viability
- capital support grants help improve existing ECEC facilities.

To be eligible, providers must:

- be Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved, **and**
- operate a service in an identified priority area, **or**
- located in, or servicing families in, a regional, remote or very remote area, **or**
- provide specialised care services to disadvantaged or vulnerable families, **or**
- currently receive CCCF funding under [round 1 or round 3](#).

Applications will be open until 8 March. We encourage you to review the requirements for applying as soon as possible. We can't extend the application period or accept late applications.

Check your eligibility, find grant guidelines, and apply on [GrantConnect](#).

Since 2018, the Australian Government has provided over \$208 million to around 1,060 services under the CCCF disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant.

Learn more about the [CCCF grant](#) on our website.

### CCS period of emergency in Victoria

**A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency was in place yesterday in parts of Victoria where some services were directed to close due to fire risk.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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



## Spotlight on the sector

### More services meeting National Quality Standard

**For the second quarter in a row, the National Quality Framework (NQF) snapshot shows 90% of services are rated as Meeting National Quality Standards (NQS) or above.**

The fourth quarter 2023 snapshot shows an improvement from 89% for the same quarter last year.

The number of services with a quality rating increased by 2% from Q4 2022.

The number of approved services increased 2% from Q4 2022.

The quarterly snapshots, released by ACECQA, provide an overview of the sector, including the progress and results of quality assessment and ratings.

Read the [latest NQF snapshot](#) on ACECQA's website.

## Supporting the workforce

### Have your say on regional and remote workforce programs

**We're reviewing programs that support people in regional and remote areas to enrol in and complete early childhood education and care qualifications.**

The review is a key action from [Shaping our Future, the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy](#).

You can contribute to the review by completing a [10-minute survey](#). The survey closes on 28 February 2024.

We encourage the following groups to complete the survey:

- ECEC teachers and educators in regional and remote areas
- current and prospective ECEC students in regional and remote areas
- organisations that support the ECEC workforce in regional and remote areas.

We've engaged Scyne Advisory to undertake the review. If you have questions, please email [ecec\\_targeted\\_programs\\_review@scyne.com.au](mailto:ecec_targeted_programs_review@scyne.com.au).

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Did you know you must keep records of all working with children checks?

**You must keep records of working with children checks (WWCCs) for any person required to have one.**

You must be able to provide these records to us if we ask you for it.

Find out more about [your WWCC obligations](#).

### Need a refresher on enrolments?

**You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS payments.**





Services Australia can only pay CCS if:

- the enrolment notice correctly identifies the person who made the CCS claim, and
- the family has confirmed the enrolment.

We have detailed information about [the enrolment process](#) on our website.

## News for families

### The latest updates from Services Australia

#### Check the progress of your families payment claim online

You can check the progress of your Family Tax Benefit (FTB) or Child Care Subsidy (CCS) claim online.

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

#### It's time to update your family and child care details

Make sure your details are up to date so you get the right amount of CCS and FTB.

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



## Victorian fires: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Victoria where some services have been directed to close due to fire risk.

The CCS period of emergency applies for 13 February 2024 in the following local government areas:

- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- West Wimmera Shire Council
- Yarriambiack Shire Council.

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

### Support during the emergency

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

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

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

### Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after an emergency](#).

### Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [VicEmergency](#).



## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the PEP or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [VicEmergency](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Join our online community

#### Did you know we run a Facebook group for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved providers and services?

Our group is a place to get information about CCS and the legislation that underpins it, known as Family Assistance Law (FAL). We also connect you with other Australian Government-led early childhood education and care policies and programs.

We welcome general questions about CCS and FAL in our group.

Questions that contain personal information about a child or family are best directed to the Child Care Subsidy Provider Helpdesk. Call 1300 667 276 during business hours, Monday to Friday or send an email to [CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au) anytime.

Questions relating to the National Quality Framework are best directed to your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).

If you operate or work at a CCS approved provider or service, we'd love you to [join our group](#).

You should encourage your families to follow [Services Australia's Family Update Facebook page](#).

### CCCF grant round opening soon

**A new Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant round will open soon.**

This CCCF grant provides funding to eligible services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities to:

- stay open
- increase the number of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

To be eligible for the next grant round, providers must:

- be CCS approved, and operate a service in an identified priority area, or
- be located in, or servicing families in, a regional, remote or very remote area, or
- provide specialised care services to disadvantaged or vulnerable families, or
- currently receive CCCF funding under [round 1 or round 3](#).

More information, including the application process, will be published on [GrantConnect](#) soon.

Make sure you get [our newsletter](#) and join our [Facebook Group](#) to find out when the grant opens.

Learn more about the [CCCF disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant](#) on our website.

### Consultation on the draft national vision

**We would like to thank everyone who provided feedback on the draft national vision for ECEC. Your feedback was invaluable and helped us to improve and refine the vision.**



We conducted consultations on the draft vision throughout 2023, including:

- online surveys
- public submissions
- virtual workshops
- one-on-one consultations
- targeted consultation with First Nations stakeholders.

We heard from a diverse range of voices, including:

- ECEC services
- educators
- peak bodies
- researchers
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- families.

The consultation findings showed broad support for the draft vision. It also highlighted areas for improvement, such as ensuring the vision:

- aligns with other reforms
- embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- involves ongoing collaboration with the sector and the community.

We have updated the vision based on your feedback. National Cabinet is considering the vision early this year. Once agreed, the vision will provide long-term direction to achieve a quality, accessible, affordable and equitable ECEC sector.

Read more about [consultation on the draft national vision](#) on our website.

## New resources for young people with disability

**We have released new resources for young people with disability and their parents and caregivers.**

[Advocating for your child: the early years](#) explains the rights of children with disability in ECEC services and how to advocate for children in ECEC.

The resource is available in Easy Read, Auslan, and several other languages.

It is part of a group of resources co-designed with [Children and Young People with Disability Australia](#). The resources provide practical information to help students with disability and their caregivers understand their rights under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

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



# Spotlight on the sector

## ACCC price inquiry: read the final report

**The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has released its final report from its inquiry into ECEC pricing.**

The ACCC carried out a range of consultation and information gathering activities throughout 2023.

The final report contains findings related to the costs, prices and competition within Australian child care markets. It also makes recommendations to achieve accessibility and affordability for children and families across Australia.

Key findings include:

- the Cheaper Child Care reforms cut costs for families across all care types
- a 'one size fits all' government intervention is unlikely to be effective.

Key recommendations include:

- consider and consult on changes to CCS and hourly rate cap
- ensure the information provided on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) better meets parents' and guardians' needs
- make policy changes to support educators and teachers
- design policy options to better meet the needs of those who use In Home Care services
- develop alternative approaches for First Nations households to access CCS.

[Read more about the inquiry.](#)

[Read the ACCC's final report.](#)

[Read the Ministerial media release.](#)

## Updated learning frameworks now in force

**The updated approved learning frameworks are now in operation.**

There are 2 approved learning frameworks under the National Quality Framework:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia.

The frameworks guide early childhood teachers and educators in the design, delivery and evaluation of quality learning and development.

In 2023, ACECQA released updated versions of the frameworks. Both versions of each framework were available throughout 2023 to help you transition.

If you haven't already, you must now apply the updated frameworks.

Read the updated frameworks and get resources to help you implement them on the [ACECQA website](#).



## Early Years Strategy survey closes Friday

**Time is running out to have your say on the draft Early Years Strategy.**

The government has developed the draft strategy to shape its vision for the future of Australia's children and their families.

You can help shape and refine the final version by taking the survey on the [Department of Social Services consultation website](#).

The survey closes on 9 February.

## Productivity Commission accepting final submissions

**The Productivity Commission is accepting final submissions on the draft inquiry report into ECEC.**

Final submissions are due in 1 week. Make your submission by Wednesday 14 February on the [Productivity Commission website](#).

Public hearings will then start in late February. Public hearings are an opportunity for you to discuss inquiry issues with Commissioners. Any organisation or person is welcome to appear at a hearing or to observe the proceedings. You can attend online or in person.

Find out more on the [Productivity Commission website](#).

## Supporting the workforce

### Have your say on regional and remote workforce programs

**We're reviewing programs that support people in regional and remote areas to enrol in and complete ECEC qualifications.**

The review aims to:

- inform creative approaches to new and existing programs
- strengthen the delivery of programs, by identifying what works well for existing programs
- collect ideas for how programs could be delivered in the future.

The review is a key action from [Shaping our Future, the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy](#). We've engaged Scyne Advisory to undertake the review.

You can contribute to the review by completing a [10-minute survey](#).

We encourage the following groups to complete the survey:

- ECEC teachers and educators in regional and remote areas
- current and prospective ECEC students in regional and remote areas
- organisations that support the ECEC workforce in regional and remote areas.

The survey closes on 28 February 2024.

If you have questions, please e-mail [ecec\\_targeted\\_programs\\_review@scyne.com.au](mailto:ecec_targeted_programs_review@scyne.com.au).



## Support for early childhood teachers to complete their practicum

**Services can get a subsidy to support early childhood teachers to complete the practicum components of their degree.**

You can use the subsidy to give educators paid leave while undertaking their practicum. We will pay a service \$1120.04 per week per staff member for eligible practicums.

Apply now for:

- practicums completed since 1 July last year.
- practicums that start this financial year and continue beyond 30 June 2024.

If your practicum starts after 1 July this year, don't apply now. We'll let you know when applications for next financial year open.

### **Did you get your invite to apply?**

We have sent invitations to eligible providers. If you can't find the email, try searching for "DocuSign". If you believe your service is eligible but you have not received an invitation, send an email to [ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au).

You can find [detailed information on our website](#), including:

- service eligibility criteria
- staff eligibility criteria
- payment information
- key dates.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Financial reporting obligations for large providers

**Don't forget – new financial reporting obligations for large providers started in July last year.**

Large providers must report financial information to the department each year, including information about revenue, profits, and leasing arrangements.

A large provider is one that operates, or shares operation of, 25 or more services.

The information you must report depends on your circumstances.

The reporting deadline depends on when you do your financial reporting:

- if you do your financial reporting on a financial year, your deadline will occur on 1 October each year
- if you do your financial reporting on a calendar year, your deadline will occur on 1 April each year.

We'll provide more information about what you need to do closer to these deadlines.

Learn more about [financial reporting obligations for large providers](#)





# News for families

## The latest updates from Services Australia

### Getting help with fees for school holiday care or child care

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) can help with the cost of child care, before and after school care and holiday care.

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

### Looking to enrol a child in child care? You'll need their Customer Reference Number

If you're using child care, before or after school care or holiday care, you'll need to give your provider your child's CRN.

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

### You need to confirm your child's enrolment details for child care

To get CCS you need to confirm your child's enrolment details for child care.

Learn more on the [Services Australia website](#)



## From the Department

### CCCF grant round opening soon

**A new Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant round will open soon.**

This CCCF grant provides funding to eligible services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities to:

- stay open
- increase the number of children in early childhood education and care.

To be eligible for the next grant round, providers must:

- be Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved, and
- operate a service in an identified priority area, or
- be located in, or servicing families in, a regional, remote or very remote area, or
- provide specialised care services to disadvantaged or vulnerable families, or
- currently receive CCCF funding under [round 1 and round 3](#).

More information, including the application process, will be published on [GrantConnect](#) soon.

Make sure you get [our newsletter](#) and join our [Facebook Group](#) to find out when the grant opens.

Learn more about the [CCCF disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant](#) on our website.

### Do you need help understanding your obligations?

**We've launched an online learning platform for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. It's called 'Get early childhood compliance knowledge online', or Geckco!**

Geckco is designed to help you comply with your obligations under [Family Assistance Law](#). Family Assistance Law sets the rules for administering CCS.

On Geckco, you can:

- complete self-paced e-learning courses
- download course certificates upon completion
- access other resources such as videos and tip sheets.

Start your learning journey and [register for Geckco](#).

### CCS period of emergency in North Queensland

**A CCS period of emergency is in place in parts of North Queensland due to Tropical Cyclone Kirrily.**

Visit our website to see:

- [regions and timeframes where the CCS period of emergency applies](#)



- [details of support available during and after a CCS period of emergency.](#)

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

## Spotlight on the sector

### ACCC price inquiry: final report released

**The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has released its final report from its inquiry into ECEC pricing.**

The ACCC carried out a range of consultation and information gathering activities throughout 2023.

The final report contains findings related to the costs, prices and competition within Australian child care markets. It also makes recommendations to achieve accessibility and affordability for children and families across Australia.

Key findings include:

- the Cheaper Child Care reforms cut costs for families across all care types
- a 'one size fits all' government intervention is unlikely to be effective.

Key recommendations include:

- consider and consult on changes to CCS and hourly rate cap
- ensure the information provided on StartingBlocks.gov.au better meets parents' and guardians' needs
- make policy changes to support educators and teachers
- design policy options to better meet the needs of those who use In Home Care services
- develop alternative approaches for First Nations households to access CCS.

[Read more about the inquiry.](#)

[Read the ACCC's final report.](#)

[Read the Ministerial media release.](#)

### Updated learning frameworks in force from tomorrow

**The updated approved learning frameworks will come into operation from tomorrow.**

In 2023, ACECQA released updated versions of the 2 [approved learning frameworks](#). Both versions of each framework were available throughout 2023 to help you transition.

If you haven't already, you are required to transition to the updated frameworks from tomorrow.

Read the updated frameworks and access resources to help you implement them on the [ACECQA website](#).



# Supporting the workforce

## Applications for our workforce subsidies remain open

**We welcome your applications for the professional development and paid practicum subsidies.**

These subsidies are designed to:

- strengthen skills and professional experience
- improve staff retention
- build supply
- increase capacity.

Initially, the subsidy prioritises particular groups including:

- services and staff in regional, remote and very remote locations
- First Nations services and educators.

We have sent invitations to eligible providers. If you can't find the email, try searching for "DocuSign".

If you believe your service is eligible but you have not received an invitation, send an email to [ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au).

Find out more about the [workforce subsidies](#) on our website.

# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## Avoiding an infringement

**We may issue infringements to providers that don't follow the rules under Family Assistance Law (FAL).**

Most providers comply with the law and do the right thing. However, where certain rules are not being followed, we use infringements to help change provider behaviour.

An infringement is a fine and can be expensive.

We issue infringements for a range of reasons, including:

- failure to keep contact details up to date
- failure to report working with children checks
- failure to report fee information
- failure to submit session reports on time
- failure to provide notifications on time
- failure to keep records.

The best way to avoid an infringement is to be aware of and comply with [your obligations under FAL](#).

We send infringements by email and by post. If you do get an infringement, you have 28 days to pay the fine.



Learn more about [what to do if you get an infringement](#) on our website.

## Share with families

### Find child care

**Did you know [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) is the one place where you can find and compare early childhood education and care services?**

On the Starting Blocks website, you can:

- find local services and view vacancies, costs, quality ratings and inclusions
- compare services side-by-side
- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- get information and advice about education, children's development, and parenting.

Visit [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to start searching.



## From the department

### Getting ready for a new school year

Here are some important reminders about the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) as we approach the start of another school year.

Families should ensure their child's expected primary school start date is up to date with Services Australia. Services Australia uses this information to calculate a family's CCS rate.

Children who have finished primary school can continue to attend care and get CCS over the school holidays if they are under 13 and have not yet started attending high school.

You must end a child's enrolment if their family advises they're ending care. You may need to do this for children who will leave your service to start school. You can end enrolments in the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software.

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

### CCS helpdesk closed on Friday

**The CCS Helpdesk will be closed for the public holiday this Friday.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Monday 29 January.

You can contact the helpdesk anytime by [email](#) and we will respond during business hours.

CCS payment timing may be affected by the public holiday

### Period of emergency in the Northern Territory

**A CCS period of emergency is in place in parts of the Northern Territory following heavy rain and flooding.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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

### Have you heard about our new online learning?

**We've launched an online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector. It's called Get Early Childhood Compliance Knowledge Online, or simply, Geccko!**

On Geccko, you can access a range of e-learning courses to help you understand your obligations under [Family Assistance Law](#).



[Register for Gecco](#) today to start your learning journey.

We'll add more courses in the future. Make sure to [subscribe to our newsletter](#) and [join our Facebook group](#) to find out when a new course launches.

## Spotlight on the sector

### Productivity Commission holding public hearings, accepting final submissions

**The Productivity Commission is seeking feedback following the release of the draft inquiry report into early childhood education and care.**

For the next phase of consultation, you can:

- attend a public hearing
- provide a submission.

#### Public hearings

Public hearings are an opportunity for you to discuss inquiry issues with Commissioners. Any organisation or person is welcome to appear at a hearing or to observe the proceedings. You can attend online or in person. Hearings will start in late February.

Find out more on the [Productivity Commission website](#).

#### Final submissions

Final submissions are due by Wednesday 14 February 2024. Make your submission on the [Productivity Commission website](#).

[Read the draft report into early childhood education and care.](#)

### Have your say on the draft Early Years Strategy

**You can have your say on the draft Early Years Strategy by answering an Australian Government survey.**

The government has developed the draft strategy to shape its long-term vision for the future of Australia's children and their families.

Read the draft strategy and take the survey by visiting the [Department of Social Services consultation website](#).

The survey closes on 9 February.

## Supporting the workforce

### Support for early childhood teachers to complete their practicum

**Services can get a subsidy to support early childhood teachers to complete the practicum components of their degree.**

You can use the subsidy to give educators paid leave while undertaking their practicum. We will pay a service \$1120.04 per week per staff member for up to 4 weeks for eligible practicums.



Apply now for:

- practicums completed since 1 July last year.
- practicums that start this financial year and continue beyond 30 June 2024.

If your practicum starts after 1 July this year, don't apply now. We'll let you know when applications for next financial year open.

## Did you get your invite to apply?

We have sent invitations to eligible providers. If you can't find the email, try searching for "DocuSign". If you believe your service is eligible but you have not received an invitation, send an email to [ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au](mailto:ECECWorkforce@education.gov.au).

You can find [detailed information on our website](#), including:

- service eligibility criteria
- staff eligibility criteria
- payment information
- key dates.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Submitting session reports

**Remember to submit accurate session reports on time – it's the law.**

You must:

- submit session reports within 14 days after the end of the week in which the session of care was provided
- submit a session report for each child at your service, for each week a session of care is provided
- include at least one session of care a week, recorded as either an attendance or absence
- only include sessions of care for which you charge a family a fee for providing care to their child.

Submit session reports through the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.

Learn more about [session reports](#) on our website

## Share with families

### Find child care in 2024

**Did you know [StartingBlocks.gov.au](http://StartingBlocks.gov.au) is the one place where you can find and compare early childhood education and care services?**

On the Starting Blocks website, you can:

- find local services and view vacancies, costs, quality ratings and inclusions
- compare services





- estimate out-of-pocket costs
- get information and advice about education, children's development, and parenting.

Visit [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) to start searching.



# Northern Territory floods: CCS period of emergency declared

**We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency for the Victoria Daly Regional Council area in the Northern Territory following heavy rain and flooding.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from 22 January to 30 January 2024.

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

## Support during the emergency

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

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

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

## Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

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

## Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Find out whether you're eligible on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [nt.gov.au](#).

## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.



- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.

Keep an eye on [nt.gov.au](https://nt.gov.au) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Help families find you in 2024

**Did you know your fees, vacancies, quality ratings and inclusions are published on the Starting Blocks website?**

[StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) is the one place where families can find and compare early childhood education and care services.

Make sure your fee and vacancy details are current so families can find you in 2024.

Update your fee and vacancy details through the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software.

Reporting your fees and vacancies is a requirement under Family Assistance Law.

### Our online learning platform is here

**Geccko is our new online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector.**

Our self-paced e-learning courses are designed to help you understand and comply with your obligations under [Family Assistance Law](#).

[Register for Geccko](#) to start learning.

### What is a CCS period of emergency?

**A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency supports families and services during and immediately after significant emergencies – such as cyclones and major floods.**

- We may declare a CCS period of emergency for an event that:
- affects a widespread area
- has a severe impact on the lives of a significant number of the people in that area, and
- prevents children from attending a service or may make attending dangerous.

All of these conditions must apply for us to declare a CCS period of emergency.

A CCS period of emergency does not:

- replace business insurance
- cover localised damage or disruptions
- cover the absence of an insurance policy for your business.

Events not considered a CCS period of emergency include:

- break-ins
- vandalism
- localised storm damage or minor flooding
- burst water pipes or plumbing problems



- mould issues
- short term power outages.

When there is an emergency emerging or underway, we:

- monitor information provided by emergency agencies
- determine whether the event constitutes a CCS period of emergency
- declare a CCS period of emergency, when appropriate.

Declaring a CCS period of emergency triggers a range of support, including extra absences and gap fee waivers. We'll tell you if a CCS period of emergency is declared in your area.

To get this information, you must ensure your contact details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System. Check this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.

We also list [regions where we've declared a CCS period of emergency](#) on our website.

Find out more about [support during a CCS period of emergency](#) on our website.

## CCS period of emergency in Victoria

**Last week we declared a CCS period of emergency for parts of Victoria affected by flooding.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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

## Spotlight on the sector

### Productivity Commission holding public hearings, accepting final submissions

**The Productivity Commission is seeking feedback following the release of the draft inquiry report into early childhood education and care.**

For the next phase of consultation, you can:

- attend a public hearing
- provide a submission.

#### Public hearings

Public hearings are an opportunity for you to discuss inquiry issues with Commissioners. Any organisation or person is welcome to appear at a hearing or to observe the proceedings. You can attend online or in person.

To attend, register by Friday 19 January 2024 on the [Productivity Commission website](#).

#### Final submissions

Final submissions are due by Wednesday 14 February 2024. Make your submission on the [Productivity Commission website](#).



[Read the draft report into early childhood education and care.](#)

## Updated learning frameworks in force from February

**The updated national approved learning frameworks will come into operation from 1 February.**

The frameworks are:

Belonging, Being and Becoming, for children aged 0 to 5

My Time, Our Place, for school-aged children.

The 2 frameworks fall under the National Quality Framework. They guide early childhood teachers and educators in the design, delivery and evaluation of quality learning and development.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) updated the frameworks in consultation with:

- state and territory governments
- the early childhood education and care sector
- academics.

Services must start using them from 1 February.

Visit the [ACECQA website](#) to:

- download the updated frameworks
- read about the updates
- learn about the transition process
- find out about assessment and ratings.

## Have your say on the draft Early Years Strategy

**You can have your say on the draft 10-year Early Years Strategy by answering an Australian Government survey.**

The government has developed the draft strategy to shape its vision for the future of Australia's children and their families.

The draft strategy recognises the early years are critical for children's development and later outcomes in life. It seeks to support improved coordination between Commonwealth programs, funding and frameworks impacting early childhood development.

Read the draft strategy and take the survey by visiting the [Department of Social Services consultation website](#).

The survey closes on 9 February.

## Facts from Family Assistance Law

### Working with children check status

**Did you know you must tell us within 24 hours if a working with children check (WWCC) status changes?**



You must tell us when the status of a WWCC changes for any of the following people:

- Family Day Care educators
- In Home Care educators
- persons with management or control who are required to have a WWCC
- persons responsible at the service who are required to have a WWCC.

A change in status includes if a check is renewed, extended, suspended, revoked, lapsed or expired.

You must report the change via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software within 24 hours of becoming aware.

Find out more about [your WWCC obligations](#).

## Share with families

### Will you have more than one child in care this year?

**If you have more than one child aged 5 or under in care, you may get a higher Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for your second and younger children.**

You can get a higher subsidy for one or more of your children if all of these apply:

- you get or will be eligible for CCS
- your family's combined income is under \$362,408
- your family has more than one child aged 5 or under in care.

Services Australia will work out if you're eligible. If you are, they'll apply a higher subsidy to any eligible children in your family.

If your Centrelink online account is linked to myGov, you can check your CCS percentage online.

Find out more about how your number of children in care can affect your CCS on the [Services Australia website](#).



## Victorian floods: period of emergency declared

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

The period of emergency applies from 8 January to 23 January 2024 in the following local government areas:

- Campaspe Shire Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Murrindindi Shire Council.

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

### Support during the emergency

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

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

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

### Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

Read more about [support after a period of emergency](#)

### Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

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

### For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.





- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://emergency.vic.gov.au) for current emergency information in your region



## From the department

### Changes for Inclusion Support Program applications

#### **We're making changes to the Inclusion Support Program (ISP).**

The following changes will occur from 11 January 2024.

#### **Additional educator**

From 11 January 2024, new applications for an additional educator under the ISP Inclusion Development Fund will only be approved up to 30 June 2024. You'll need to reapply if you require an additional educator beyond 30 June 2024.

Existing approved arrangements will be unaffected.

We will provide you with further information on applying for the next financial year.

#### **Collaborative and Strategic Projects and Innovative Solutions support**

Also from 11 January, funding for projects under the Collaborative and Strategic Projects and Innovative Solutions support will be limited to under \$10,000 (GST exclusive) but for exceptional circumstances. These projects must be completed by 30 June 2024.

Existing approved projects will be unaffected. If your application is yet to be approved and is above \$10,000, you will be asked to resubmit.

#### **Why are these changes occurring?**

The demand on the program has grown since eligibility was expanded in 2020. The changes aim to ensure the program:

- remains fiscally sustainable
- provides equity of access for those families requiring support the most in a time of high demand.

There are currently several important reviews examining the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. These will inform the future of ISP and ECEC services more broadly.

The government is also considering the [report from the 2023 review of the program](#).

The department is working with the sector to implement these changes and explore longer term solutions.

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#) and [join our Facebook group](#) to get updates.

Learn more about the [Inclusion Support Program](#) on our website.

#### **Have you registered for Geckko?**

**Get early childhood compliance knowledge online, or Geckko for short, is our online learning platform for the early childhood education and care sector.**



Gecko is designed to help you comply with your obligations under Family Assistance Law (FAL). FAL sets the rules for administering Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Gecko courses are suitable for all staff across all approved care types.

Current courses are:

- Overview of Family Assistance Law and National Law
- Fit and proper person requirements
- Persons with management or control
- Family Assistance Law notification requirements
- Understanding enrolments
- Reporting sessions of care
- Fraud awareness
- Electronic payment of gap fees.

Make sure to [subscribe to our newsletter](#) and [join our Facebook group](#) to find out when new courses launch.

[Register for Gecko.](#)

## Update your details for National Workforce Census

**The fifth Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census will occur this year. Update your contact details now.**

The National Workforce Census helps us develop and measure policies and programs for the sector. It is compulsory for all CCS approved providers and services.

It is critical that your contact details are up to date in the Child Care Subsidy System so you can participate.

You must do this as soon as possible:

- check your provider and service level contact details and update them if they are incorrect
- check contact details for all persons with management or control (PMCs) and update them if they are incorrect
- check you have identified all PMCs and add any new or missing PMCs
- remove anyone who has stopped having management or control.

You can check and update your details via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software.

Find out more about the [National Workforce Census](#) on our website.

To get information and alerts about the census, [subscribe to this weekly newsletter](#) and [join our Facebook group](#).

## Business support for CCCF grant recipients

**Do you get a Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) grant? Do you need support to help your business become more financially viable and sustainable?**

CCCF business support is available until July 2024. A total of 38 services have so far used business support, getting help to:



- conduct a business review
- identify cost drivers and savings
- review operations and business planning
- review financial processes and how to make improvements.

Find out more about [CCCF business support](#) on our website.

## Spotlight on the sector

### Child safety report makes 16 recommendations

**The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has released its review into child safety.**

The report from the Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework (NQF) makes 16 recommendations about:

- physical and online safety
- child supervision
- staffing requirements.
- The independent review investigated:
- how well the NQF operates
- how the NQF interacts with national and jurisdictional laws, regulations, policies and practices.

The report found Australia has a very good system of early childhood education and care. However, it found more can be done to ensure the NQF remains contemporary and fit for purpose around child safety.

Read the [report of the Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework](#).

Read the [Ministers’ media release](#).

Learn [more about the NQF](#) on the ACECQA website.

### Have your say on draft Early Years Strategy

**You can have your say on the draft Early Years Strategy by answering an Australian Government survey.**

The government has developed the draft strategy to shape its long-term vision for the future of Australia’s children and their families.

The draft strategy recognises the early years are critical for children’s development and later outcomes in life. It seeks to support improved coordination between Commonwealth programs, funding and frameworks impacting early childhood development.

Read the draft strategy and take the survey by visiting the [Department of Social Services consultation website](#).

The survey closes on 9 February.



# Facts from Family Assistance Law

## How to correctly enrol children

**As we begin this new year, it's timely to refresh your understanding of the enrolment process.**

All children who attend approved care must be enrolled. This is required under FAL.

You must enrol children correctly so families can get CCS payments.

Below are our top tips about enrolments:

- Families should make a CCS claim before their child starts at your service.
- You must use the correct enrolment type. In most cases, children must be enrolled under a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) to get CCS.
- You must identify the person who made the CCS claim. If you don't identify them, Services Australia cannot make CCS payments.
- Families must confirm the enrolment via their [Centrelink online account](#). Services Australia cannot make CCS payments until the enrolment is confirmed.

Visit our website to [learn more about enrolments](#).

## Share with families

### Child Care Subsidy balancing

**Services Australia is balancing Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for the 2022–23 financial year.**

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

You can confirm your income by:

- lodging your tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), or
- telling Services Australia you don't need to lodge a tax return online, even if you've already told the ATO.

Once Services Australia has balanced your CCS, they will send you an outcome.

Find out more about [CCS balancing](#) on the Services Australia website.



# Far North Queensland cyclone, flood emergency: support extended in 5 LGAs

**We've extended the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Far North Queensland affected by Tropical Cyclone Jasper and subsequent flooding.**

The period of emergency now applies from 12 December 2023 to 12 January 2024 in these 5 local government areas:

- Cairns Regional Council
- Cassowary Coast Regional Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Douglas Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council.

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

## Support during the emergency

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

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

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

## Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a [Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant](#) if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access [additional absences](#) if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

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

## Other disaster support

You may be eligible for other government disaster support:

- The Australian Government provides help for people affected by natural disasters. Learn more on the [Services Australia website](#).
- Your state or territory government may provide additional support in the event of a natural disaster. Find out more at [qld.gov.au](#).



## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](#) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [qld.gov.au](#) for current emergency information in your region.



# South East Queensland storm emergency support extended

**We've extended the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in place for parts of South East Queensland affected by storms.**

The CCS period of emergency now applies from 26 December 2023 to 10 January 2024 in these 3 local government areas:

- Gold Coast City Council
- Logan City Council
- Scenic Rim Regional Council.

## Support during the emergency

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

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

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

## Support after the emergency

The following support may help you recover **after** an emergency:

- you may be eligible for a Community Child Care Fund special circumstances grant if the emergency threatens your service's ability to stay open after the event, and you have already accessed other disaster support
- families may be able to access additional absences if they've exhausted their allowable absences
- families may be eligible for Additional Child Care Subsidy if they experience temporary financial hardship due to an emergency that happened in the last 6 months.

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

## Other disaster support

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

## For action

- Tell us as soon as possible if you close your service. Do this via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software. You also need to tell your [state regulatory authority](#).
- Update your contact details in the Child Care Subsidy System so you don't miss important information. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.





- Update your vacancy details on [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://StartingBlocks.gov.au) to help families looking for care. Do this via the [PEP](#) or your third-party software.
- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [qld.gov.au](https://qld.gov.au) for current emergency information in your region.

