



# Emails to the early childhood education and care sector

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# Tropical Cyclone Alfred: 7 new LGAs added to CCS period of emergency

We've added an extra 7 local government areas (LGAs) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland and New South Wales due to Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 5 March 2025 to 13 March 2025 in the following local government areas:

## Queensland

- **Fraser Coast Regional Council**
- **Somerset Regional Council**
- **Toowoomba Regional Council**
- Scenic Rim Regional Council
- Lockyer Valley Regional Council
- Gympie Regional Council
- Sunshine Coast Council
- Noosa Shire Council
- Redland City Council
- Brisbane City Council
- Ipswich City Council
- City of Gold Coast
- City of Moreton Bay
- Logan City Council.

## New South Wales

- **City of Coffs Harbour**
- **Bellingen Shire Council**
- **Kyogle Council**
- **Nambucca Valley Council**
- Tweed Shire Council
- Byron Shire
- Ballina Shire
- City of Lismore
- Richmond Valley Council
- Clarence Valley 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 Qld](#) and [Emergency 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 [Emergency Qld](#) and [Emergency NSW](#) for current emergency information in your region.



# Tropical Cyclone Alfred: new LGAs added to CCS period of emergency

We've added extra local government areas (LGAs) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland and New South Wales due to Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 5 March 2025 to 13 March 2025 in the following local government areas:

## Queensland

- Scenic Rim Regional Council
- Lockyer Valley Regional Council
- Gympie Regional Council
- Sunshine Coast Council
- Noosa Shire Council
- Redland City Council
- Brisbane City Council
- Ipswich City Council
- City of Gold Coast
- City of Moreton Bay
- Logan City Council.

## New South Wales

- Tweed Shire Council
- Byron Shire
- Ballina Shire
- City of Lismore
- Richmond Valley Council
- Clarence Valley 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](#).

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- 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 Qld](#) and [Emergency NSW](#).

## For action

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- 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.
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- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [Emergency Qld](#) and [Emergency NSW](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Worker retention payment update

#### Need help with the worker retention payment?

**You can get help to engage with the worker retention payment.**

We've updated the [help directory on our website](#) with the latest support on offer.

This includes help to:

- understand the payment and its requirements
- develop a compliant workplace instrument
- submit a complete application
- get workplace relations or legal advice, and more.

Support is free.

We recommend you get support through the organisations listed on our website. Workplace instrument templates sold commercially may not meet the worker retention payment requirements.

### Backdating payments

**We appreciate your patience as we process worker retention payment applications.**

We will backdate your payments if you:

- submit a complete application by 30 June 2025
- meet the eligibility criteria from 2 December 2024.

We will backdate payments to:

- 2 December 2024, for workplace instruments that cover the full grant period even if adopted later
- the date your workplace instrument starts, if this is after 2 December 2024.

Some providers may attempt to form or join a workplace instrument before 30 June 2025, but may not be approved until after the deadline. In this scenario, we may backdate payments provided you submit a complete application by 30 June 2025 that indicates you are awaiting approval.

Visit our website to see [examples of how we will backdate payments](#).

Please be assured we are working to assess applications as quickly as possible.

### CCS Provider Helpdesk closed on Monday

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Helpdesk will be closed for a public holiday on Monday 10 March.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 11 March.





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

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.

## CCS period of emergency in Qld and NSW

**A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency is in place in parts of Queensland and New South Wales due to Tropical Cyclone Alfred.**

Visit our website to see:

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

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

## Facts from FAL

### Submit a tip-off if you suspect CCS fraud

**If you suspect a child care provider or service is not following the rules, you can tell us.**

Some examples of CCS fraud are:

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

Our online [CCS fraud tip-off form](#) is anonymous and only takes a few minutes to complete.

### Salary sacrificing early childhood education and care fees

**Do you have families who pay their early childhood education and care 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 early childhood education and 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 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.

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



# Workforce support

## Have your say on professional development opportunities

Has your service accessed any of our professional development opportunities? Tell us about your experience.

We have engaged ORIMA Research to conduct a short survey on our [professional development opportunities](#).

This includes the:

- professional development subsidy
- paid practicum subsidy
- practicum exchange network
- practicum exchange living allowance.

If you have used any of these supports and would like to provide feedback, [complete the survey](#).

The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. It is open to representatives from all service types.

Participation is voluntary and all responses will be treated as private and confidential.

The survey will close on 31 March 2025.

Please contact [SPS@education.gov.au](mailto:SPS@education.gov.au) if you have any questions.

## Professional development subsidies closing soon



**Applications for our professional development subsidies are closing soon.**

The professional development subsidy helps qualified staff complete training.

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

We pay these subsidies to providers. Providers pass funding on to staff through training opportunities and paid leave.

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.

Applications close on 14 March 2025.



Learn more about the [professional development opportunities](#).

A teal banner featuring a circular inset image of two people in purple shirts looking at a laptop. The background of the banner includes a rainbow, yellow stars, and a white star in the bottom left corner.

**ECEC videos**  
Watch short videos about key topics on our YouTube channel



# Tropical Cyclone Alfred: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland and New South Wales due to Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 5 March 2025 to 13 March 2025 in the following local government areas:

## Queensland

- Gympie Regional Council
- Sunshine Coast Council
- Noosa Shire Council
- Redland City Council
- Brisbane City Council
- Ipswich City Council
- City of Gold Coast
- City of Moreton Bay
- Logan City Council.

## New South Wales

- Tweed Shire Council
- Byron Shire
- Ballina Shire
- City of Lismore
- Richmond Valley Council
- Clarence Valley 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 Qld](#) and [Emergency 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 [Emergency Qld](#) and [Emergency NSW](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### ECEC supported bargaining agreement update

**The Fair Work Commission (FWC) is processing applications to join the early childhood education and care (ECEC) multi-employer enterprise agreement.**

The ECEC multi-employer enterprise agreement is a type of workplace instrument. It meets the worker retention payment requirements.

Providers can apply to join the agreement. This is known as a variation.

FWC must approve the variation and is now processing applications on a monthly schedule.

Each month, FWC will publish one decision that covers all applications received before the cut-off date for that month.

Applications received after the cut-off date will be considered in the next month's decision.

FWC approved the first applications on 28 January 2025. This adds new employers and their employees to the agreement.

Visit the [Fair Work Commission](#) website to:

- read the agreement
- apply to join the agreement
- see the application cut-off and decision dates
- see variations in progress
- see approved variations.

### Need help with your workplace instrument?

Support is available now. This includes help to join the ECEC multi-employer enterprise agreement or develop your own compliant workplace instrument.

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

### CCS period of emergency extended

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

Visit our website to see:

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

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



# Sector spotlight

## Changes to fit and proper person requirements coming soon

**From 1 April 2025, new CCS provider approval applicants will need to provide a statement of tax record (STR).**

For CCS approval, a provider must be considered fit and proper to handle public money. All new providers go through a fit and proper assessment. The STR will form part of this assessment. It demonstrates a provider's engagement with the tax system.

The provider must supply the STR. Applicants will need to:

- request and obtain the required STR for their organisation from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO)
- provide the STR as part of their application for CCS approval.

Providers will be able to request an STR from the ATO:

- by using [ATO online services](#)
- through their registered tax professional.

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

## Facts from FAL

### Can families travelling overseas get CCS?

**Generally, Australian Government payments are not payable while the recipient is overseas. Government payments are for families who live and work in Australia.**

To remain eligible for CCS, a family must meet residency requirements. This means:

- payments will stop when a family leaves Australia to live in another country
- payments will stop if a family travels overseas for 6 weeks or more, restarting when they return to Australia.

A family can use their 42 allowable absences for short term travel overseas.

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

### Tell us within 24 hours if a working with children check status changes

**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 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 [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software within 24 hours of becoming aware.

Learn more about [how to manage your WWCC](#) on our website.

## New Geccko course: First Nations Cultural Awareness

**Our new First Nations Cultural Awareness course is designed for all staff working in ECEC, including administrators, educators and support staff.**

This course will help the ECEC sector better understand issues impacting First Nations families. Understanding these issues will help create a safe, welcoming and respectful environment.

This course will provide insights into:

- the impact of colonisation on First Nations people
- the experiences of First Nations people in ECEC settings
- practical steps you can take to support First Nations children, families, staff and communities.

Improve your cultural competency and share with your colleagues today.

Find out more and access this free course on [Geccko](#).

## Workforce support

### Professional development survey coming soon

**We want to hear about your experience with our professional development opportunities.**

We've engaged ORIMA Research to conduct a survey about our [professional development opportunities](#). This includes the:

- professional development subsidy
- paid practicum subsidy
- practicum exchange network
- practicum exchange living allowance.

The survey will open on Monday. If your service has accessed any of these opportunities, we encourage you to take part.

**Please keep an eye out for an email from ORIMA with the survey link next week.** We will also share a link in next week's newsletter.

The survey is voluntary. It is an opportunity to let us know how we can better support you in the future.





## Apply for the practicum exchange living allowance

**Don't forget – applications for the practicum exchange living allowance are open.**

The practicum exchange network is a dedicated website connecting ECEC services and educators in training.

Educators who work in the sector and use the network may be eligible for a living allowance to complete a practicum in a rural or remote area other than their home location.

Providers must apply on behalf of eligible staff. Applications close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [living allowance](#).

## Apply for the professional development subsidy

**The professional development subsidy helps qualified staff complete training. It covers 1 day of training per staff member.**

We pay the subsidy to providers. Providers pass funding on to staff through training opportunities.

Providers must apply 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.

Applications close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [professional development subsidy](#).

## News for families

### Your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) may change if you have a child turning 6 this year

When your eldest child turns 6, the CCS rate you get may be different, depending on how many children you have and their ages.

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



## Queensland floods: 14 new LGAs added and CCS period of emergency extended

**We've added 14 new local government areas (LGAs) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding. We have also extended the period of emergency.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from Wednesday 29 January 2025 to Tuesday 4 March 2025 in the following local government areas:

- **Barcaldine Regional Council**
- **Shire of Boulia**
- **Cloncurry Shire Council**
- **Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council**
- **Longreach Regional Council**
- **Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council**
- **Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council**
- **Richmond Shire Council**
- **Winton Shire Council**
- **Blackall-Tambo Regional Council**
- **Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council**
- **McKinlay Shire Council**
- **Diamantina Shire Council**
- **Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council**
- Carpentaria Shire Council
- Croydon Shire Council
- Flinders Shire Council
- Charters Towers Regional Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Douglas Shire Council
- Etheridge Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Whitsunday Regional Council
- Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
- Burdekin Shire Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Aboriginal Shire of Palm Island



- Townsville City Council
- Hinchinbrook Council
- Cassowary Coast 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 <https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency>.

## 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](#).
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- Join our [Facebook group](#) for alerts and updates.
- Keep an eye on [qld.gov.au/emergency](https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency) for current emergency information in your region.



## Western Australia cyclone: new LGA added to CCS period of emergency

We've added an extra local government area (LGA) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in Western Australia due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Zelia.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 13 February 2025 to 20 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- **Shire of East Pilbara**
- City of Karratha
- Town of Port Hedland.

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
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- 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 WA](#).



## For action

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## From the department

### 3-day guarantee – legislation passed

**On 11 December 2024, the Australian Government announced changes to how subsidised hours are calculated for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).**

This change is part of the government's pathway toward a [universal early education and care system](#).

Legislation to enact this measure passed Parliament on 13 February 2025.

From 5 January 2026, families can get at least 72 subsidised hours of care each fortnight for each child. This is regardless of how much work, training, study or volunteering they do.

The department will now work with Services Australia to ensure child care providers and families are ready for the change in January next year.

Read more about the [changes](#) on our website.

### Need help with your workplace instrument?

**You can now get help to develop a workplace instrument that meets the requirements of the worker retention payment.**

The following organisations can provide workplace instrument support:

- Ai Group
- Australian Childcare Alliance
- Community Early Learning Australia
- National Outside School Hours Services Alliance
- United Workers Union.

These organisations can help you with:

- single enterprise agreements
- variation to existing enterprise agreements
- individual flexibility arrangements
- ECEC Multi-Employer Agreement.

Workplace instrument templates sold commercially may not meet the worker retention payment requirements.

We recommend you get support through the organisations listed on our website.

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



## CCS periods of emergency declared

CCS periods of emergency are in place in parts of Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia due to the impact of fires, flooding, storms and cyclones.

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

### What Closing the Gap report means for early childhood

**On 10 February 2025, the Australian Government released the Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan.**

The report:

- assesses the Commonwealth's progress against Closing the Gap targets and priority reforms over the last year
- outlines the Commonwealth's priorities to support Closing the Gap targets and priority reforms over the next year
- spotlights outstanding programs, services and initiatives.

Closing the Gap outcomes 3 and 4 focus on the early years. They aim to ensure:

- children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education and care (ECEC)
- children thrive in their early years.

The report highlights key achievements and investments to improve progress in these areas, including:

- continuation of the [Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership](#)
- expansion of [Connected Beginnings](#) to 50 sites across the country
- finalising the [Early Years Strategy](#) and developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- establishment of new First Nations-led ECEC services through the [Community Child Care Fund restricted expansion grant](#)
- changes to the CCS [activity test for families with First Nations children](#)
- announcement of a [building early education fund](#)
- core funding to support First Nations peaks, NATSIEC and SNAICC, to partner with government on matters affecting First Nations children in the early years.

Read the [Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan.](#)



## Spotlight on Connected Beginnings

This year's report puts a spotlight on the [Connected Beginnings program in Ceduna](#).

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

Connected Beginnings started in 2017 in Ceduna, South Australia. Since then, the program has laid the foundations for community-led systems change in Ceduna, Scotdesco and surrounding homelands. It also works with families of the Yalata and Oak Valley (Maralinga) communities who have connections with Ceduna and Koonibba.

*"Our focus and our purpose of Connected Beginnings is engaging with our families. It's making sure that our families are safe, that their voices are listened to, and that when we're making decisions on programs centred around those families, that they are at the heart and soul of what we do. I want our kids to be treated fairly and to grow up safe and strong, connected to culture"* – Connected Beginnings Project Officer, Ceduna.

There are now [50 Connected Beginnings](#) sites across Australia supporting about 24,800 children.

## Facts from FAL

### Have you made any changes to your business this year?

**Under Family Assistance Law, you must notify us about changes to your business, including changes to fees, vacancies, closures and contact details.**

You must notify us of these changes to maintain your CCS approval.

Find out more about [how to notify us about changes](#), including:

- when you must notify us
- who can how to notify us, and
- how to notify us, including links to helpful task cards.

### Understanding shared care enrolments

**Families must tell both you and Services Australia when their relationship changes.**

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

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

Separate care arrangements are required even if you previously had a care arrangement in place before the separation.

Read more about [how to enrol children](#) 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
- work 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. 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 [discounted care for early childhood workforce](#).

## Apply for the paid practicum subsidy

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

We pay this subsidy to providers, so you can give your staff paid leave while they complete practicums.

Practicums help teachers and educators in training gain practical, work-place experience in an early childhood educational setting. They are mandatory for most ECEC qualifications.

Providers must apply for the subsidy on behalf of staff. If you have staff who need to complete a practicum, we encourage you to apply.

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

Applications will close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [paid practicum subsidy](#).

# News for families

## You'll need your child's Customer Reference Number (CRN) to enrol them in child care.

If you're using child care, before or after school care or holiday care, you'll need to give the service your child's CRN.

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

## Confirming your child's enrolment details for child care

To get Child Care Subsidy (CCS), you need to confirm your child's enrolment details.

Read more on the Services Australia website.



## NSW storms: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in Hilltops Council local government area (LGA) in New South Wales following storm activity.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 10 February 2025 to 12 February 2025.

To access the emergency provisions below your **person with management or control** must contact the department as follows:

- email [CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au)
- use the subject line "Claim for NSW storms CCS period of emergency"
- include in the body of the email for each affected service:
  - service name
  - service ID
  - service address
  - estimated number of impacted families
  - expected period of closure
  - reason for closure
  - note whether the service was directed to close
- attach any of the following as evidence for each affected service:
  - photos of damaged caused by the storm
  - communications from state emergency services agencies
  - other information you consider helpful.

We will review your request for emergency support. We will respond via email to advise if your request has been approved.

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

### Support during an 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](#).

## 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](#) for current emergency information in your region.



# Western Australia cyclone: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Western Australia due to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Zelia.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 13 February 2025 to 20 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- City of Karratha
- Town of Port Hedland

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 WA](#).

## 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 WA](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## Queensland floods: 3 new LGAs added to CCS period of emergency

**We've added 3 new local government areas (LGAs) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from Wednesday 29 January 2025 to Tuesday 25 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- **Carpentaria Shire Council**
- **Croydon Shire Council**
- **Flinders Shire Council**
- Charters Towers Regional Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Douglas Shire Council
- Etheridge Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Whitsunday Regional Council
- Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
- Burdekin Shire Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Aboriginal Shire of Palm Island
- Townsville City Council
- Hinchinbrook Council
- Cassowary Coast 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 <https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency>.

## 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](http://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/emergency](http://qld.gov.au/emergency) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Worker retention payment update

#### More support for worker retention payment applicants

**We are funding organisations to help providers engage with the worker retention payment.**

You will soon be able to access free support to engage with, apply for and meet the conditions of the worker retention payment.

The organisations we're funding to provide this support are:

- Community Early Learning Australia
- Australian Childcare Alliance
- National Outside School Hours Services Alliance
- AI Group
- SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children
- Independent Education Union
- United Workers Union
- Australian Services Union.

The organisations were selected based on their:

- knowledge of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, and
- understanding of the worker retention payment.

We will provide a summary of services provided by each organisation and contact details soon.

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

#### Passing funding on to labour hire workers

**The government intends for all workers covered by the awards, or undertaking duties covered by the awards, get a wage increase. This includes workers engaged through a labour hire agency.**

The worker retention payment is paid to eligible Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved services. Services should work with their labour hire agency to:

- determine how funding will be passed on to workers hired through these agencies
- update their contractual arrangements.

Any funding provided by a service to a labour hire agency must be passed on to workers as higher wages. Funding cannot be used to pay for the agency's fees.

Services should request evidence showing that funding has been passed on to workers. This evidence could be part of the contract terms or a formal declaration from the agency.





Providers must show that funding was used in line with these conditions in their annual reporting.

Read more about [who the payment covers](#).

## Contacting our helpdesk

**The CCS Provider Helpdesk is here to help you.**

When you contact the helpdesk, you can expect our staff to provide a respectful service. We ask that you treat our staff respectfully in return. The helpdesk will not tolerate abusive, threatening or violent behaviour.

We understand many providers are awaiting the outcome of their worker retention payment application.

While helpdesk staff can provide advice about the worker retention payment, they do not have access to individual applications.

After submitting your application and receiving a confirmation email, no further action is required from you. If we need more information, we will contact you.

We are working to assess applications as quickly as possible and appreciate your patience.

## CCS periods of emergency declared

**CCS periods of emergency are in place in parts of Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales due to the impact of fires, flooding and storms.**

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

### Services continue to meet National Quality Standard

**For the second quarter in a row, 91% of education and care services are rated Meeting NQS or above.**

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.

As at 1 January 2025, 17,842 NQF approved children's education and care services were operating across Australia.

The number of:

- services with a quality rating increased by 3% from Q4 2023
- approved services increased 2% from Q4 2023.

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

## Be You events for early learning

**Join Be You for new early learning events to make positive change in your learning community in 2025.**



**Be You in Practice** is a 30-minute online event that will showcase a new topic every month. Each session will explore a theme and immerse you in practical examples through engaging case studies and scenarios.

The first Be You In Practice event will focus on **routines and rituals to support transitions**. It will take place at 3.30 pm AEDT on 19 February 2025.

**Be You Fundamentals** are 3 rotating events that cover topics fundamental to children's and educators' wellbeing. These events are an opportunity to discover how other learning communities are making meaningful changes in their mental health and wellbeing practices for children, educators, and the whole community.

The first Be You Fundamentals event will focus on **applying a wellbeing lens to your quality improvement plan**. It will take place at 12 pm AEDT on 3 March 2025.

Find out more and register for [Be You early learning events](#).

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

## Facts from FAL

### Changing session reports from previous financial years

**After a financial year ends, the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) closes for that year.**

In limited circumstances, you may need to:

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

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

You need to provide a separate application per family.

If you are applying to amend session reports for multiple children or weeks, you must provide the information in a spreadsheet. We cannot accept your application until you provide all information required.

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

### Our compliance approach

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

To support 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 also work with other agencies to keep the system fair. This includes sharing intelligence and information, exchanging data, and engaging in joint taskforces and programs.



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

## Workforce support

### Join the practicum exchange network

#### Has your service joined the practicum exchange network?

The practicum exchange network is a dedicated website connecting ECEC services and educators in training.

On the network you can:

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

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

Go to [prac.education.gov.au](http://prac.education.gov.au).

Educators who work in the sector and use the network may be eligible for a living allowance to complete a practicum in a rural or remote area.

Providers must apply on behalf of eligible staff. Applications close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [living allowance](#).

## News for families

### 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 Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Family Tax Benefit (FTB).

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

### Check the progress of your families claim online

You can check the progress of your Family Tax Benefit (FTB) or Child Care Subsidy (CCS) claim online.

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



# NSW storms: 6 new LGAs added to CCS period of emergency

We've added 6 extra local government areas (LGAs) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of NSW due to the impact of storm activity.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 15 January 2025 to 17 January 2025 in the following local government areas:

- **Central Coast Council**
- **Hornsby Shire Council**
- **Ku-ring-gai Council**
- **City of Newcastle**
- **Wagga Wagga City Council**
- **Wingecarribee Shire Council**
- City of Maitland
- Port Stephens Council
- Singleton Council
- Northern Beaches Council
- Mid-Coast Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Cessnock Shire Council
- Blacktown City Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- Snowy Valleys Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council.

To access the emergency provisions below your **person with management or control** must contact the department as follows:

- email [CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au)
- use the subject line "Claim for NSW storms CCS period of emergency"
- include in the body of the email for each affected service:
  - service name
  - service ID
  - service address
  - estimated number of impacted families



- expected period of closure
- reason for closure
- note whether the service was directed to close
- attach any of the following as evidence for each affected service:
  - photos of damaged caused by the storm
  - communications from state emergency services agencies
  - other information you consider helpful.

We will review your request for emergency support. We will respond via email to advise if your request has been approved.

## 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](#).

## 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 NSW](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## 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 the impact of fires.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from 27 January 2025 to 10 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Rural City of Horsham
- West Wimmera Shire
- Ararat Rural City
- Macedon Ranges Shire
- Northern Grampians Shire
- Southern Grampians Shire.

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.

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





## Queensland floods: 7 new LGAs added to CCS period of emergency

**We've added 7 extra local government areas (LGA) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from Wednesday 29 January 2025 to Tuesday 25 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- **Charters Towers Regional Council**
- **Cook Shire Council**
- **Douglas Shire Council**
- **Etheridge Shire Council**
- **Tablelands Regional Council**
- **Whitsunday Regional Council**
- **Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council.**
- Burdekin Shire Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Aboriginal Shire of Palm Island
- Townsville City Council
- Hinchinbrook Council
- Cassowary Coast 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 <https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency>.

## 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 [qld.gov.au/emergency](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## Queensland floods: new LGAs added to CCS period of emergency

**We've added two extra local government areas (LGA) to the declared Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of Queensland due to the impact of flooding.**

The CCS period of emergency applies from Wednesday 29 January 2025 to Tuesday 11 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- Burdekin Shire Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Aboriginal Shire of Palm Island
- Townsville City Council
- **Hinchinbrook Council**
- **Cassowary Coast 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 [qld.gov.au/emergency](https://qld.gov.au/emergency).

## 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 [qld.gov.au/emergency](https://qld.gov.au/emergency) for current emergency information in your region.

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



## From the department

### 3-day guarantee legislation introduced

Today, the Australian Government introduced legislation to parliament to give children access to 3 days a week of subsidised early childhood education and care.

**It's called the 3-day guarantee.**

Should legislation pass, families can get at least 72 subsidised hours of care each fortnight for each child. This is regardless of how much work, training, study or volunteering they do.

Families caring for First Nations children will get 100 hours of subsidised care each fortnight for each child.

This proposed change is part of the government's pathway toward a [universal early education and care system](#).

Read more about the [proposed changes](#).

### How to request a worker retention payment funding review

**The funding review process allows us to support unique providers for whom the standard payment calculation method is not appropriate.**

A provider must be approved for the worker retention payment and smooth funding across services **before** requesting a funding review.

The provider must operate services that:

- have a unique staffing profile, or
- have stand-alone jurisdiction-funded preschool rooms, or
- are First Nations, remote/ or very remote, or
- get the Community Child Care Fund and have a unique operating model, or
- cannot be provided consistent and smoothed funding by the provider across a financial year.

If you meet the above criteria, contact [ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:ccshelpdesk@education.gov.au) to request a funding review.

Read more about [requesting a funding review](#) on our website.

### Give feedback on disability standards

**We're seeking feedback on proposed changes to include early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the Disability Standards for Education (the Standards).**

The Standards explain what you must do to support students with disability.

In [2020 a review of the Standards](#) recommended including ECEC services. This will make it clearer and easier for you to understand what your service must do to support children with disability under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.



You can give feedback anonymously and you do not have to answer all the questions.

FAQs, documents that explain the changes, and the link to provide feedback are on the [consultation website](#).

## CCS period of emergency declared

**A Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency is in place for parts of New South Wales and Queensland due to the impact of storms and flooding.**

Visit our website to read more about:

- [NSW storms: CCS period of emergency](#)
- [Queensland floods: CCS period of emergency](#).

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

## Sector spotlight

### Changes to fit and proper person requirements

**From 1 April 2025, new CCS provider approval applicants will need to provide a statement of tax record (STR).**

The provider must supply the STR. Applicants will need to:

- request and obtain the required STR for their organisation from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO)
- provide the STR as part of their application for CCS approval.

For CCS approval, a provider must be considered fit and proper to handle public money. All new providers go through a fit and proper assessment. The STR will form part of this assessment. It demonstrates a provider's engagement with the tax system.

Providers will be able to request an STR from the ATO:

- by using [ATO online services](#)
- through their registered tax professional.

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

## Facts from FAL

### Inducements and advertising your service

**An inducement is an incentive offered by a provider or a third party to secure a child's enrolment at a service.**

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

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
- provide 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.

## How to avoid an overpayment

**You may sometimes 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 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.

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

Learn more about [how to manage overpayments](#) on our website.

## Need help administering CCS?

**Our website has everything you need to know about child care subsidy, including [how-to guides](#) for administering CCS.**

If you need specific help to administer CCS, our CCS Provider Helpdesk is the place to go.

The helpdesk provides frontline support for child care providers and services seeking answers. The helpdesk can answer your 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, always include your CCS Provider/Service ID in your email.

## Workforce support

### Apply for a professional development subsidy

**Applications for our professional development subsidies are open.**

The subsidies aim to strengthen the skills and professional experience of your workforce.

We pay the subsidies to providers to pass on to staff through training opportunities and paid leave.



The subsidies provide a flat daily or weekly rate depending on the activity. This may not cover all costs. Providers are responsible for any remaining costs, including associated on-costs.

Following high demand for the professional development subsidy in the last round, we will prioritise applications for:

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

Remaining applications will be funded in the order they are received until funding is exhausted.

Applications close on 14 March.

Learn more about the [professional development opportunities](#).

## News for families

### Getting help with child care fees for before and after school care

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) can help with the cost of child care, before and after school care and holiday care.

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





## NSW storms: CCS period of emergency declared

We've declared a Child Care Subsidy (CCS) period of emergency in parts of NSW following storm activity.

The CCS period of emergency applies from 15 January 2025 to 17 January 2025 in the following local government areas:

- City of Maitland
- Port Stephens Council
- Singleton Council
- Northern Beaches Council
- Mid-Coast Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Cessnock City Council
- Blacktown City Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- Snowy Valleys Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council

To access the emergency provisions below your **person with management or control** must contact the department as follows:

- email [CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCSHelpdesk@education.gov.au)
- use the subject line "Claim for NSW storms CCS period of emergency"
- include in the body of the email for each affected service:
  - service name
  - service ID
  - service address
  - estimated number of impacted families
  - expected period of closure
  - reason for closure
  - note whether the service was directed to close
- attach any of the following as evidence for each affected service:
  - photos of damaged caused by the storm
  - communications from state emergency services agencies
  - other information you consider helpful.



We will review your request for emergency support. We will respond via email to advise if your request has been approved.

## 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](#).

## 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](#) for current emergency information in your region.



## Queensland floods: CCS period of emergency declared

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

The CCS period of emergency applies from Wednesday 29 January 2025 to Tuesday 11 February 2025 in the following local government areas:

- Burdekin Shire Council
- Cairns Regional Council
- Aboriginal Shire of Palm Island
- Townsville City 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 [qld.gov.au/emergency](https://qld.gov.au/emergency).

## 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 [qld.gov.au/emergency](https://qld.gov.au/emergency) for current emergency information in your region.



## From the department

### Worker retention payment funding review process

**The funding review process allows us to support unique providers for whom the standard worker retention payment calculation method is not appropriate.**

The government has committed to provide all participating providers with funding to cover:

- a 10% wage increase for all eligible workers in the first year
- an additional 5% wage increase for all eligible workers in the second year
- a minimum of an additional 20% funding for eligible on-costs.

For most providers, a standard payment calculation will cover these costs. However, there may be a small number of services who provide a unique service offering outside the scope of the standard payment calculation.

This includes providers who operate services that:

- have a unique staffing profile, or
- have stand-alone jurisdiction-funded preschool rooms, or
- are First Nations, remote/ or very remote, or
- get the Community Child Care Fund and have a unique operating model, or
- cannot be provided consistent and smoothed funding by the provider across a financial year.

Providers of these services can request a funding review. **Before** requesting a review, you must first be approved for the worker retention payment.

You will need to complete an application to receive a funding review. If found eligible:

- we will vary your grant agreement
- some or all of your services will move to an alternative funding review stream
- payments will be made quarterly based on employee data
- you will have additional reporting requirements.

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

### Ensuring quality and safety in early childhood education and care

**We're ensuring quality and safety in services that don't operate under the National Quality Framework (NQF).**

For most early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, the NQF provides a national approach to ensuring quality standards are met.

A small number of services are out of scope of the NQF. This includes some Community Child Care Fund restricted (CCCFR) services. Such services operate under the *Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017*.



This year we're starting a regulatory project to provide additional support to these services. This will enable them to meet the quality and safety requirements in the Minister's Rules.

We will work collaboratively with these services to ensure quality and safety.

Our regulatory approach:

- will align with the key objectives of the NQF
- will acknowledge the unique contexts these services operate in
- aims to ensure all children have access to high quality and safe early learning environments.

The project builds on several existing projects including:

- [ACECQA Quality and Safety Project](#)
- [Northern Territory Regulatory Project](#)
- [South Australia Regulatory Project](#).

We have contacted identified services directly with more information. If you have questions about the project, contact [ECYRegulatoryProject@education.gov.au](mailto:ECYRegulatoryProject@education.gov.au).

Read more about the [regulatory project](#) on our website.

## Facts from FAL

### Reminder that fee reporting obligations were due 14 January

**Changes made in September 2024 mean that you must notify us of fees at least twice a year to ensure they are correctly updated or remain accurate.**

You need to notify us of your fees 14 days after the end of the:

- financial year – due 14 July
- calendar year – due 14 January.

This also includes reporting no change to fees.

To report no change, update the date of event on the fees and inclusions screen via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.

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

- receiving CCS approval
- starting the CCS approved service
- changing your fees.

This change was part of the government's commitment to improving the transparency of child care fees. It will help families make informed financial decisions about ECEC.

Read more about [notifications and reporting](#) on our website.



## Claiming CCS when your service is closed

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

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

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

## What happens if you get an infringement notice?

**We issue infringement notices when providers 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 infringement notices 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.

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 [how to administer CCS](#)
- 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.

## Reporting absences

**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.

You cannot report absences when your service is closed, except on a public holiday or during a [period of emergency](#).

During a period of emergency, the closure must be as a direct result of the emergency.

Read more about [how to manage absences](#) on our website.

## Workforce support

### Support for educators to complete practicums

**Are your educators using the practicum exchange network? They may be eligible for a living allowance to complete a practicum exchange.**

The [practicum exchange network](#) is a dedicated website connecting ECEC services and educators in training.

Educators who work in the sector and use the network may be eligible for a living and travel allowance to complete a practicum in a rural or remote area.



Providers must apply on behalf of eligible staff. Applications close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [living allowance](#).

## 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.

Families can find more details at [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#).





## From the department

### We've improved our website

#### **We've made changes to our website based on your feedback.**

Last year we asked you what you thought of our website. You provided valuable feedback, including the need for more streamlined navigation.

You can still find all the information you need at [education.gov.au/early-childhood](https://education.gov.au/early-childhood). We've improved the structure and layout of the site to help you find what you're looking for.

We've established a new section for providers which contains:

- how-to guides for administering the Child Care Subsidy
- information about your legal obligations
- our approach to compliance and enforcement
- extra support available during difficult or challenging times
- what we're doing to support your workforce.

As part of the updates, some URLs have changed. We recommend updating your bookmarks to ensure you can easily access our content.

### Get the latest on the 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
- information about workplace instruments, awards and supported bargaining
- the minimum rates you must pass on to eligible workers
- an application guide, and more.

We are receiving a high volume of incomplete or inaccurate applications. Applications must be complete and accurate before we can start our assessment.

Please consult our [application guide](#) and ensure you have checked off all the required details before submitting.



## Celebrating 50 Connected Beginnings sites



**Last week the Australian Government launched the 50th Connected Beginnings site in Kununurra, Western Australia.**

This is a major milestone for the grants program, which helps Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life.

In 2021, the Australian Government committed \$81.8 million to expand the program to 50 sites nationally by 2025.

Minister for Early Childhood Education the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP announced \$2.4 million for Binarri-binyja yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation Limited to deliver the 50th site in Kununurra on Thursday.

The new site will support around 600 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in Kununurra.

Nationally, the program supports about 24,800 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children across all 50 sites. The program has the potential to support up to 20% of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children aged zero to 5.

Connected Beginnings is a community-owned and led initiative making a tangible difference in Closing the Gap in early childhood education. It provides steady, wrap-around support so children are safe, healthy and ready to thrive at school.

The program is jointly funded by us and the [Department of Health and Aged Care](#). It's delivered in partnership with [SNAICC – National Voice for our Children](#) and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#) and [explore all 50 sites](#).

## CCS helpdesk closed next Monday

**The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Provider Helpdesk will be closed for the public holiday on Monday 27 January.**

The helpdesk will re-open at 9 am AEDT on Tuesday 28 January.

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

CCS payments may be affected by the public holiday.



## Reminder for CCCF grant recipients

**A reminder that grants under round 4 of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant are transitioning to the [Community Grants Hub](#).**

If you have a capital support grant, it will transition from tomorrow.

If you have both a capital support and sustainability support grant, both will transition from tomorrow.

If you only have a sustainability support grant, it will transition from 31 March 2025.

You don't need to do anything. The Community Grants Hub will contact you once your grant has been transferred.

## Change to start date of direct gap fee collection

**Last year, the government announced that Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) providers must collect the gap fee direct from families.**

The start date for this measure has moved to 1 January 2026. This change is based on feedback from the sector. It gives providers time to make necessary administrative changes.

We have partnered with Family Day Care Australia and the NSW Family Day Care Association to support providers to transition.

Family Day Care Australia will support FDC providers. NSW Family Day Care Association will support IHC providers. They will be reaching out to providers shortly.

An [overview of the proposed changes](#) can be found on our website.

This measure is subject to the passage of legislation.

## Sector spotlight

### Issues with RA number in PRODA

**A small number of providers are experiencing an IT error where their RA number is removed from their records.**

If you're affected:

- your service status will show as 'not approved'
- you will not be able to interact with your services in the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

**This does not mean that your CCS approval has been removed.**

To fix the problem, a person with management or control should email [CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au](mailto:CCShelpdesk@education.gov.au). Include screenshots from PRODA showing:

- your PRODA RA number and your ABN
- personnel details for your organisation showing the person listed as 'Director'.

We will work with Services Australia to restore access. This usually takes 1–2 business days.

We are also working with Services Australia to permanently fix the issue.



## Celebrating one year of Gecccko



**Gecccko is our free online learning platform for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. It has resources to help you understand your Family Assistance Law (FAL) obligations.**

Gecccko was launched in December 2023 and has since become a go-to resource for providers. Gecccko has:

- more than 6,000 user registrations
- more than 12,500 course completions.

What we're hearing from users:

*"These courses would be very beneficial to new staff."*

*"The learning courses are very user-friendly and easy to complete, and specifically, the knowledge tests are very user friendly and easy too."*

Want to improve your understanding of FAL and check you're administering CCS correctly? Register to use Gecccko.

You can:

- login using your tablet, laptop, or mobile phone
- access a range of self-paced courses about FAL
- download course certificates upon completion.

Gecccko currently offers 11 free courses. New courses are added regularly. Two key courses coming this year include a First Nations Cultural Awareness course and a comprehensive Family Day Care course.

If there is a specific topic that you want us to explore, please email us at [gecccko@education.gov.au](mailto:gecccko@education.gov.au).

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

## Get our updates on social media

**Did you know we run a Facebook group for CCS approved providers and services?**

Our group is a place to get authorised and fact-checked information about:

- CCS



- FAL
- other Australian Government-led ECEC policies and programs.

We welcome general conversation about these topics in our group. Where you need specific help or advice, we encourage you to contact the CCS Provider Helpdesk.

If you haven't already, join more than 10,000 members in [our Facebook group](#).

## Facts from FAL

### The enrolment process in 4 steps

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

All children who attend approved care must be enrolled. This is a requirement under FAL.

Enrolling children correctly means families can get CCS payments.

Follow these steps.

#### Step 1

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

#### Step 2

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

#### Step 3

Submit an enrolment notice in the CCSS for the care arrangement.

#### Step 4

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

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

## 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.



Check out the examples on our website to help you understand [how to report different types of third-party payments](#).

## Workforce support

### Apply for professional development subsidies



**Applications are open for our 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.

We pay these subsidies to providers. Providers pass funding on to staff through training opportunities and paid leave.

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.

Following high demand for the professional development subsidy in the last round, we will prioritise applications for:

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

Remaining applications will be funded in the order they are received until funding is exhausted.

Applications will close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [professional development opportunities](#).



# Share with families

## Know where to go for help when you have an issue?

**Start by having a conversation with your child care service or provider if you have a complaint or dispute relating to Child Care Subsidy (CCS) including:**

- enrolments, payments, debts or balancing
- safety or quality.

If they cannot resolve the issue, you have a range of options.

### Services Australia

Contact Services Australia on the [Centrelink families line](#) if you have a complaint or concern about:

- enrolments
- payments
- debts
- CCS payment balancing.

If your child care service or Services Australia are unable to resolve the issue, submit our [online contact form](#).

### Child safety concerns

If you have concerns about the quality or safety of a child care service or provider, contact your [state or territory regulatory authority](#).



## From the department

### Worker retention payment update

#### New workplace instrument available

On 10 December 2024, the Fair Work Commission approved the [Early Childhood Education and Care Multi-Employer Enterprise Agreement](#).

The agreement is compliant with the worker retention payment conditions. This means that providers covered by the agreement will meet the workplace instrument requirement.

Providers can apply to join the agreement. Find out how on the [Fair Work Commission website](#).

#### Compliant workplace instruments

You must engage workers through a workplace instrument that meets grant conditions.

The workplace instrument must:

- include an obligation to pay workers at least 10% above current award rates
- provide for an additional 5% above applicable award rates from 1 December 2025
- apply until at least 30 November 2026.

A workplace instrument will not be compliant if it excludes the above amounts from calculations of:

- penalties
- loadings
- termination payments
- payments while on leave
- superannuation.

#### Minimum rates updated

We have updated the [worker retention payment minimum rates](#) to reflect the *Children's Services Award 2010* rate increase for level 1.1 workers from 1 January 2025.

#### Get help with your application

We are receiving a high volume of incomplete or inaccurate applications. Applications must be complete and accurate before we can start our assessment.

Before you submit your application, please consult our [application guide](#) and ensure you have checked off all the required details.

The application guide shows you:

- how to find your CRNs, ABN and ACNs





- how to find your correct provider and service names
- guidance on financial and staffing information.

## Payments start this month

Regular payments will start to eligible providers this month.

We will send payments to the same bank account as your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments.

Please ensure your bank account details are up to date via the [Provider Entry Point](#) (PEP) or your third-party software.

## Backdating payments

We understand meeting certain conditions, like having a workplace instrument, may take time. We will backdate payments for providers who:

- submit a complete application by 30 June 2025
- meet the eligibility criteria from 2 December 2024.

We will backdate payments to either:

- 2 December 2024: for providers who have a compliant workplace instrument that covers the full grant period, even if the instrument was adopted or formed after 2 December 2024
- the date from which the workplace instrument applies: for providers who have a compliant workplace instrument that starts after 2 December 2024.

## Get the latest on our website

We have resources to help you navigate the process, including:

- read [details about the payment](#)
- see the [minimum rates you must pass on to eligible workers](#)
- learn about the [types of workplace instruments you may use](#)
- consult our [application guide for help applying](#).

## Connected Beginnings is expanding in the ACT

**The Australian Government is expanding the Connected Beginnings program in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).**

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.

The new site at Winnunga Nimmitjyah Health and Community Services will support up to 1000 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children across the ACT.

The site joins 48 other locations across the country supporting about 24,200 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children.



The new site is part of an \$81.8 million investment from the Australian Government to expand the program to 50 sites nationally.

Once all 50 sites are established, the program has the potential to support up to 20% of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children aged zero to 5.

Learn more about [Connected Beginnings](#).

## Update for CCCF grant recipients

**Grants made under round 4 of the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) disadvantaged and vulnerable communities grant will soon transition to the [Community Grants Hub](#).**

The transition will occur in 2 phases:

- if you only have a 'capital support' grant, this will transition from 23 January 2025
- if you have both a 'capital support' and 'sustainability support' grant, these will both transition from 23 January 2025
- if you only have a 'sustainability support' grant, this will transition from 31 March 2025.

You don't need to do anything. The Community Grants Hub will contact you once your grant has been transferred.

After this, all communication about your grant will be through the Community Grants Hub. This includes:

- questions about your grant
- grant reporting
- payment information
- acquittals.

We will continue to manage grants until the transfer date.

## Facts from FAL

### Getting ready for a new school year

**Here are some important reminders about the 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
- they 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 [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](#).



## How can you help families use EFT?

**Most families get salaries or benefits electronically, making it easy for them to pay the gap fee using electronic funds transfer (EFT).**

Families can pay the gap fee by payroll deduction as long as:

- the payment is made using EFT
- the provider can identify the electronic payment as being the gap fee for the family.

Learn more about how [you can help families use EFT](#).

Complete the **Electronic Payment of Gap Fees** course in [Geccko](#) to learn more.

## Submitting session reports

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

As a CCS-approved provider, you must:

- submit session reports within 14 days 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.

## Who must have a working with children check?

**Broadly, anyone who has contact with children at an early childhood education and care service must have a current working with children check (WWCC).**

This usually includes:

- 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 more about your [WWCC obligations](#) and where to apply on our website.



# Workforce support

## Apply for professional development subsidies



**Applications are now open for round 2 of the 2024–25 professional development 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.

We pay these subsidies to providers. Providers pass funding on to staff through training opportunities and paid leave.

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.

Following high demand for the professional development subsidy in the last round, we will prioritise applications for:

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

Remaining applications will be funded in the order they are received until funding is exhausted.

Applications will close on 14 March 2025.

Learn more about the [professional development opportunities](#).

## Practicum exchange living allowance applications open

**Providers can now apply for a living allowance for educators who complete practicums in rural and remote areas.**

The practicum exchange living allowance is for educators who:

- use the [practicum exchange network](#)
- arrange a practicum in a rural or remote area other than their home location between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025 through the network
- have worked full-time, part-time or casually at a CCS-approved service for more than 40 hours in the last 3 months
- are an Australian citizen, permanent resident or hold a valid work visa.



The allowance will provide up to \$1,543.50 per week, for up to 4 weeks.

Applications are now open. Providers must apply on behalf of eligible staff.

Learn more about the [living allowance](#).

## 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 child and any 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 \$365,611
- your family has more than one CCS eligible child aged 5 or under.

Services Australia will 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](#).

