



# Draft Policy and Funding Guide

Supporting the introduction of  
universal 3-year-old preschool



## 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 enrich 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.

## Purpose of the guide

The Policy and Funding Guide (Guide) provides an overview of the new 3-year-old preschool program, focusing on provider and service requirements and obligations, supports available, and funding arrangements.

The Guide will also be applicable to non-government 4-year-old preschool programs delivered by providers who partner to deliver preschool under the new model.

### Non-government services

The Guide has been developed to support non-government providers seeking to become funded preschool providers under the new model. The Guide will help inform their decision to submit an expression of interest in the 2024-2025 process for a 2026 commencement of service delivery.

A final version of the Guide will be released in May 2025, and will form part of the funding agreement with the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD).

During the roll-out, the Guide will continue to be updated periodically. Where changes are proposed, partner providers will be notified and, if changes are material, will be consulted before finalising updated versions. All updates will be published on the OECD website.

### Government services

Leadership and oversight of government sessional preschool and department long day care services including rural care, continues to be through the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will centrally manage all obligations and requirements that are applicable to government services. Examples of centrally managed requirements include all funding and data requirements (expressions of interest, payment, obligations, acquittals). This also includes the approach to quality improvement, teaching and learning, preschool enrolment and inclusion of Aboriginal children and children in care.



Additionally, workforce conditions outlined throughout the Guide are currently met for department preschool employees through existing industrial provisions and will continue to be met through Department for Education policies and procedures.



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## Introduction

### A new perspective on early childhood

As they enter school, South Australian children are experiencing a concerning level of developmental vulnerability. The national Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) shows South Australian children are not faring as well as their counterparts elsewhere in Australia.

It also tells us children at risk of developmental vulnerability live in families across all walks of life.

The good news is that more support in the early years of a child's life can be effective in reducing developmental vulnerability, and positively influences their life trajectory. Quality early childhood services can benefit all children.

In recent research undertaken by the Australian Educational Research Organisation (AERO), a clear link was found between participation in quality services and predicted children's developmental vulnerability (2024). Through bold reforms, our 20-year aim is to reduce the rate of developmental vulnerability from 23.8% to 15%, as measured by the AEDC.

### The new preschool offer for South Australian children

As part of the South Australian Government's early childhood reform package, 3-year-old children will be eligible to receive up to 15 hours of preschool. The program will be rolled out between 2026 and 2032.

By 2032, all South Australian children will benefit from taking part in 2 years of quality preschool in the years before school. This will build on and strengthen the existing universal preschool program for 4-year-olds.

We know the importance of teacher-led programs, however the new preschool model – as defined through the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care – is so much more than this.

The new model enables differentiated levels of wraparound supports for children and their families. Practice and leadership supports, along with funding for planning time and professional development, are included in the model.

Layered supports ('Preschool Boost') will also deliver resources and tools to build a service's capacity to respond to children's developmental needs. For services in low socio-economic areas, outreach funding will also be available (from 2027). This will reach and help retain children and families to address barriers to preschool participation.

### Transition from the current preschool funding arrangements to a new universal preschool model

As services become approved as 3-year-old preschool providers, they will transition to the new funding model. This will include the additional Preschool Boost funding stream.



For non-government services, the new funding model will be applicable for both 3- and 4-year-old preschool programs in their services and will replace funding they currently receive for 4-year-old preschool.

The current *non-government* 4-year-old preschool funding model may continue for a limited time for services not yet approved to be a 3-year-old preschool provider. Over time, the OECD will cease the current *non-government* 4-year-old funding model and services will be required to transfer to the new arrangements.

Please note that *non-government* 4-year-old preschool funding at current and new levels is subject to the continuation of existing Australian Government funding arrangements for preschool programs.

For government services, existing funding arrangements for 4-year-old preschool will be retained, with the addition of outreach funding for services in low socio-economic areas.

### **Extra support for children who need it most**

All children benefit from 2 years of quality preschool, but children who need more support benefit more – and are likely to gain more from extra hours of preschool.

Between 2026 and 2032, the government will put in place measures so that 3- and 4-year-old children at risk of developmental vulnerability (up to 2000 children) will be able to access more preschool per week (up to 30 hours) in each of the 2 years before school.

Some of these places will be delivered by a mix of government and non-government services, and others will be through integrated hubs.

Integrated hubs will bring preschool together with other health, wellbeing and education services so that families and children can access support in one place.

### **A mixed model of delivery**

The new preschool model will be delivered across a range of early childhood education and care settings to maximise the availability of 2 years of quality preschool.

If a child is currently enrolled in a 'partner' long day care, they will receive their 3-year-old preschool program in that service.

If a child is:

- not currently in long day care, or
- is in a long day care service that is not yet a 'partner service' under the new model

their family can apply for 3-year-old preschool in a 'partner' long day care and will also be able to apply for non-government or government sessional service.



## Rolling out universal preschool

From 2026 to 2032, South Australian early childhood education and care services will progressively offer a quality preschool program for 3-year-olds.

- **Long day care services** that meet quality and workforce requirements can apply to partner with the government to offer a 3-year-old preschool program, which will be phased in based on service readiness, not location.
- **Government and non-government sessional preschools** will also phase in, from 2026 by location. This will start with a small group of rural and regional communities, followed by other parts of the state. For more information, see [www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/3-year-old-preschool-roll-out](http://www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/3-year-old-preschool-roll-out).

## A partnership approach

As stewards of South Australia's early childhood development system, the OECD will partner with:

- governments and departments
- Aboriginal leaders
- sector stakeholders
- unions and the professions
- parents and the wider community

to create a better and fairer future for children across the state.

This approach to delivering quality preschool is focused on collaboration, support and shared objectives. It recognises that every child is born with their own potential, to become the fullest, most flourishing version of themselves. Realising that potential depends on their early childhood experiences.

This is our challenge and opportunity. Success will involve working collaboratively with long day care, government sessional, non-government sessional, and other early childhood services to improve developmental outcomes for children in South Australia.

Engaging with our state's early childhood education and care workforce is critical to the success of system reforms. To assist the sector to work together collectively to offer quality preschool, the following will be developed:

- local professional networking opportunities
- quality and practice supports
- professional development material
- leadership support material.

The OECD is establishing a statewide network of local teams. These will support early childhood services to implement early childhood reforms across the state, including the roll-out of universal 3-year-old preschool.



## Aboriginal co-design

OECD will listen to the Aboriginal community about how to ensure Aboriginal children retain and increase the benefits from the existing Aboriginal 3-year-old government preschool entitlement.

We have partnered with the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) to establish the Aboriginal Co-design Governance Group (ACGG). This will create a shared decision-making process with Aboriginal stakeholders and Communities.

The ACGG will oversee:

- an extensive community co-design process
- prioritisation of initiatives that increase benefits that Aboriginal children receive from 3-year-old preschool
- an Aboriginal Early Childhood Workforce Strategy (the Strategy)

and then make recommendations to government.

Revised Aboriginal preschool initiatives are anticipated to commence from 2026. Some immediate 'no regrets' workforce actions supported by the ACGG will begin in 2025 as the full Strategy is co-designed.

The co-design and shared decision-making process through the ACGG will also support OECD's work to strengthen Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), including their capacity to deliver:

- early childhood services
- integrated hubs
- Preschool Boost
- cultural safety training.

## Learning and evolving

We will listen, learn and evolve our approach to stay true to our core objectives of improving developmental outcomes for children in South Australia.

We will do this through:

- evaluating and monitoring implementation of the new preschool model
- harnessing diverse perspectives
- listening to and learning from lived experience
- keeping abreast of contemporary research
- valuing on-the-ground views of what works.





# Expression of interest to become a partner service

## Expression of interest for non-government providers

Providers interested in partnering to deliver a preschool program under the new model will need to submit an [expression of interest via the OECD website](#).

Providers will also need to submit information at both a provider and service level. For providers with multiple services, information relating to enrolment, quality measures, and workforce will be requested for each service.

## Overview of the process

1. Check your eligibility against the [provider requirements](#).
2. Complete an expression of interest. Provide all requested documentation and evidence (for example, submission of information at a provider level plus enrolment, quality and workforce information for each service).
3. Provider eligibility will be assessed based on meeting the provider eligibility requirements.
4. Service eligibility will be assessed based on meeting the service eligibility requirements.
5. Successful applicants will be advised in writing in May 2025.
6. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised in writing, stating the reasons their application was not approved.
7. If oversubscribed, OECD reserves the right to prioritise approvals based on quality and location of services.



## Provider requirements

### Provider eligibility

Non-government providers may apply to become a 'partner provider' based on a set of core requirements.

This section outlines these core requirements and criteria to receive and maintain funding.

To be considered eligible for funding, providers must:

- be an approved provider under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law) and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (National Regulations) and maintain approval
- have a centre-based care service approval under the National Law and National Regulations
- commit to quality education and care for children in the provider's services and across their local network.
- meet organisational requirements as outlined below.

The OECD may consider the eligibility of providers that meet the preschool program objectives but are not currently approved providers under the National Law and National Regulations. In particular, ACCO-operated services that are not currently regulated under the National Law are encouraged to apply. The OECD has absolute discretion to determine provider eligibility.

### Organisational requirements

Providers must meet the following organisational requirements:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- be registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- demonstrate ongoing financial viability and declare to the OECD any previous legal or financial misconduct
- deliver the preschool program in an early education and care service operating under the National Law and National Regulations
- have relevant policies and procedures as required under Child Safety Legislation ([Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#))
- hold \$20m Public Liability Insurance, including coverage for allegations of historic or current child abuse.

### Service eligibility

There are minimum requirements an individual service must meet to be eligible to apply. A service must meet the following criteria:

- hold and maintain centre-based care service approval under the National Law and National Regulations



- be assessed and rated as 'meeting' the National Quality Standards (NQS) or higher. If a service is 'working towards' the NQS, they can apply if they agree to participate in an OECD-approved quality improvement program (see Quality Uplift program, below). These services will be assessed case by case, based on several factors including the quality areas assessed as working towards and elements not met
- have a degree-qualified early childhood teacher (ECT) or person with a Special Authority to Teach in place to deliver the preschool program – they must be working directly with the children and delivering the preschool program for the full hours claimed (excluding breaks)
- the service from which the preschool program is delivered must be located in South Australia
- the service must deliver 3-year-old preschool to be eligible for funding for both 3- and 4-year-old preschool under the new model.

The OECD has discretion to restrict services' ability to participate in a funded preschool program. We may consider the eligibility of services that meet the preschool objectives but are not currently approved providers under the National Law and National Regulations.

Services not yet assessed against the NQS may apply to become a partner service. The OECD will consider several factors when considering whether to offer a funding agreement including:

- the outcomes of the post-approval visit by the Education Standard's Board (ESB)
- the number and ratings of other services owned by the same provider
- the location of the provider
- the support available to the service.



## Core partnership requirements

### Requirements to maintain eligibility

To remain a partner service and be eligible for funding, the service must continue to meet both provider and service requirements.

In addition, they must comply with the following core partnership requirements to enter into a funding agreement with OECD.

### 1. Teacher-led program

#### Qualifications

All partner services must have an early childhood teacher in place to deliver the preschool program for the full program hours. This can be:

- an early childhood teacher registered with the Teacher's Registration Board (TRB) of South Australia who meets National Quality Framework (NQF) qualification requirements (ECT)
- a person completing an Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) approved qualification and holding a Special Authority for an Unregistered Person to Teach as an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT SAT) from the TRB.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances, the OECD requires services to ensure there is another registered teacher available to coach and support programming and practice where the program is being led by a person with an ECT SAT.

#### Ratios

All funded preschool programs must be led by an early childhood teacher for *all funded hours* for *all funded children* (see above). This teacher can be counted as part of the National Law and National Regulations ratio requirements.

#### Staffing waivers

Where there is a waiver in place that does not affect the service's ability to deliver the requirement to have an ECT delivering the full preschool program hours, funding will not be affected.

If, however, a service is seeking to use an ECT SAT to meet the preschool teaching requirement, they must ensure there is another registered teacher available to coach and support programming and practice.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see [Specific Authorities | Teachers Registration Board of South Australia \(trb.sa.edu.au\)](https://trb.sa.edu.au).



### Leave, illness or resignation

A diploma-qualified educator or person who holds a qualification in primary teaching may replace an ECT or a person with an ECT SAT for a period up to, but not exceeding, **60 days** in a 12-month period to cover illness, leave and resignation, as long as another registered teacher is identified to coach and support programming and practice.

The partner service would be required to ensure families know that the program over this time is not 'preschool' as it is not being delivered by a teacher. The service will need to document the days the ECT or ECT SAT is not delivering the program. For over 60 days in any 12-month period, funding will be paused. Local support teams will work with the service to identify the approach to re-establishing the program.

### Notification

When there is a change or replacement of an ECT, partner services must check they still meet both regulatory and preschool funding requirements.

## **2. Non-contact time**

The Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care noted the importance of non-contact time for ECTs to enable planning and professional development, and that this can support retention of teaching staff.

ECTs need sufficient time to plan quality preschool programs for children, and time to engage with families and make referrals based on assessed needs. Non-contact time allows teachers to regularly plan and evaluate preschool programs.

Partner services must provide ECTs delivering the preschool program with *an additional 2* hours of non-contact time per week. (Currently, this would mean a total minimum of 4 hours per week plus *an additional 2* days' paid professional development per year, *over and above* the current relevant industrial award.)

Evidence of all ECT non-contact periods must be clearly available, as this is an essential part of record-keeping. Other evidence may also be needed to confirm these hours, when requested by the OECD.

OECD reserves the right to increase this non-contact time in future, in response to changed industrial arrangements or market conditions, after consultation with the sector.

## **3. Workforce development**

Access to professional development, professional networks and contemporary, evidence-based teaching and learning resources:

- significantly contribute to the quality of learning programs
- build educator knowledge of child development in the early years
- enhance the effectiveness of interactions between educators and children
- supports educator retention.



Partner services will be required to:

- demonstrate a commitment to workforce development, including through traineeships, hosting student placements or supporting educators to upskill
- ensure all ECTs and diploma-qualified educators are supported to access professional development, curriculum resources and tools. This includes those offered at no cost by OECD to support high-quality teaching and learning.

#### 4. Professional development

The Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care outlined a vision of place-based, responsive and connected service delivery for early years education.

This should include:

- creating regular opportunities for connection between different services working with families with young children in local areas
- building a community of practice for integrated service provision across government and non-government services.

There is an expectation that all 3-year-old preschool services will *engage with other early childhood services in their area* (regardless of ownership type), to support building a stronger, more connected system for children and families at the local level.

Services not yet partnered to deliver 3-year-old preschool services are encouraged to participate.

There are 2 ways that partner 3-year-old preschool services can meet this expectation:

##### 1. Actively engage with local early childhood professional networks

OECD will support existing early childhood professional networks and help establish new ones in areas where they do not exist. They will generally meet 4 times a year for 2 to 3 hours and will:

- identify local challenges and opportunities
- collaborate to develop and implement shared solutions that target local challenges and translate policy into practice
- reflect on how solutions have been implemented and impact on the practice of network members.

OECD will facilitate other types of early childhood and family services attending at least some professional network meetings.

OECD local teams will be actively engaged with issues that arise through the meetings. They will escalate to central policy and program teams, any identified issues with policy settings or suggest opportunities to offer better support to services that arise through the network.



## 2. Alternative proposals

3-year-old preschool services can propose an alternative way to commit to system participation and connecting with other early childhood services in their area. These proposals should be discussed with their local OECD team.

## 5. Quality Uplift program

Investment in lifting quality is essential to prepare the sector to provide 3-year-old preschool and realise its benefits to children.

Recommendation 30 of the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care outlined that the OECD and South Australian Education Standards Board (ESB) should work together aligned to their respective roles, to help services delivering preschool programs rated as working towards NQS to raise their quality. This process will be implemented.

Services rated as working towards the NQS:

- at the time of expressing interest in being a 3-year-old preschool service, or
- during their expression-of-interest assessment phase, or
- throughout the period of being a funded partner service

will need to agree to participate in a quality uplift program, with the type and intensity determined by the OECD.

Some partner services referred into a quality uplift program will need to complete the program *before* being offered a final funding agreement and starting preschool provision.

Others may be able to begin preschool operations on the proviso that they complete a quality uplift program when it can be offered to the service, within a timeframe as determined by the OECD.

This decision will consider factors such as the nature and timing of the working towards rating, and the practicalities of accessing the quality uplift program before preschool provision is due to begin.

## 6. Assessment for children's learning and development

Under the National Law, early childhood education and care (ECEC) services must assess and document children's learning and development. However, historically the early childhood sector has not had access to high-quality, validated formative assessment tools to support teachers and educators to understand and support children's learning progress.

These tools can help professionals to:

- better understand each child
- document the child's progress
- improve intentionality of teaching
- support continuity of learning between services and schools.



The tools' purpose is not to judge the performance of a service, teacher or child, or to affect a service's funding. Rather, they are a support for effective teaching practice. The tools can help give insights into what works best for cohorts of children or areas of learning.

Under the Preschool Reform Agreement (PRA), states and territories have agreed to trial formative assessment tools (known as the 'preschool outcomes measure'). Subject to the outcome of this process, and the continuation of existing Australian Government funding arrangements for preschool programs, the OECD reserves the right at any time to request or expect funded partner services to participate in using such a tool, for the purposes outlined above.

Before any such decision, the OECD will consult with the sector and consider feasibility and capacity requirements.

### Transition statements

It is a partnership expectation that all services will actively support the transition of their children to school, whether through:

- transition statements
- transition days
- discussions between ECTs and reception teachers
- and/or or in other ways.

The OECD is developing a Preschool Toolkit, which will be available to all services to support the provision of high-quality preschool teaching and learning. The toolkit will advise on supporting transitions and continuity of learning for children.

The OECD will also consult with the sector and experts on developing an easy-to-use standard approach to transition statements for all services, building on existing practices. This may be phased in as a requirement for services that are not currently providing transition statements.

A transition statement between preschool and school plays a critical role in ensuring a smooth and positive start for children entering school. It enables:

- **continuity of learning:** a snapshot of a child's strengths, interests, and learning preferences
- **personalised support:** through understanding each child's unique needs and abilities, teachers can tailor their teaching strategies to better support individual students
- **collaboration between educators:** sharing information about a child's development and learning experiences helps create a cohesive educational experience
- **parental involvement:** parents are encouraged to contribute to the transition statement, providing insights into their child's personality and preferences
- **early identification of needs:** a transition statement can highlight any additional support a child might need to maximise their learning and development.





Overall, the transition statement is a valuable tool that helps ensure children have a positive and successful start to their school life, promoting better learning and wellbeing outcomes.

## 7. Aboriginal inclusion

Partner services must provide a welcoming and culturally safe preschool program for Aboriginal children and families.

Partner services must have initiatives in place that demonstrate their commitment to supporting cultural safety of the children, families, and staff in their services. It should be reflective of their size and community.

This commitment must be visible to community on the service's website and onsite. It could include actions such as:

- developing a Reconciliation Action Plan, or alternative commitments relative to the size of the service
- active engagement with local Aboriginal Elders and community
- policies and practices promoting diversity and anti-racism
- employing Aboriginal teachers, educators and support staff
- special community days or events
- visible indicators to welcome Aboriginal children and families, such as displaying Aboriginal flags, artwork by an Aboriginal artist etc.
- engagement with local Aboriginal community to advise and support on Aboriginal language priorities
- celebrating culturally significant days such as NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.

Partner services will also need to commit to all staff attending cultural safety training delivered by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. This will be progressively rolled out across all services, funded by OECD. Prior training may be recognised, dependent on timeframe and alignment with the scope of training available for partner services.

## 8. Inclusion

All partner services must ensure their environments are genuinely inclusive, where every child is seen as a capable learner and a valued participant.

*Inclusion*, in this context, is not about fitting the child into the existing structure, but about adapting the care and education environment to meet the unique needs of every child, allowing them to fully engage and succeed.

To fulfil this commitment, partner services must have appropriate policies, processes, and guides in place that support inclusion. These measures should ensure that regardless of their learning styles, cultural background, language, abilities or family circumstances all children can:

- access services
- participate meaningfully



- have positive experiences.

The requirement to prioritise inclusion is not only a fundamental principle of quality education but also a legal obligation under frameworks such as the National Quality Framework and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Partnering with the OECD means *embracing these responsibilities*, ensuring that inclusion is at the heart of every service. Partner services will receive [Preschool Boost](#) funding for access to additional resources and support to build the service's capacity to better meet children's diverse developmental needs.

Partner services must apply the OECD priority of access policy enrolments to all vacancies across 3- and 4-year-old preschool programs. For more information see [here](#).

Partner services must not un-enrol preschool children from their service based on their inclusion needs.

## 9. Data and transparency

### Data

Partner services must provide data to the OECD on application and for the duration of preschool program service provision.

The OECD will collect data for system and service monitoring, in relation to integrity and quality. Data may be used for evaluation purposes, however any additional data requirements for evaluation will be part of evaluation design.

Families should be aware that their information (including the name of their child, birth date, and membership of key cohorts) will be shared with the OECD.

### Transparency

Partner services must communicate clearly to families that the South Australian Government is providing funding to cover the additional costs associated with provision of a preschool program.

Services should not increase fees for families enrolling in a preschool program, as state funding covers the additional costs associated with its provision.



## Partnership compliance

The OECD may undertake audits or compliance checks of the partner service or provider to understand if they are meeting the core partnership requirements. This may be based on complaints received or be in line with a published audit and compliance framework.

A partner service or partner provider must advise if they:

- have outstanding compliance issues of a serious or ongoing nature that may affect the preschool program or the operation of the service, or
- have had their Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy (CCS) funding withdrawn by the Australian Government, or
- are not meeting the core partnership conditions or their contractual obligations, including where a service's NQS rating has fallen.

Where a service receives consecutive working towards ratings and cannot demonstrate improvement, OECD reserves the right to vary the requirements of their agreement, including the requirement to undertake a quality improvement program, or the service may be given notice of termination of the funding agreement.



## Child eligibility

### Aligning preschool and school commencement dates

Every child's development is unique, and partner services should collaborate with families to determine the best time for their child to begin preschool. Some families may seek to have their children enrolled in a preschool program as soon as they are eligible, and others may wish to defer, based on when they are planning to have their child start school.

Children will be eligible to access up to 8 terms<sup>2</sup> or 2 years of funded preschool in the 2 years before school.

Aboriginal children and children who are or have been in care continue to be entitled to access a government preschool program any time after their third birthday.

If a child has reached compulsory school age (6 years old), they will become ineligible for preschool funding.

### 3-year-old preschool

#### Enrolment timeframes

All partner services (sessional and long day care) must undertake a twice-yearly registration of interest and enrolment process for preschool programs before the start of each major intake (annual and mid-year). There is an option for late registrations of interest and enrolment decisions, based on service capacity.

#### Age eligibility

To check whether a child is of eligible age, an age calculator will be available from mid-2025 to support families to identify when children are eligible to enrol and start 3-year-old preschool.

#### Enrolment eligibility

To be eligible to enrol into a 3-year-old preschool program, a child must be:

- aged 3 by 30 April (for term 1 enrolment) or 3 by 30 October (for term 3 enrolment) of the year in which they are enrolled in the funded program
- enrolled in the funded preschool program for a minimum of 6 and up to maximum of 15 hours per week (with the exception of the 30-hour preschool program) – this 'flexible hours' approach will apply during the roll-out period of 2026 to 2032
- not attending another funded preschool program
- not yet in compulsory schooling.

<sup>2</sup> For non-government services, the reference to terms should be read as quarters, and enrolment timeframes should align on that basis.



### Residency

Residency requirements will be advised before the OECD contract with partner services.

### Intake

Some children will not yet have turned 3 within the 2-year period before they plan to start school – with the youngest such child being 2 years and 9 months old.

Services are not required to start these children in the preschool program if they cannot accommodate them, given National Law ratio requirements.

Services are required, at a minimum, to offer families the option for these children to either start during the term/s or to push back their enrolment to the next start or mid-year intake point. The goal is that children should receive as much of their 2 years of preschool as possible, considering intended school starting ages.

Implementation of the intake requirements is likely to differ across service types, however, all partner services must provide a minimum of 6 intake points across the year.

In addition to the minimum intakes, partner services can start children earlier or at more frequent intervals, with approval from their families – for example:

- partner services can start children in the preschool program and receive preschool funding for children not yet 3, if they can manage this within ratios and parents support this option, noting the maximum preschool funding for that child will be 2 years (8 terms)
- services may choose to offer families a rolling intake based on the date a child turns 3
- a child born in February could start in the middle of term 1, and a child born in March could start at the start of term 2, rather than being forced to start preschool mid-year and either miss out on a whole semester of preschool, or push back their school starting age
- alternatively, a service may start children from the day the child turns 3 in February or March, if they wish to accommodate this within allowed ratios. The same would be true for children born in July or August.

### Quantum of funding

Services will be funded for all enrolments confirmed before the start of the 6-month period, irrespective of when the children are likely to start within that 6-month period.

For example, confirmed enrolments must be provided in November for the upcoming 6-month period, and services will be funded on that basis.

This means that funding for an enrolled child will be provided to the partner service for the full 6-month period (the whole semester) that the child is enrolled to start, including where a child begins preschool later than the start of the semester, due to their age.

This is subject to the OECD receiving appropriate and timely enrolment information from the partner service.



Funding will *not* apply to children who are not yet enrolled as at the beginning of the semester (such as, to children who enrol *after* the semester begins and who start preschool during this period).

If there is a net increase in total enrolments within a 6-month period at a scale that warrants the service to consider employing additional staff to accommodate these new enrolments, a request for additional funding must be made to [OECD.PreschoolFunding@sa.gov.au](mailto:OECD.PreschoolFunding@sa.gov.au).

### Child eligibility for 3-year-old preschool service types

Eligibility requirements for different models of 3-year-old preschool delivery reflect the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care. We want to optimise the delivery of the program in services that families are already using to meet their needs, as well as provide options for families not currently using long day care services.

Aboriginal children and children in out-of-home care continue to have an entitlement to a 15-hour program at a government preschool from the date of their birthday.

Services need to make sure that families enquiring about 3-year-old preschool understand their eligibility:

- **Children in long day care** at the time of registering interest for preschool would receive their 3-year-old preschool offer from their long day care service, if it is a partner service. This applies regardless of the number of days per week a child attends.
- **Children who have not been enrolled** in a partner service have the option to apply for preschool within a government or non-government sessional preschool, or other partner long day care service. This is based on family preferences and services available within their local area. Available options will grow as the roll-out progresses between 2026 and 2032.
- **Note:** Children in a long day care at the time of registering interest for preschool **not offering** a 3-year-old preschool program (that is, not a partner service) are eligible to apply for 3-year-old preschool within a government or non-government sessional preschool, or another long day care service.
- **Note:** If a family decides to cease their child's long day care enrolment before the start of the next preschool program intake period (January or mid-year), they will be eligible to apply for preschool within a government or non-government sessional preschool, or other partner long day care service. The family would need to formally notify the partner service by October before the start of the following year, (or by April before a mid-year start).
- **Note:** A child cannot be in receipt of a funded 3-year-old preschool program at two services.



Please see the table below for clarification.

Criteria for accessing 3-year-old preschool	
Child currently enrolled/attending a LDC* that is a partner service	Child may receive 3-year-old preschool at that service, and have the option to move to another LDC service to receive their program if they chose
Child currently enrolled/attending a LDC that is <i>not</i> a partner service	Family has the option to apply for preschool within a government or non-government sessional service, or another LDC service providing the preschool program
Child is not enrolled/attending a LDC service	
Aboriginal children and children in out-of-home care continue to have an entitlement to a government place from their third birthday.	
* LDC – long day care	

#### 4-year-old preschool

Age and setting eligibility remain the same for 4-year-old preschool. Children will continue to be entitled to access 4 terms (1 year) of government preschool in the year before they start school. Families may choose to enrol their child in 4-year-old preschool in a funded long day care or non-government sessional preschool service.



## Managing enrolments

### Enrolment policies and procedures

Partner services must have clear and transparent preschool enrolment processes. Their application and enrolment policies must:

- promote fair, equitable access to preschool programs
- support all eligible children to access a preschool program, including those who face barriers to participation, especially for those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage
- align with the priority of access requirements
- be advised to families when they enrol.

### Priority of access

Establishing a priority of access policy during the 3-year-old preschool roll-out will support greater access for children at risk of developmental vulnerability who would benefit the most.

Services across the system must make decisions about enrolments. This becomes particularly important during the roll-out where, in the short term, there may be more demand than available supply.

Evidence suggests child or family characteristics shown in the table below *increase* the risk of developmental vulnerability. Children within these priority groups should therefore be prioritised for access to a service that best meets their needs. For some children and families in these priority groups, access to 3-year-old preschool will be an important protective factor.

In partner services, toddler-age children seeking to progress into the 3-year-old program will be prioritised for a place.

Note that if a Category-1 child from **outside the service** is seeking a place in the 3-year-old preschool program, the partner service must prioritise this child over existing families who are *not* experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage and seeking additional days beyond the funded 3-year-old preschool program offer.

Priority category	Priority group
1	Aboriginal children
	Children in out-of-home care
	Children referred to the 30-hour preschool program
2	Children with active child protection involvement or active involvement with the child and family support system
	Children with additional needs
	Asylum-seeker and refugee children





	Children who do not speak English
	Children of families experiencing or at risk of family and domestic violence
	Children of healthcare card holders
	Other extenuating factors that increase a child's developmental vulnerability as determined through site level leadership discretion

### Communication with families

Partner services must provide information and resources to families about the funded preschool programs offered at their service. This must include details about eligibility and age requirements to access a funded place. The service must support parents to ensure children to participate and attend.

### Declaration and consent

The partner service must collect a completed declaration and consent form for all children enrolled in the preschool program.

This form will be provided by mid-2025 and will ask the parent or guardian:

- to declare whether the child is enrolled in a funded preschool program at another partner service, and if so, to advise of preschool-service-type eligibility requirements
- to consent to the child's information being provided to the OECD for the purposes outlined in the declaration and consent form.

Partner services must retain the form and provide it to the OECD if requested for the purposes of reporting or funding compliance reviews.

Funding cannot be claimed where consent has *not* been obtained through a completed declaration and consent form.

### Children enrolled at multiple services

#### 3-year-old preschool

Partner services must inform parents/carers/legal guardians that their child can only access a funded preschool program *at one service* at any given time.

If a child is enrolled in 2 partner services, the service-type eligibility will be considered and applied. Where the child has the option to attend any setting (because they are not already enrolled in a partner service), the parent/carer/legal guardian must nominate which partner service will receive the funding for the child.



Example:

- Families with a child attending a long day care that offers a funded preschool program (a partner service) will *not* be able to also access funded sessional government/non-government preschool.
- If a child is enrolled in *more than one* long day care partner service (such as shared care arrangements), *only one* of those services can receive 3-year-old preschool funding. This is based on the parents' decision or, in its absence, the first service to enrol the child in any capacity.

Partner services are responsible for ensuring reasonable steps are taken to minimise claiming for children who may be enrolled in more than one funded preschool program. This includes clearly communicating to parents verbally and in writing about **eligibility rules** for 3-year-old preschool and how they differ from 4-year-old preschool. The OECD will provide speaking points, FAQs and a flyer to support services to do this.

A new enrolment form will also give details and a checklist of preschool service-type eligibility, to minimise duplications.

To support smooth implementation, services must provide available enrolment data well in advance of the start of the semester, to identify data matches and allow time for other enrolments to be confirmed. If there is a duplication, we will apply the service-type eligibility policy to determine where funding will be allocated.

The OECD will undertake ongoing duplication checks. If a duplicate is identified during the semester, and the child is enrolled in both a partner long day care *and* sessional preschool service, funding for that enrolment will cease to the sessional preschool service.

### Children who are not eligible

If a partner service makes a claim for a child who is *not* eligible, or where there has been a duplicate enrolment, the OECD is entitled to recover the funds and take appropriate action under the funding agreement.

### Immunisation

Under the *South Australian Public Health Act 2011*, children cannot enrol in or attend early childhood services unless all immunisation requirements are met (*No Jab, No Play*).

This legislation aims to reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases through increased immunisation rates in the community. Under the legislation, before enrolling a child, early childhood education and care services must first obtain evidence that the child is up to date with all vaccinations due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

Please refer to the SA Health website for more information: [Early childhood services and immunisation requirements | SA Health](#)



## Funding for teaching and learning

Teaching and learning funding is the base per-capita funding for the preschool program. It supports the delivery of a teacher-led program:

- to enable services to uplift an existing program to be a preschool program led by an early childhood teacher
- by allowing an additional 2 hours of non-contact time per week
- by providing an additional 2 days of professional development per year, both above the current relevant industrial award and any future negotiated changes to awards.

The maximum per-capita funding for teaching and learning will be based on enrolments at 15 hours per enrolment per week, for maximum 600 hours over 12 months for a child enrolled in 3-year-old preschool program, plus a 4-year-old preschool program.

**Note:** Public holidays are included in the annual provision of 600 hours.

### Flexible hours – 3-year-old preschool

By 2032, all children will be entitled to 15 hours, but during roll-out – while building up workforce and infrastructure capacity – services may offer between 6 and 15 hours per enrolment per week to maximise the number of children able to receive a 3-year-old preschool program.

Where there is greater demand than capacity in a partner service, they must prioritise the *participation* of children in a funded preschool program over *the number of weekly program hours*.

Each eligible child can be enrolled for funded preschool program between 6 to 15 hours per week. The partner service will be funded pro-rata on that basis – per funded preschool program enrolment, for each child the:

- *minimum* hours per week is 6 hours
- *maximum* hours per week is 15 hours
- *maximum hours* offered per day is 8 hours
- *maximum number of weeks of attendance* is 48 weeks per year
- *maximum number of hours* for universal 3- and 4-year-old preschool program is 600 hours.

Partner services may be funded in the following pro-rata increments, per child, per week. If a service is offering different hours, they should round down to the lower of the 2 points – such as, 8.5 hours to 8 hours, 11 hours to 10 hours.

- 6 hours
- 7.5 hours
- 8 hours
- 10 hours
- 12 hours



- 12.5 hours
- 15 hours.

Displaying preschool program information

At all times, partner services must:

- display the preschool program operating days and times
- the name and qualifications of the early childhood teacher or other qualified position delivering the program.

This information must also be provided to the OECD, to support service monitoring and compliance.

Activities that *can* and *cannot* be included as part of program hours

Activity	Applicability
When the early childhood teacher is working directly with the children and delivering the program	Yes
When the service is using the ‘under the roofline’ ratio provisions and the early childhood teacher is in another area of the service and not delivering the program	No
Standard meal breaks as required by industrial instruments	Yes

Spending rules

Teaching and learning funding must be spent in accordance with the purposes explained here. It cannot be used for other purposes, unless authorised in writing by the OECD.

For **sessional preschool partner services**, teaching and learning funding (along with parent fees) can be applied to the costs of providing a funded 3-year-old and/or 4-year-old preschool program at the service. This can cover wages and conditions of the early childhood teacher and VET-qualified program staff.

For **long day care partner services**, teaching and learning funding can *only* be applied to the marginal costs of teaching and learning in the funded preschool programs. This funding cannot be used for the costs of other rooms or the underlying costs of operating a national law-compliant long day care service. (It is assumed these costs are covered by Australian Government funding and parent fees.) For example, funding must only be spent on the *additional costs* of delivering a quality preschool program above and beyond a long day care program. Costs may include:

- the differential between wages and conditions of an early childhood teacher-led room and a program led by a diploma-qualified staff member



- for early childhood teachers delivering the funded preschool program, the provision of an additional 2 hours of non-contact time per week above and beyond the relevant industrial award, plus 2 working days off the floor per year. This includes costs for backfilling of staff.
- teaching and learning professional development programs plus release time for early childhood teachers and VET-qualified staff working in the funded preschool program. This supports quality programming, including a focus on preventing and responding to developmental vulnerability
- improved wages and conditions for early childhood teachers and/or VET-qualified staff working in the funded preschool program. This includes attraction and/or retention payments necessary to establish and maintain the program
- support such as release time for staff who are upskilling to their next level of qualification in order to take on a higher-level role in the funded preschool program
- additional enrichment experiences such as incursions and excursions, for funded preschool children to support preschool program delivery.

Funding can only be allocated and used **at a service level**, unless authorised in writing by the OECD.

The OECD will consult on appropriate arrangements for long day care services that, at the time of becoming a partner service, already wholly or partly meet the teaching and learning requirements of the funded preschool program.

In these cases, funding uses could include:

- additional workforce development
- quality or capability building in staff
- equity and inclusion activity that benefits the service and its families as well as the broader local community, particular cohorts, or the early childhood system as a whole.

### Financial obligations

Each partner service must be able to demonstrate to the OECD that:

- the funding has been spent has been spent in accordance with the spending rules
- they have retained evidence to demonstrate compliance with funding rules, which may include:
  - enrolment policies and procedures, enrolment forms
  - fee structure for the service/s
  - family fee statements
  - financial reports, receipts, invoices, bank account statements
  - payslips or employment contracts.



## Additional funding

### Preschool Boost (also known as ‘layered supports’)

Preschool Boost is a funded program designed to support partner services to do more to address children’s developmental vulnerability.

This additional funding may be provided as a mix of cash and/or vouchers for access to services such as trauma-informed practice training, allied health capacity-building for teachers, educators and parents/guardians, and various other evidence-based resources, supports, and training.

#### Service eligibility

All partner services will receive funding, reflecting that developmental vulnerability occurs in every area in South Australia. Funding amounts will vary based on the statistical likelihood of developmental vulnerability in the service’s location.

All partner services are expected to have access to and are expected to participate in cultural safety training and trauma-informed practice training. It is anticipated this program of professional development will be phased in over the period of roll-out of universal 3-year-old preschool.

We will provide further information before contracting with the first round of partner services in mid-2025.

#### Spending rules

Funding is to be used to *support groups of children* and to *build service, educator and parent capability*, rather than provide direct, individualised support.

The intention is to encourage early intervention to better support children’s developmental growth during important stages. Preschool Boost funding is intended to complement other available resources such as the Australian Government (CCS-eligible services) and state (Department for Education services) inclusion funding, that offers support for individual child inclusion.

#### Financial obligations

The OECD will consult with the sector and experts on an approved menu of Preschool Boost interventions.

Each partner service must ensure that funds are spent on *approved interventions* linked to identified developmental goals for their cohort or community. A process of identifying interventions should be informed by relevant data (such as AEDC results for their community) and the service’s experience of their community.



To support this process, services will be informed of their Preschool Boost funding amount in the months before the start of the calendar year. Services must submit a simple plan for OECD approval before the start of the calendar year.

A mid-year review will assess alignment with planned supports. Final acquittal of both funding and supports will occur at the end of the year. Unspent funding will be offset against the next year's Preschool Boost funding amount (this will be the net amount of unspent funds).

We will provide further guidance on eligible spend and program information in 2025.

## Outreach

Outreach will provide access to additional resources and targeted supports in areas of high vulnerability to support uptake of 3- and 4-year-old preschool.

### Service eligibility

Outreach funding will be available for all 30-hour preschool places from 2026, and for other services in SEIFA 1 and 2 areas from 2027. We will provide further information in mid 2025.

### Spending rules

The intention is for this to help reach and retain children and families to address barriers to participation in preschool through additional resources and targeted supports. We will provide further information in mid 2025.

## 30-hour preschool program

The 30-hour preschool program is a targeted early intervention program of additional hours of preschool for some 3- and 4-year-old children. Evidence has shown that children benefit from an additional year of preschool, and children at risk of being developmentally vulnerable are most likely to benefit from both an additional year and additional hours.

The program comprises the following elements:

- up to 30 hours of preschool program per week for the 2 years before school entry
- outreach funding to support uptake of preschool
- additional Preschool Boost funding to support early childhood services to address developmental vulnerability in preschool-aged children
- fee relief to ensure cost is not a barrier to participation in the program.

We will provide further information in 2025.

The 30-hour preschool program will be capped at 2,000 places at full roll-out. Places will be phased in between 2026 and 2032.

### Child eligibility criteria

This program will be delivered through 2 approaches.



### **Approach 1:** Integrated hubs – place-based priority of access

Integrated hubs will be established in areas of high developmental vulnerability. These locations will be chosen based on:

- data on the likelihood of developmental vulnerability among resident children
- the number of developmentally vulnerable children who could access the hub, and
- the practical feasibility of establishing a hub in that location.

Hubs will be a mix of existing services that are expanded and/or better resourced, and new services. At least 2 hubs will be Aboriginal Community-controlled, subject to community support.

### **Approach 2:** Other preschool services – referral and eligibility criteria

To provide greater, statewide accessibility, this program will also be delivered in other services providing a preschool program, including government and non-government sessional preschools and long day care services. A referral approach will be used to manage these places.

In 2026, the first group of children will be identified by the OECD to participate through a referral process established with cross-government partners.

Eligible children and their families will be identified and supported to engage in a local, eligible partner service.

As more places become available, additional referral pathways will be added. We will provide more details in 2025.

#### Service eligibility criteria

Services may be eligible to provide places in this program, either through Integrated Hubs or other preschool services if they:

- receive 3-year-old teaching and learning preschool program funding (as a partner service)
- meet or exceed the NQS
- can provide at least 1,200 hours of a preschool program
- have completed or started cultural safety and trauma-informed practice in education training before the service starts providing preschool.

Integrated Hubs will provide the 30-hour preschool program as part of their core services (refer to section below Integrated hubs).

Partner services do not need to apply for the 30-hour preschool program.

OECD will identify eligible services and during the first half of 2025, will approach these services to gauge their interest in supporting and providing places for children engaged in the program.





Integrated hubs will be identified through a separate process.

### Program hours

The 30-hour preschool program involves delivering 1,200 hours of preschool each year to children in the 2 years before full-time school. Program hours can be delivered flexibly across days and weeks of the year, with a maximum of 8 hours of funded preschool programming per day, with a goal of 1,200 hours per year.

Because children have individual needs, and some parents may not choose to have their child attend the full 30 hours at the start of their intake (either at the beginning of the year or through a mid-year intake), partner services should support families to maximise their participation over time.

We will provide more details in 2025.

### **Fee relief**

#### Spending rules

Fee relief funding will be available for children receiving 30-hour preschool places, to reduce fees for families with children in the 30-hour preschool program. Fees for these families cannot be set higher than for other families.

We will provide more information in 2025.

### **Integrated hubs**

Integrated hubs will bring up to 30 hours of preschool together with other health, wellbeing, and education services in areas of high developmental vulnerability. This will help families and children receive support and access to the services they need in one place.

All hubs are expected to provide a core offering of child and family health services and support. Other services will be co-designed with local communities.

#### Service model

A service model for integrated hubs – based on best-practice and evidence from successful child and family hubs – will guide the delivery of high quality and consistent services. Each integrated hub will develop and maintain its own services to meet the needs of its local community.

Core components are:

- a 30-hour preschool program
- child and family health services (such as Child and Family Health Services (CaFHS), child health checks, immunisations, allied health services)
- parenting programs and support (such as playgroup, Circle of Security).



Each integrated hub will develop and maintain their own Service Offer to meet the needs of their local community. The Service Offer will be developed through place-based consultation activities to assist with the identification of additional services and programs to meet the needs of local children and families. These will be tailored in response to each community.



## Data collection and reporting

This section outlines the requirements for partner services to provide reporting and data to the OECD, the type of data collected, and how this data is submitted for teaching and learning funding. Reporting and data collection for government services will be managed centrally through the Department for Education.

Under the current Commonwealth Preschool Reform Agreement there is a requirement to collect information about preschool enrolment and attendance for all children. This includes the proportion of Aboriginal children and disadvantaged children enrolled and attending 600 hours of preschool in the year before full-time schooling. This information is currently collected directly by the Australian Government where a service has a Child Care Management System (CCMS). However, for providers without a CCMS, this requirement may fall to the state government, and may also change in future Commonwealth/state agreements over time.

Data collections are undertaken by State government for funding purposes. There are also national data collection requirements across the 3- and 4-year-old preschool program. Commonwealth requirements will be incorporated into quarterly data collection.

### Reporting requirements

Collection, storage and sharing of data related to preschool programs must meet the information security, data storage and information sharing requirements of the State Government.

Routine data collection will be aligned to service core partnership requirements.

### Data collection requirements

Partner services must:

- provide confirmed enrolment data to OECD in advance of each semester to inform teaching and learning payments.
- undertake ongoing termly online data collections/updates (aligned with dates for confirming 6-monthly enrolment data) for all enrolments within the required timeframes set out by the OECD. Funding may be withheld or ceased if information is not submitted within these timeframes.
- ensure provider, service, teacher, and enrolment information is accurate.

This data may be shared with the Australian Government.

The OECD may ask for confirmation that a partner service complies with provider and service eligibility requirements before a funding agreement is signed.

We may change the frequency of reporting requirements for data collection purposes and request additional information relating to service delivery.



## Data collection fields

Partner services must provide child-level and service-level data to the OECD. This may include:

Data level	Data fields
Child-level	Name
	Address
	Date of birth
	Whether is a year before school, or 2 years before school enrolment
	Enrolled hours in the preschool program
	Actual hours of attendance in the preschool program*
	Preschool program enrolment period start date
	Preschool program enrolment period end date
	Preschool program commencement start date
	Preschool program commencement end date
	Whether is a 30-hour preschool program enrolment
	Country of birth
	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status
	If the child is or has been in out-of-home care
	Intended school start date
Whether the child was enrolled under 'priority of access' and if so, the priority category	
Child's parent, carer or legal guardian	Name
	Date of birth
	Address
Service level	Number of early childhood teachers planning and delivering the preschool program
	Name of ECTs planning and delivering the preschool program
	Qualification of early childhood teachers planning and delivering the program (ECT or ECT SAT)
	Number of non-contact hours per week above current relevant industrial award for early childhood teachers



	Hours and days of preschool programs delivered per week
	Number of weeks of the year that preschool programs are delivered

For services with an existing CCMS, OECD will work with them to understand how to ensure visibility of attendance data.

The OECD will monitor a partner service's compliance with core partnership requirements through data collected for other programs administered by OECD.



# Funding

## When funding starts

Expression of Interest closes	Funding agreement offered by OECD	Funding starts
28 February 2025	Late May 2025	Term 1, 2026

## How funding is calculated

The OECD will communicate initial funding amounts, including a breakdown of loadings and the number of eligible enrolments funded to the partner services. See Appendix 1: Funding Rates for 2026.

Information about funding for Preschool Boost, outreach and 30-hour preschool program fee relief will be available before partner services are contracted in 2025.

## Funding claim and payments

### Teaching and learning

Funding for the non-government preschool program is paid 6-monthly in advance of the teaching period. It is based on preschool enrolment data submitted to the Non-Government Preschool Data System (NGPDS) for children in the 2 years before school. Payments are made via electronic funds transfer.

Each 6-monthly allocation is calculated using:

- confirmed enrolment data for terms 1 and 2 collected in term 4 of the prior year, with payments for the first 6 months made in January.
- confirmed enrolment data for terms 3 and 4 collected in term 2 of the same year, with payments made in July.

Where there are amendments to enrolment numbers after enrolment data is submitted by a service, or changes to enrolment numbers identified in termly data collections, funding may be adjusted if there is a significant decrease in enrolments without reasonable explanation.

If a partner service seeks to increase enrolments after data collection periods, and they would be required to employ additional staff in order to do so, they must make a request for additional funding to [OECD.PreschoolFunding@sa.gov.au](mailto:OECD.PreschoolFunding@sa.gov.au).

## Payment of other funding

Preschool Boost and outreach funding will be paid annually and will not be adjusted based on changes in enrolments during that calendar year.

Fee relief funding arrangements for the 30-hour preschool program will be advised to commissioned services in 2025.



## Financial acquittal

### Review of financial acquittal

When a partner service submits its financial acquittal, OECD will take the following actions:

- where there are unexpended funds, future payments will be adjusted taking this into account
- where there is a 'nil balance' or deficit reported, no further action will be taken.

### Partner service record keeping and compliance

The OECD may undertake a funding compliance review of the partner service in relation to preschool funds, and request that supporting documentation is provided, such as:

- proof of expenditure in line with spending rules
- statements to families receiving a 30-hour preschool program showing fee reduction and attributing fee relief to the SA Government
- parent declaration and consent forms.

### Recovering funds

Under the terms and conditions of any funding agreement, partner services may be required to return any unspent funds to the OECD.

### Ceasing or suspending funding

Partner services may be suspended or ceased based on any of the following grounds, at the discretion of the OECD:

- insolvency, under management, under administration or in liquidation
- in receipt of outstanding compliance issues of a serious or ongoing nature that may adversely affect the delivery of a preschool program or service operations
- not meeting the core partnership requirements or their contractual obligations.



## Service changes

Partner services must notify the OECD if there are any changes to its operation that may impact the funding agreement, such as a change of ownership, service approval details or service closure.

### Transferring service approval

Partner service status does not transfer with a change of service details, either through the transfer of a service approval or an application for a new service approval with the ESB. A new approved provider would need to apply again for that service to become a partner service.

### If a service ceases to operate

If a partner service closes or ceases trading, before that date, they must:

- contact the OECD via email [OECD.PreschoolFunding@sa.gov.au](mailto:OECD.PreschoolFunding@sa.gov.au)
- complete all outstanding financial acquittals
- stop spending funds after the date of closure
- return all unexpended and unaccounted funds to the OECD no later than 30 days after the service closure date, or as agreed by the OECD
- comply with any direction by the OECD under the funding agreement.

The OECD may take action if a partner service has stated that it proposes to close or cease trading, including withholding funding for the service where it relates to a period after the proposed date of closure.

No funding will be provided by the OECD for a service that has closed or ceased trading, for a period after the date of closure.

Note: approved providers must follow steps to comply with regulatory requirements under the National Law and Nation Regulations, including notifying the ESB within 7 days of ceasing to operate the education and care service (under section 173(2)(d) of the National Law).

### Withdrawing from program

Where a partner service notifies the OECD that they will not deliver the funded preschool program, they:

- must give 90 days' notice
- will be ineligible for preschool funding
- will be removed from all future collections
- will need to reapply if seeking to become a partner service again.





## Appendix 1 – Funding rates

### SEIFA metric

Some funding allocations vary based on the SEIFA of a service.

SEIFA is the ‘Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas’, which is produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and ranks areas according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage using Census data. For more information, see [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\), Australia, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australians-and-society/socio-economic-indexes-for-areas-seifa)

Services will be allocated a SEIFA quintile for funding purposes based on service address, using the South Australian Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) for the Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) in which a service is located.

Service SEIFA quintiles will be updated every 5 years, based on ABS published indices following each Census.

### Regional metric

Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) is also known as ABS relative geographic remoteness index, available at [Remoteness Areas | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australians-and-society/remoteness-areas). ARIA divides Australia into five classes of remoteness which are characterised by a measure of relative geographic access to services.

Services will be allocated to a remoteness category for funding purposes based on service address, using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia for the Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) in which a service is located.

Service ARIA will be updated every 5 years, based on ABS remoteness indices following each Census.

### Long day care services

Table 1 – Teaching and learning per enrolment funding rates

SEIFA Quintile	2026 rate
1	\$2,600
2	
3	\$2,000
4	
5	



Table 2 – Teaching and learning regional loadings per enrolment

ARIA+	2026 rate
Major cities	\$0
Inner regional	\$0
Outer regional	\$300
Remote	\$700
Very remote	\$1,150

### Non-government Sessional Services

Table 3 – Teaching and learning per enrolment funding rates

Teaching and learning	2026 rate
Base rate	\$6,200

Table 4 – Teaching and learning regional loading

ARIA+	2026 rate
Major cities	\$0
Inner regional	\$0
Outer regional	\$900
Remote	\$2,000
Very remote	\$3,000

### Preschool Boost Funding

Preschool Boost is a funded program designed to support Partner Services to do more to address children’s developmental vulnerability. Preschool Boost funding may be provided as a mix of cash and/or vouchers for access to services such as trauma informed practice training, allied health capacity-building for teachers, educators and parents/guardians, and a range of other evidence-based resources, supports, and training designed to support early childhood services to address developmental vulnerability. Preschool Boost funding (and any vouchers) is distributed annually, based on initial enrolment data and assessments of developmental need. A calculation is used to determine how much funding each Partner Service receives, with more support going to services in less advantaged areas. All services receive funding, reflecting that developmental vulnerability occurs in every area in South Australia. Preschool Boost funding will be phased in from 2026, to allow time to build capacity.

This funding will be fixed for the year, ensuring stability despite any fluctuations in child enrolment.