



Government of  
South Australia

# Office for Early Childhood Development

## QualifySA in Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathways

Funding Support Program Guidelines

June 2024

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## From the heart

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the First peoples of South Australia and as custodians of the lands, waters, skies and communities where we live, learn and raise children.

We recognise Aboriginal peoples as having the longest living culture, raising children safe and strong in their identity, community, culture, and connection to country.

We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and their role as the first knowledge sharers for children. We follow in their footsteps.

Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enriches our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families. We respect Aboriginal peoples' ways of being, doing and wise practices guiding our continual learning. Together we walk and build stronger, more supportive communities for all children.

## QualifySA in Early Childhood

Financial support for individuals undertaking qualifications in early childhood aims to reduce barriers, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue rewarding careers.

This program seeks to amplify opportunities for individuals to enter and thrive in the early childhood field, fostering equality, building our workforce and enhancing the quality of care and education provided to children.

## About this program

The Aboriginal Pathways Funding Support Program is open to eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals aspiring to become early childhood teachers or educators. This includes those seeking to enhance their skills and current students in the field.

Students who receive these funding supports can utilise them to offset living expenses while they study and work. This may include course fees, study materials, or accommodation and living costs to facilitate early childhood studies.

Successful applicants will be asked to contractually commit to working / teaching in the early childhood preschool sector in South Australia after graduation for a minimum of 2 years.

The following funding supports are available under this program (all amounts listed are before tax).

## Educator support

- This program offers financial assistance to South Australian residents enrolled and studying a diploma of early childhood education, who are committed to working as an educator in the early years (preschool) sector in South Australia.
- In 2024, this financial assistance is exclusively accessible to students enrolled and studying at TAFE SA or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Registered Training Organisation.
- Funding of up to \$9,000 (before tax) is available for students who have commenced their study in 2024.
- This includes up to \$1,000 for the employer of existing early childhood sector employees. The funding can be used for various purposes such as partially covering the cost of back-filling during the participant's placement, supporting professional learning, allowing the participant to undertake studies without work duties, facilitating planning time, or upskilling another individual.
- Students can apply for this financial assistance in addition to Fee Free TAFE, though priority will be given to those who couldn't access tuition support through other government initiatives.

## Initial teacher education support

This program offers financial assistance to South Australian residents commencing or already enrolled in an approved early childhood teaching (ECT) bachelor or master qualification [recognised by ACECQA](#) on the approved qualifications list.

This includes (amounts listed are before tax):

- **up to \$34,000** for participants studying a bachelor degree
- **up to \$24,000** for participants studying a master's degree.\*

*\*Master's applicants must possess an existing degree, that is not an Early Career Teacher qualification recognised by ACECQA, unless otherwise approved by the OECD. Students studying a research Master's are not eligible for this financial support program.*

Recipients may enrol in a course offered by any registered Australian higher education provider offering an ACECQA approved Bachelor or Master's degree.

This opportunity is also open to educators seeking to enhance their skills through upskilling initiatives, including diploma qualified educators upskilling.

## Grow Your Own

The Grow Your Own (GYO) allowance aims to support students in regional and remote areas who face additional barriers to accessing higher education. This program provides up to \$10,000 over the course of the recipient's studies to help them pursue their education and build careers locally. This funding is in addition to the support offered through the QualifySA in Early Childhood Funding Support Program.

### Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for GYO funding, students must:

- be recipients of financial support through the QualifySA in Early Childhood Funding Support Program
- reside in and intend to work within a local regional or remote community, specifically in locations classified as very remote, remote, or outer regional according to the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard - Remoteness Area classification](#).

Eligibility will be determined by the administrator based on your residential address.

## Funding information

- All program funding is contingent on satisfactory evidence being submitted each year. For example, while studying, a funding support recipient must submit evidence that they have completed study requirements and remain enrolled.
- Retention funding eligibility extends to both fixed term and ongoing roles.
- Financial support payments for casual roles will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD).
- Students will receive payments per academic year, adjusted for recognition of prior learning (RPL) or other reductions in course duration.
- If a person studying a 4-year bachelor's degree receives RPL, reducing their study duration to 2 years, they will receive the higher study payments as outlined in the milestones for a 3-year degree.
- Part-time students will receive prorated payments.
- Support under the program for multiple tertiary courses per individual, whether diploma, bachelor, or master's degree will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## Eligibility and approved courses

- To be eligible, applicants must be Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens, or hold a permanent residency visa, and be South Australian residents. They should identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and they should have been accepted into or are currently studying an approved course. Part-time students must be studying a minimum 0.5 load.
- Eligible participants must provide one of the following supporting documents at the time of application: a confirmation of Aboriginality, a letter of support from an Aboriginal Community member, or a statutory declaration signed and confirmed by an Aboriginal Community member.
- Applicants should intend to work, or continue working, in one of the following South Australian early childhood education and care service types upon qualification completion: long day care services providing a preschool program, sessional preschool provided by non-government preschools and government preschools. Applicants must complete the qualification by 31 December 2032.
- Applicants receiving any other OECD or Department for Education scholarship, financial support, or grant for the approved course will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Those enrolled in Fee Free TAFE programs are deemed eligible.
- If applying for the Initial Teacher Educator program, applicants must be studying an approved Early Childhood Teacher bachelor or master's qualification recognised by ACECQA on the approved qualifications list ([Approved courses](#)). Priority will be given to those studying a birth to 5 early childhood degree. Dual qualifications may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- If the program receives more applications than it can accommodate, preference will be given to specific groups. This includes educators in rural and regional areas, those in metropolitan services with a significant number of vulnerable or disadvantaged children, and educators who have not yet benefited from financial support, or incentives provided by OECD.

## Application process and funding arrangements

- Managed by an external funding administrator on behalf of the OECD, the initiative requires online applications with evidence of meeting eligibility criteria  
<https://www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/working-in-early-childhoodin-early-childhood>
- To access the employer payment, applicants must consult with their employer before applying and include their employer's details in the application.
- Upon selection, successful candidates sign a legally binding funding agreement outlining rights and responsibilities.
- Funding payments are disbursed based on milestone conditions, with potential repayment obligations for non-compliance.
- If you are studying full-time and your study period extends beyond the standard duration due to circumstances such as not passing subjects, withdrawing, or other considerations (e.g., completing a 3-year course over 5 years), your final year of study will still be considered your third / or fourth year for payment purposes. Consequently, you will not receive study payments for 2 of the extended years.
- For part-time students, payments are made on a pro-rata basis, as articulated in the application process.

## Considerations before applying

- Applicants must assess their financial situation, as they are responsible for additional expenses beyond the awarded amount.
- Funding amounts are pre-tax, and recipients must seek independent advice on potential impacts on taxation and government benefit schemes.
- Employment to meet program milestones is the recipient's responsibility, as the OECD does not guarantee employment in the early childhood sector.

## Employment changes and milestone non-compliance

- After completing the approved course, recipients of funding support in South Australia's early childhood sector may qualify for extra retention payments upon starting employment. Employment should begin within six months of graduation, whether in a fixed-term or ongoing role, with assessments for casual roles conducted case by case by the OECD.
- Continuous employment, meeting specified criteria outlined in the Funding Support Agreement, is crucial for retaining eligibility for payments. Recipients may hold successive approved positions at various services, as long as they meet OECD criteria for funding support milestones.
- Changes in employment status, conditions, or location must be reported promptly to the administrator to receive retention milestone payments. This includes instances like successive fixed term contracts or periods of parental leave. Casual employment will be considered for milestone payments on a case-by-case basis, particularly when regular, long-term casual work is demonstrated.
- Failure to meet milestones may require repayment of Financial Support Payments. In exceptional circumstances, the OECD may consider waiving repayment obligations, subject to individual evaluation and supporting documentation.

## Guidelines

- Guidelines Revision: The guidelines, which cover program specifications and eligibility criteria, are subject to potential change. Any modifications will be made available on the department's website.

## QualifySA in Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathways

### Funding payment milestones

The table below shows the funding support payments. Recipients will receive these payments after they provide the evidence needed for each milestone. The evidence needed is described in the funding support agreement and is checked by the funding administrator.

### QualifySA in Aboriginal Pathways Educator Financial Support (Diploma)

Eligibility	Study milestone payments <i>Part-time study paid at pro-rata</i>		+ Employer support	+ Employment / retention payments	Total value
	Milestone 1 <i>Following enrolment/ Census</i>	Milestone 2 <i>Course completion</i>	Funding to support employers.	<i>End of first year in sector following completion of qualification.</i>	
<b>Cert III qualified, studying diploma</b>	\$3,000	\$3,000	Up to \$1,000	\$2,000	Up to \$9,000

### QualifySA in Aboriginal Pathways Initial Teacher Education Financial Support (Bachelor)

Eligibility	Study milestone payments <i>To be paid each year following census date</i> <i>Part-time study paid at pro-rata</i>				+ Employment / retention payments		Total value
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Milestone 1 <i>Halfway through first year in sector after graduation (Paid at 6 months)</i>	Milestone 2 <i>Halfway through third year in sector after graduation (Paid at 2.5 years)</i>	
<b>Students *4-year degree</b>	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$9,500	Up to \$34,000
<b>Students 3-year degree</b>	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$7,000				

## QualifySA in Aboriginal Pathways Initial Teacher Education Financial Support (Masters)

Eligibility	Study milestone payments <i>to be paid each year following Census date</i> <i>Part-time study paid at pro-rata</i>		+ Employment / retention payments		Total value
	Year 1	Year 2	Milestone 1 <i>Halfway through first year in sector after graduation (Paid at 6 months)</i>	Milestone 2 <i>Halfway through third year in sector after graduation (Paid at 2.5 years)</i>	
	Students	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$7,500	

## Contact

**Web page:** <https://www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/working-in-early-childhood>

**Email:** [OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au](mailto:OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au)

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