



Four-year-old preschool Central Registration Program

Priority of Access and Offer Policy Guidelines

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Priority of Access and Offer Policy Guidelines

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Objective

The Priority of Access and Offer Policy Guidelines ensure a fair and equitable process for the management of the central registration and allocation of four-year-old preschool places in Nillumbik.

Purpose

Council's Preschool Central Registration Program manages applications and placement of children for four-year-old funded preschool programs. This guideline is underpinned by objectives set out in the following State and Local Government policies, frameworks and guidelines:

- Department of Education and Training's *The Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016*. For a copy of the guidelines visit www.education.vic.gov.au
- Municipal Association of Victoria's *A Framework and Resource Guide for Managing a Central Registrations Process for Kindergarten Places 2013*
- Council's *Preschool Committee of Management Central Enrolment Consultation 2010 – 2011*
- Council's *Integrating Child, youth and family services strategy – Birth to 25 years*
- The National Quality Framework
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.

This guideline will outline:

- preschool central registration requirements for funded four-year-old preschool programs
- the process to be adhered to when submitting and accepting applications for four-year-old preschool programs
- the offer process of four-year-old preschool places

Scope and coverage

This guideline covers any person accessing or administering the Nillumbik Preschool Central Registrations Program.

This guideline applies to all:

- residents and non-residents of Nillumbik
- Council officers responsible for managing, overseeing or administering the Nillumbik Preschool Central Registration Program
- Committees of Management or Early Years Managers of Nillumbik four-year-old preschool programs.

This guideline does not apply to:

- three-year-old preschool programs. A child who attends a three-year-old preschool program will not automatically be enrolled or guaranteed a place at the same preschool in the four-year-old program
- preschool programs operating in private services and child care centres

It must also be noted that such guidelines cannot identify the vast range of individual circumstances that families are in, and therefore, Council reserves the right to assess and make decisions based on individual circumstances.

Statement and principles

Council will provide a fair and equitable preschool registration process. Council will ensure the registration process:

- promotes fair and equitable access to preschool programs
- supports all eligible children to access a preschool program, including those who face identified barriers to participation
- does not inadvertently present barriers to participation

In order to achieve these objectives, Council will ensure the registration guidelines and processes:

- adhere to State and Local Government policies, frameworks and guidelines as listed in the Purpose section
- comply with Victorian and national legislation, including anti-discrimination, human rights and privacy laws
- are developed on the basis of local need determined by surveys of the local community
- support children who are experiencing disadvantage
- address issues of eligibility for funded places, vacant funded places and vacant unfunded places
- outline how waiting lists will be prioritised
- are effectively communicated to families and the local community
- considers policies associated with neighbouring municipalities and the related four-year-old central registrations policies



Definitions and abbreviations

Applicant

A parent or guardian who has lodged a completed four-year-old preschool application form.

Application

Form submitted to Council for registration into a preschool.

Early Years Manager

A not-for-profit organisation which receives funding from DET to manage early childhood services offering four-year-old preschool programs. The Early Years manager is responsible for the overall service delivery of the preschool.

DET

Department of Education and Training.

Early Start Kindergarten

A child eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is any child aged three by 30 April of the year she/he is attending preschool, who has been identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or is a child known to Child Protection or a child referred by Child Protection to Child FIRST. Refer to DET The Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016.

Eligible child

A child who is eligible to apply for a place in a subsidised four-year-old preschool program as stated in the DET The Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016.

Enrolment

The point at which a family has formerly accepted a place in a group at the preschool.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten is the interchangeable term for Preschool. It is the term used by the State Government and is a universal early childhood program which is funded by the Victorian Government for four-year-old children in the year prior to commencing primary school.

Preschool

Interchangeable term for Kindergarten.
See definition Kindergarten.

Preschool Central Registration Officer(s)

Council Officer(s) responsible for the administration of Nillumbik's four-year-old Preschool Central Registration Program.

Registration

An application form is verified and entered into Council's Central Registration system.

Vulnerability

For the purpose of this document vulnerability refers to a child and family where there are risks to a child's wellbeing and development. In families experiencing vulnerability, the capacity of parents and care-givers to effectively care, protect and provide for their children's long term development and wellbeing is limited. Vulnerability can be of varying durations, long or short term and or situational. Consideration needs to be given to the context of the situation of the child/family.

Implementation

Eligibility criteria

As per the DET Kindergarten Funding Guidelines, one year of funded preschool is available to:

- children who turn four years of age on, or before 30 April the year they will attend the funded preschool program, and who intend to go to school the following year
- children who turn six years of age during the preschool year who have been granted an exemption from school entry age requirements by the regional office of the DET
- children who have received approval for a second year of funded four-year-old preschool through DET
- children who are younger than four years of age by 30 April in the year of attendance whose family has requested and received approval for early age entry from the DET, or the non-government school that the child is to attend
- eligible children of three years of age on, or before 30 April of the year of attendance who are accessing the DET funded Early Start Kindergarten Program
- children who are fully immunised for their age refer to No Jab, No Play Legislation information on page 5

Parents/guardians of children born in the months of January to April have the choice of which year to enrol their child including the year the child is eligible to attend preschool or the following year.

Second year of funded preschool year

The DET provides funding to support children to access a funded preschool program in the year before they start school. Where a child is observed to display delays in key outcome areas of learning and development, the possibility of a second year of funded preschool may be considered. The early childhood teacher is responsible for determining a child's eligibility to receive a second year of funded preschool.

Once an assessment of the child is undertaken and a Declaration of Eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten is completed and sent to the appropriate DET regional office, the child is eligible to attend a second year of funded preschool.

Children who are granted a second year of funded preschool will be offered a place at the preschool that they currently attend and a position has been reserved for them. In the event that a child is requesting to transfer to a different preschool for their second year, they will be offered the first available position within their priority category.

Early age entry into preschool

As per the DET Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016: If a child is aged less than four by 30 April of the year they are to attend a funded year of four-year-old preschool, the parent must request early school entry approval. This request must be in writing for their child to be considered to attend in the following year. Requests can be made to the DET regional office or non-government primary school the child will be attending. A copy of the letter must accompany the preschool application form.

No Jab, No Play Legislation

All parents/guardians seeking to finalise enrolment of their child at an early childhood service (including preschool) in Victoria must provide evidence that their child is:

- fully immunised for their age OR
- on a vaccination catch-up program OR
- unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons

'Conscientious objection' is not an exemption under the 'No Jab No Play' Legislation.

You can get copy of your child's most recent Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) as evidence of your child's immunisation.

To request an Immunisation History Statement contact the ACIR:

- phone 1800 653 809
- email acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au
- visit Medicare Australia online
- visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.

If your child is not fully immunised, or if you are not sure if your child is fully immunised, or you're interested to find out more you can visit www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play or www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/ to:

- locate and consult your nearest immunisation provider
- review the 'Immunisation – childhood' fact sheet to find out what vaccines are due and when
- review the 'Immunisation – facts and misconceptions' fact sheet if you have questions or concerns about vaccine safety
- review the No Jab No Play frequently asked questions
- review the brochure 'Starting childcare or kindergarten? Immunisation information for parents enrolling a child'

Alternatively you can talk to your regular family doctor/ GP for more information or to determine if your child is unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons. The GP will need to complete and sign a Medicare Immunisation Exemption Medical Contraindication Form, and send it to ACIR. The parent/guardian will need to obtain an updated Immunisation History Statement from ACIR and provide it to the preschool to finalise enrolment.

Unsubsidised places

Unsubsidised places refer to children who attend preschool but are not subsidised by DET. An unsubsidised child shall not take the place of an eligible child.

Parents/guardians who require an unsubsidised place are required to contact the Preschool Central Registration Officer and advise of the preschool they wish to attend.

A position can only be offered once all eligible children have been placed and the position will be withdrawn should an eligible child require a place.

The child's parent/guardian would need to pay the full fee (DET Funding and the Nillumbik preschool's term fee) for their child to attend preschool.

Application process

Submitting applications

Applications open on the first business day in March each year, two years before children are eligible to attend four-year-old preschool and remain open up until 30 June the year prior to attendance.

Applications can be submitted in a number of ways:

- **Online:**
Complete the application form and fee payment online at www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/preschoolapplicationform
- **In person or by mail:**
Application forms are available on Council's website at www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/preschools. Application forms can be submitted in person or by mail.

Eligible children must be registered in the name identified on their birth certificate or equivalent or on the passport or travel documents for children born overseas.

Completed application forms can only be accepted with the required supporting documentation and preschool application fee. A separate application form must be submitted for each eligible child.

Children with additional needs

Children with additional needs may be eligible for priority access into preschool and funding through the DET Kindergarten Inclusion Support packages. When the eligible child accepts a place at a Nillumbik preschool the Central Registration Officer will advise the preschool of the contact details for that child so that funding applications can be completed in a timely manner.

For this reason, parents/guardians are required to provide additional information within the preschool application and to the Preschool Central Registration Officer in relation to their child's additional needs.

Confirmation of applications

When a preschool application form is received, the Preschool Central Registration Officer or relevant Council Officer will enter the application into the Preschool Central Registration system.

In the event of the application form being incomplete, the officer will contact the applicant to request the required information and/or documentation. The application will not be processed/entered into the system until the required information and/or documentation has been received.

Once the application has been entered into the system, a letter of confirmation will be sent within two weeks to the applicant confirming the details and preferences as outlined in the application.

Application fees

Council will charge all applicants a non-refundable preschool application fee to cover the cost of Council's administration of the process and system. This fee is separate to the preschool term fees. This fee is reviewed on an annual basis and is subject to increases based on the CPI (consumer price index). Fee increases come into effect as of 1 July each year.

Council will reduce financial barriers for vulnerable and disadvantage families by offering a reduced application fee to a child who is identified by a parent/guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or for others who can supply supporting documentation in the following forms:

- Commonwealth health care card
- Commonwealth pensioner concession card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs gold or white card
- Refugee Visa (subclass 200)
- In-country Special Humanitarian Visa (subclass 201)
- Global Special Humanitarian Visa (subclass 202)
- Temporary Humanitarian Concern Visa (subclass 786)
- Protection Visa (subclass 866)
- Emergency Rescue Visa (subclass 203)
- Woman at Risk Visa (subclass 204)
- Bridging Visas A-E
- Birth certificate identifying a child as a multiple birth child

The application fee can be paid in person at the Civic Centre by cash, EFTPOS, or credit card, cheque or money order via the post.

Applications received after 30 June (late applications)

Applications received after 30 June the year prior to attendance at preschool are considered late applications and will be given equal opportunity to positions during second and third round offers. This is provided that the application is received within a minimum of one week before the next round of offers commences. Due consideration will be given to children identified at risk or vulnerable.

Changes to preschool application details

Changes to application details must be made in writing by emailing the Preschool Central Registration Officer at preschool@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Application changes can be made before 30 June in the offer year without affecting the offer process.

Any changes made after 30 June will be considered a late application and will follow the late application process.

Deferrals

If a parent/guardian identifies that their child would benefit from commencing preschool a year later, they can choose to defer their application any time up until the day of commencement in the four year old preschool program.

Deferred applications will be considered a new registration for the following preschool year, but will not incur further application fees.

Requests to defer a child must be made in writing by emailing the Preschool Central Registration Officer at preschool@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Cancellation of an application

Cancellation of an application must be made in writing to the Preschool Central Registration Officer at preschool@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

At the time of cancellation, Council will seek information regarding the reasons for cancellation to inform planning and central registration service delivery.

Offer procedure

Pre-offer audit

During April in the year prior to attendance, applicants will be sent a notice known as the audit letter confirming their application information. Any changes to this information needs to be made in writing by the applicant by completing the registration audit form by the date stipulated in the audit letter.

Priority of access

All applications for four-year-old preschool in Council's Central Registration Program are processed in accordance with the priority of access as outlined in the table on page 8. This aligns in with the DET Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016 and the Municipal Association of Victoria's A Framework and Resource Guide for Managing a Central Registration Process for Kindergarten Places.

Offer process

The preschool central registrations process runs according to a systematic timeline. The offer process will commence in July of the year prior to attendance, with first round offers being sent from Council to all registered families. Applicants must respond by completing the preschool offer form, and have to the option to:

- accept the offer
- accept the offer but wait for a higher preference preschool
- defer the application to the following year
- decline the offer

Second and third round offers are processed in August.

After round three, Council will continue to make offers until all positions are filled or all children are offered a place, whichever comes first. If a place has not been offered during this process, children will remain on a waiting list until September when they will be contacted to either consider an alternative preschool where a vacancy exists or cancel the application.

See Appendix A for the Central Registration Timeline.

Priority status	Verification process / documentation required
Priority 1	
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attending a three-year-old preschool program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, is <p>referred by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Protection Child and Family Services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/ integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) Maternal and child health nurse, or out-of-home care provider
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	Family identifies the child as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
Asylum seeker and refugee children	Appropriate visa that identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	Children or parents who hold a Commonwealth health care card, pensioner concession card, Veteran's Affairs card or multiple birth children (triplets or more)
<p>Children with additional needs, defined as children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program require a combination of services which are individually planned have an identified specific disability or developmental delay 	<p>The child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten <p>Previously approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Disability Insurance Scheme Early Childhood Intervention Service Preschool Field Officer, or Maternal and child health nurse Holds a Child Disability health care card
Priority 2	
Children who are/intending to be Nillumbik residents or children of Nillumbik rate payers	<p>Current proof of residency document such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate payer notice Driver licence Utility bill (gas, electric, phone) Contract Of Sale document Certified statutory declaration
Priority 3	
Children who have a connection to Nillumbik (only one form of connection is required)	<p>A child with a connection to Nillumbik is defined as meeting one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child's parent/guardian is working or studying within Nillumbik which is evidenced by a letter from an employer or educational institution The child has regular child care arrangements in Nillumbik which is evidenced by a letter or an invoice from the child care service provider or a certified statutory declaration from an unpaid child care provider The child is attending the three-year-old program at the preschool which is evidenced by a document from the preschool confirming enrolment /attendance The child has a sibling who attended the preschool within five years of the child's intended attendance year, which is evidenced by an attendance record or invoice from the preschool The preferred Nillumbik preschool is the closest preschool to the child's place of residence when travelling the shortest practical route (as verified by Google maps)
Priority 4	
	Children who are non-residents, and do not have a connection to Nillumbik



Preschool group allocation

Once the offer process is complete, Council will release a detailed list of confirmed registrations to each preschool management body including parent/guardian's name, children's name, date of birth, gender and contact details including address, phone and email address.

Preschools will then liaise directly with families and will send out group preference sheets to families mid September of the year prior to attendance and families will be requested to return their preference sheet, with their non-refundable deposit fee within a specified time frame.

Preschools will have three weeks to finalise their group preferences and must notify families by 30 October in the year prior to preschool attendance.

Nominating a primary funded preschool program

Children are eligible to receive preschool funding at one nominated preschool. At the time of enrolment at the preschool, or during the course of the preschool year, families should notify the service if they are accessing a preschool program at a second service (preschool or long day care centre).

Preschools offering registered child care services

Some preschools within Nillumbik offer child care services including extended hours programs or outside school hours care. Fee rebates are available to families if services are registered with the Department of Human Services and have a carer reference number.

For more information visit the Department of Human Services website www.humanservices.gov.au or speak to your preferred preschool service.

Assessment of individual circumstances

It must be noted that these guidelines cannot identify the vast range of individual circumstances for families and therefore Council reserves the right to assess and make decisions based on individual circumstances.

Final decisions on the assessment of individual circumstances, not outlined in these guidelines will be forwarded to Council's Early Years team Leader at family.services@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Grievances and appeals

Any grievances or appeals in relation to these guidelines or with the implementation are to be directed through to Nillumbik Shire Council's Family and Children's Services at family.services@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Should there be no satisfactory resolution, the applicant is requested to outline their grievance in writing to:

Coordinator Community Services
Nillumbik Shire Council
PO Box 471
GREENSBOROUGH VIC 3088

A formal response will be sent within ten business days of receipt of the letter.

Privacy

Nillumbik Shire Council is committed to the responsible collection and handling of personal information.

Personal information requested through the preschool central registration program is required to assist in the placement of children. Information gathered through the registration process will be treated in accordance with legislative guidelines and Council policies.

Personal information will only be shared with those directly responsible for the administration of the preschool central registration system, the committee of management and staff at the relevant preschool as appropriate.

If the information is sought from any other source it will not be divulged without parental consent, except if requested by law enforcement or government representatives (e.g. disclosure is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare).

If families choose not to provide the information requested, Council may not be able to place the child at a preschool. All application forms will be destroyed seven years after the final attendance of the child.

For more information relating to Council's Privacy Policy, including rights to access to any information collected on this form, refer to www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/privacy

Role of the Preschool Central Registration Officer

It is the role of the Preschool Central Registration Officer to:

- maintain preschool central registrations for the current year along including the following and subsequent years
- receive preschool application forms, enter and amend data on both children and preschools, and maintain the registration system of children attending four-year-old preschool in Nillumbik
- distribute information relating to the central registration process and timeline to preschools within Nillumbik
- collaborate with neighbouring local councils and those in the wider catchment
- ensure documents associated with the central registrations program are up to date and accessible to the public
- liaise with Nillumbik preschool management groups to ensure the efficiency of processes and information exchange
- point of contact for preschool applications enquiries and the central registration process
- resource the annual Preschool Committee of Management Enrolment Officer's training sessions
- distribute surveys and collate feedback relating to the central registration program
- liaise with software providers to ensure systems are effective and support the implementation of the program and guidelines.

Role of the Committee of Management Preschool Enrolment Officer

It is the role of each Nillumbik Committee of Management preschool Enrolment Officer to:

- ensure information about the preschool application process is available at the preschool
- ensure contact details of the Preschool Enrolment Officer are displayed at the preschool
- direct enquiries relating to the central registration process and its implementation to the Preschool Central Registration Officer
- maintain registration records and ensure they are provided to the incoming Preschool Enrolment Officer
- upon receipt of the enrolment list a letter of acknowledgement will be sent including session times, fee structure and the Preschools Policy pertaining to group allocation
- advise Nillumbik's Central Registration Officer of cancellations and childrens non attendance
- adhere to timeline as outlined in the Preschool Central Registration Timeline to ensure the central registration process is correctly implemented. See Appendix A for Central Registration Timeline
- complete data collection and reporting as required by DET within the funding guidelines

References

- Department of Education and Training: The Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016
- Municipal Association of Victoria's: A Framework and Resource Guide for Managing a Central Registrations Process for Kindergarten Places 2013.
- Nillumbik Shire Council: Preschool Committee of Management Central Enrolment Consultation 2010 – 2011
- Nillumbik Shire Council: Integrating Child, Youth and Family Services Strategy – Birth to 25 years
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Victoria)
- *Information Privacy Act 2000* (Victoria)
- *Education and Care Services National Law 2010*
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*
- *Sexual Discrimination Act 1984* (Commonwealth)

Appendix A: Central Registration Timeline

Two years before your child attends four-year-old preschool

TIMEFRAME	EVENT
March 1	Application forms can be submitted to Council (date of application is not applied during the offer process)

One year before your child attends four-year-old preschool

TIMEFRAME	EVENT
April	Audit letters and registration audit forms sent from Council to all registered families
May 1	Final day for families to return registration audit forms
June 30	Last date to change preferences without affecting the allocation process
July	
<i>Mid</i>	First round offer letters sent from Council to families
<i>Late</i>	Final opportunity for families to respond to first round offers
August	
<i>Early</i>	Second round offer letters sent from Council to families
<i>Mid</i>	Final opportunity for families to respond to second round offers Third round offer letters sent from Council to families Final opportunity for families to respond to third round offers
<i>Late</i>	All "accepted but waiting" statuses to be changed to "accepted" or families to be placed on waiting lists for preferred preschool Council to provide preschools with contact details of all accepted places
September	
<i>Early</i>	Families who did not receive an offer will be sent details about vacancies within the Shire Deposit information and group selection forms sent from preschools to families
<i>Mid</i>	Last day for families to pay the deposit to the preschool and nominate their preferred preschool session
October	
<i>Mid</i>	Preschools to inform families of their group allocation for the following year and collect first term fees (where required)