

## KINDERGARTEN CENTRALISED WAITING LIST POLICY & PROCEDURES

### POLICY

*Darebin City Council operates a Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List on behalf of kindergarten programs within the municipality. Council provides the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List service to:*

- *simplify the process of application for kindergarten for Darebin families*
- *support community managed kindergarten providers*
- *apply equity and fairness processes for families seeking kindergarten places*
- *inform Council's early years services and infrastructure planning.*

*This policy & procedure provides the framework for a kindergarten centralised waiting list that applies Victorian Government allocation and funding criteria<sup>1</sup> that:*

- *prioritises access for vulnerable children, increasing opportunities for children facing the greatest barriers to early learning*
- *promotes local community connection and continuity of learning*
- *prioritises families who are Darebin residents offers kindergarten places equitably*

#### **Vulnerable children and families**

*Darebin supports the State Government policy directions which articulate that children with additional needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, children known to Child Protection and those eligible for fee subsidy, benefit most from being involved in early childhood programs. Families that demonstrate that they have a child in one of these categories will be allocated priority weighting.*

## 1. PROCEDURE FOR ALLOCATION 2018

### **Application and Allocation Criteria**

- a. Children are eligible to attend State funded kindergarten if they have turned 4 years of age by the 30 April in the year of attendance. Children are eligible to attend pre-kindergarten programs if they have turned 3 years of age by the 30 April in the year of attendance.
- b. The same application period for the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List will apply to all Darebin families wanting placement of their child in kindergarten in the following year. Applications can be made in the year prior to kindergarten attendance between 1 February (on or after the next business working day) and 30 April (on or prior to the previous working day).

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Education and Training, Kindergarten Guide

- c. Applications received within this period will be given priority. Late applications will be processed after those which are received during the stated application period.
- d. The following processes apply to kindergarten preferences:
- i. Up to 4 kindergarten programs can be selected in preference order 1 - 4 and will be applied in order of listing.
  - ii. If a family chooses to nominate one preference only and the nominated kindergarten is full, the child's name will remain on the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List (even if there are vacancies at other kindergartens).
  - iii. Once the family has accepted a place the child's name cannot remain on the waiting list for allocation to any other kindergarten.
- e. Allocation preference will be made as follows:
- i. Allocation of children with additional needs and vulnerable families. This includes:
    - Where the child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child FIRST).
    - Where the child is currently in an Out of Home Care arrangement including kinship care.
  - ii. Allocation of applications according to priority weightings and evidence provided to support:
    - Children approved by Department of Education and Training for a second year of kindergarten.
    - Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy as listed in the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines (see 3.2.3).
    - Families who are Darebin residents or whose child attends unregistered verified care in Darebin. Unregistered care is provided by family members, nannies or other carers who are not registered with the state authorities to provide registered care. This must be verified with a Statutory Declaration and proof of residency of the carer.
    - A child or sibling participated in the preferred kindergarten within the last two years of the application being completed.
    - Where a kindergarten is the closest to a child's home.
  - iii. The following weighting points can also be allocated for administrative reasons to distinguish a point of difference at allocation time in the electronic system.
    - Application lodged between 1 February and 30 April the year prior to attendance.
    - Where the child attended a pre-kindergarten program at their first preference kindergarten.
    - Please note that children attending a pre-kindergarten program are not automatically allocated a kindergarten place and must submit an application form as per the process for all Darebin families.
    - Where the child is a twin, triplet or quadruplet.
- f. When children on the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List have applied within the designated time period and achieve the same points for priority weightings, allocation

will be ordered according to random selection. Random selection will be made by computer generated sorting of applications.

## 2. HOW TO APPLY

- a. Application forms are available from:
- Early Childhood Services and Maternal and Child Health Centres in the City of Darebin
  - Darebin City Council Customer Service Centres.
  - Darebin City Council website.

An application requires:

- i. Completion of the Darebin City Council Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List Application Form.
- ii. Proof of child's age such as a copy of the child's Extract of Birth Certificate, Birth Certificate or Passport
- iii. Reports from family support services or intervention services confirming circumstances and/or disability
- iv. If applicable, statutory declaration confirming unregistered care arrangement
- v. A non-refundable application fee. This fee is for the administration of the Darebin Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List and does not contribute to kindergarten fees. A child who individually holds, or has a parent or guardian who holds one of the following can make application free of charge:
  - A Commonwealth Health Care Card
  - A Commonwealth Pensioner Concession 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
  - This also includes a child identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and a child identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more).
- vi. Applications must be lodged with the Darebin City Council at any of the Customer Service Centres.
- vii. Incomplete applications will be returned via post requesting the missing information. The original receipt date will not be honoured.

## 3. CONFIRMATION AND CHANGES TO APPLICATION

- a. Applications received by the Darebin City Council Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List will be sent a letter of confirmation within approximately four weeks of receipt of application.
- b. Any changes to details concerning a Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List application (for example: address, telephone number, kindergarten preference) are to be notified in writing to the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office by post or email. *Application Alteration Forms* are available on the Darebin City Council website or by contacting the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office. Requests for changes of kindergarten preference will be accepted up to 30 June in the year prior to the commencement of kindergarten.
- c. Cancellations can be lodged at any time in writing using an Application Alteration Form or via email: [kindergartenwaitinglist@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:kindergartenwaitinglist@darebin.vic.gov.au). Application fees are not reimbursed.

#### **4. TRANSFER AND PLACE RESERVATION**

- a. Once a place has been allocated it is not transferable between kindergartens unless the requested kindergarten has vacancies and no other children are waiting for a kindergarten program.
- b. If a child is attending a program in the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List and the family decide to defer the child's attendance at kindergarten to the following year, the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office must be notified by the end of Term 1 of the year they are attending (or as per the Department of Education Kindergarten Guide) and a new application form is to be submitted. Deferrals are not guaranteed a place at that same service the following year. Deferrals received after the 30 April will be treated as a late application.
- c. Places will be reserved for children granted a second year of funding as per the Department of Education Kindergarten Funding Criteria. Children applying for a second year of funding for the kindergarten program are not required to submit a new application form. In May each year the Early Childhood Teacher will be requested to identify the children recommended for a second year of kindergarten. Written permission from the family is required for the child to be allocated a second year of kindergarten.
- d. Only a place at the same kindergarten will be reserved for children granted a second year of funding. If a family choose to attend a different service, they will need to advise the centralised waiting list in writing. This will relinquish the reserved place and their application will join the waiting list. A place is therefore not guaranteed at the first preference kindergarten.
- e. If application for a second year of funded 4 year old kindergarten occurs after 30 June, the application will be treated with priority however the same service may not be available and/ or the family may need to wait until the following offer round.

#### **5. ALLOCATION PROCEDURES**

- a. All kindergartens are to notify the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office by 1 July of the number of available places for the coming year and children recommended to attend a second year of kindergarten. Written permission from the family is required for the child to be allocated a second year of kindergarten. The allocation process will normally commence from late July in the year prior to kindergarten attendance.
- b. Three rounds of offers are made.
  - i. First round offers are made to families in approximately late July of each year for 4 year old kindergarten and August of each year for 3 year old pre-kindergarten
  - ii. Second round offers are made approximately four weeks after the first round offers using available places not accepted in first round offers
  - iii. Third round offers are made approximately four weeks after second round offers using available places not accepted in second round offers. This round will continue until all places are filled.
- c. Families requesting kindergarten where the child is not eligible for a State funded kindergarten program but are willing to pay the full fees stipulated by the individual kindergarten must check the policy of their preferred kindergarten.
  - i. If the centre allows this option, applications must be made directly to the kindergarten.
  - ii. Kindergartens must then advise the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List of one less place available at the kindergarten. Kindergartens are not allowed to allocate unfunded places unless vacancies exist and there are no children on the waiting list for this kindergarten. Please note that an unfunded child may be requested to vacate the position should a funded child require the place. The kindergarten must advise the family of this requirement when accepting the enrolment.
- d. Placement offers will be made in writing to families with a “Letter of Offer” in late July and August of each year. Families will be required to accept the place or decline the offer within two weeks by returning the “Acceptance Slip” attached to the letter of offer, in the reply paid envelope or emailing acceptance to: [kindergartenwaitinglist@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:kindergartenwaitinglist@darebin.vic.gov.au)

Where no response to an offer of placement is received by the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office within the specified timeframe, a courtesy telephone call or email will be made during the following week prior to the child’s place being cancelled.

- e. Families can make one of the following choices:
  - i. Accept the offer
  - ii. Decline the offer and request to remain on the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List for another kindergarten of preference (*no guarantee that a place will be available*). A decline will result in the application date changing to the date of decline.
  - iii. If families choose not to accept a second or third preference they will remain on the waiting list of the kindergarten of first preference.
  - iv. Cancel their application. Families wishing to defer their child’s application to the next kindergarten year are required to cancel their application and submit a new

application form for the following year. Please note that a place at the same service is not guaranteed.

## 6. INFORMATION PROVIDED TO KINDERGARTENS

- a. The Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office will provide lists to kindergartens with family details following the distribution of third round preferences (4 year old kindergarten in early September and 3 year old pre-kindergarten in early October). Late applications will be forwarded to the kindergarten as they are allocated.
- b. The kindergarten will be in contact with the family and distribute their "Welcome Package" containing service specific information regarding orientation process, fees, timetable etc. Parents should note that enquiries regarding selection to particular session times and groups should be directed to the kindergarten.

## 7. CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

- a. Darebin City Council has a commitment to ensuring that kindergartens are accessible to all children. We recognise that every child has individual needs, abilities and interests. Children with additional needs are:
  - i. children who require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
  - ii. children who require a combination of services which are individually planned
  - iii. children who have an identified specific disability or developmental delay
- b. Children with high support needs may be eligible for the Victorian Government funded Special Education Program, which provides funding for an additional assistant in the 4 year old kindergarten program only. Pre-kindergarten is not eligible for this funding. Requests for specialist funding are made to the Department of Education and Training in the year prior to commencement at 4 year old kindergarten.
- c. Darebin City Council auspices the Pre School Field Officer program as part of its commitment to support the inclusion of children with additional needs into a quality program. Pre School Field Officers are trained professionals with Special Education qualifications.

If you wish to discuss your child's needs or any of the information above please contact: Pre School Field Officer program at the City of Darebin, [psfo.referral@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:psfo.referral@darebin.vic.gov.au) or Telephone: 8470 8114. Written permission from families is required for the involvement of the Pre School Field Officer. Confidentiality is maintained.

- d. Families of children with additional needs follow the standard enrolment process, including timelines. Families complete an application form and indicate that their child has an additional need. Supporting documentation will be required to add to your application. A separate Additional Needs Section is included with the application form. Families are strongly encouraged to complete this section to assist in the placement of their child.

- e. Children with additional needs are given consideration in relation to the following areas to ensure that a child's individual needs are accommodated and quality of care and education is not compromised for any child:
  - i. physical environment (indoor and outdoor)
  - ii. ratio of staff
  - iii. group size
  - iv. availability of Government funding (Federal or State) for additional staff.
- f. The Pre School Field Officer will contact families of children identified as having additional needs to discuss individual needs for kindergarten once they have accepted a kindergarten place. The Pre School Field Officer's with parent consent will contact other services or specialists the child is currently involved with to ensure all necessary support can be put into place prior to the child attending a 4 year old kindergarten program. When a child is already attending the service they have nominated, the Preschool Field Officer's will contact the service to discuss the child's support needs.
- g. Children with additional needs are allocated as per the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List policy and, whenever possible, children are allocated to the kindergarten of first preference or to the kindergarten that best meets the needs of the child.

## **8. ADDITIONAL KINDERGARTEN YEAR**

Some children may benefit from a second year of funded 4 year old kindergarten. Funding for a second year of 4 year old kindergarten requires collaboration between the kindergarten teacher and parents. The kindergarten teacher will submit an application form to the Department of Education and Training.

All requests for a second year of funded 4 year old kindergarten must be notified to the Kindergarten Centralised Waiting List office by 30 June by the kindergarten teacher. These places are subject to successful funding by the Department of Education and Training and further details can be discussed with the service. Please see section 5 for further information on reserved places.

## **9. FEES**

Fees are set by the operator of each kindergarten and may vary. Most kindergartens will require the payment of a deposit for accepting the place in the December prior to attendance in February. Kindergartens may require fees to be paid a term in advance, and it is usual that kindergartens will not refund part-payments of fees due to absence or late enrolment. Families are advised to discuss the fees policy with their chosen kindergarten.

## **10. FEEDBACK**

Darebin City Council welcomes your feedback whether it's a compliment, suggestion or a complaint. You can contact us in a number of ways;

Call: 8470 8888

Fax: 8470 8877

Mail: PO Box 91, Preston, Victoria 3072

Email: [mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au)

Speak and Listen TTY: dial 133 677  
Speak and Listen: call 1300 555 727  
[iprelay.com.au](http://iprelay.com.au): enter 03 8470 8888

Visit one of our [Customer Service Centres](#):

*Preston Customer Service Centre*

Address: 274 Gower Street, Preston

Opening Hours: 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday

*Northcote Customer Service Centre*

Address: 32-38 Separation Street, Northcote

Opening Hours: 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday

*Reservoir Community and Learning Centre*

Address: 23 Edwardes Street, Reservoir

Opening Hours: 10am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday

You can also complete an online form which will be forwarded to an appropriate Council officer for action: <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Global/ContactUs>