

# Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme Procedure

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| <b>Policy Number:</b> | D25-370598       | <b>Directorate:</b>         | Connected Communities |
| <b>Approval by:</b>   | CEO              | <b>Responsible Officer:</b> | Manager Early years   |
| <b>Approval Date:</b> | January 2026     | <b>Version Number:</b>      | 5.0                   |
| <b>Review Date:</b>   | 1 year from date |                             |                       |

## 1. Purpose

This procedure outlines Knox City Council's Central Registration Scheme (CRS) process for registering and allocating children in 3-year-old kindergarten, 4-year-old kindergarten, and Pre-Prep programs at CRS participating kindergarten services. It provides clear and consistent guidance for families, CRS participating services and Council officers regarding the registration process and the allocation of kindergarten places, ensuring a transparent, equitable and consistent approach compliant with the Victorian Kindergarten Funding Guide.

## 2. Context

The Victorian State Government funds and regulates all kindergarten programs. Through the recent Best Start, Best Life reforms, the State has reshaped the kindergarten service system by introducing two years of funded kindergarten before school. The Central Registration Scheme provides a single point of entry for families, simplifying the kindergarten registration process and improving equity of access.

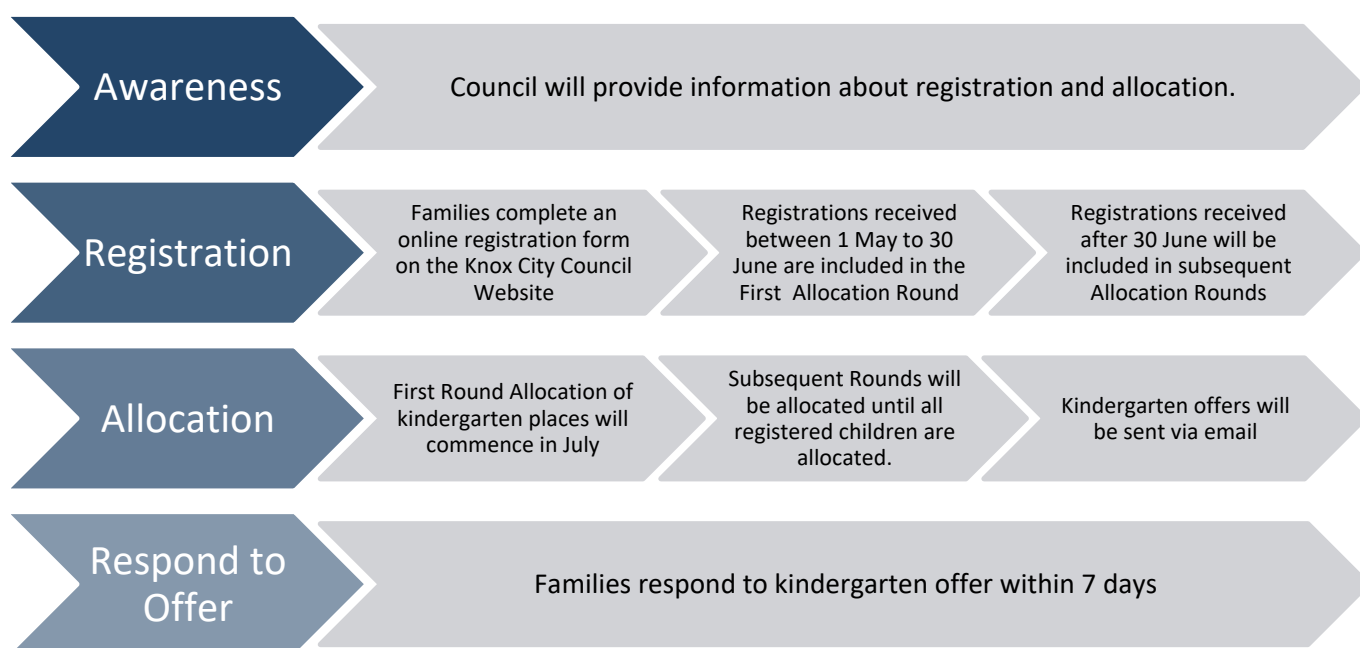
## 3. Scope

This procedure applies to all kindergarten services participating in the Central Registration Scheme (CRS), Council officers involved in the registration and allocation process, families with eligible children enrolling in 3-year-old kindergarten, four-year-old kindergarten or pre-prep programs.

## 4. Procedure

Council implements an annual process for the Central Registration Scheme, ensuring that all key activities are carried out in a structured and consistent manner each year.

### Central Registration Scheme



### Stage 1 - Awareness

Council is committed to fostering strong and collaborative partnerships with kindergarten service providers and relevant stakeholders to engage and support families in understanding the value of kindergarten. Through these partnerships, Council seeks to actively promote and facilitate access to available supports for families, carers and children who may otherwise encounter barriers to kindergarten participation.

### Eligibility for Kindergarten

A child must be 3 or 4-years of age by April 30 in the year they attend a funded kindergarten service. A 3-year-old child can only attend kindergarten after their 3rd birthday. For children born between January and April, families can choose which year to start 3-Year-Old Kindergarten. These children can start in the same year they turn three, or in the year they turn four years of age. In Victoria a 3 or 4-year-old child can only attend one State Government funded kindergarten program each year.

## **Additional Year of Funded Kindergarten**

Children may be recommended for a second year of funded kindergarten by their kindergarten teacher if it is recognised that they would benefit from additional time in the program. A child may qualify for a second year of funded 3-year-old or 4-year-old kindergarten if they are experiencing delays in their learning and development, and remaining in the kindergarten program is considered the best way to support their progress. Families are required to complete a new registration form for a second year of funded kindergarten and will be given priority of access.

## **Early Start Kindergarten**

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) offers 15 hours of kindergarten each week to eligible 3-year-old children. Children are eligible for ESK if they:

- turn three years old by 30 April in the year they will attend kindergarten; and meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
  - have had family contact with Child Protection
  - are from a refugee or asylum seeker background

## **Pre-Prep Programs**

From 2026, eligible 4-year-old children can access between 16 - 25 hours of funded kindergarten a week, in the year before school. From 2028, these children can access between 16 – 30 hours.

A child is eligible for Pre-Prep if they are four years old by 30 April, and:

- are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- if the eligible family has had contact with child protection

From 2028, eligibility for Pre-Prep (16 -25 hours) expands to include:

- a child who, or their parent/guardian, hold a Commonwealth concession card
- or are from a multiple birth (triplets or more)

## **Local Community Area**

A Local Community Area (LCA) is a defined geographic boundary used by Council to plan, monitor and coordinate early years services at a neighbourhood level. LCAs group nearby suburbs and catchments that share community connections such as playgroups, parent networks, and local services, as well as similar social and travel patterns. In Knox, LCAs mirror the existing Maternal and Child Health (MCH) catchments, creating consistency across early years planning and ensuring that data, outreach and service delivery are coordinated at the same local scale.

## **Stage 2 - Registration for Kindergarten**

Prior to completing the registration process, families are encouraged to visit or contact a selection of kindergartens to assist them in identifying the most appropriate kindergarten service to meet their individual needs. Kindergarten registrations for the following year will open 1 May. All kindergarten registrations received between 1 May and 30 June will be included in Round One allocations.

- Registrations received after 30 June will be included in subsequent allocation rounds.
- Registrations for 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten must be completed separately in the year prior to attendance.
- A separate kindergarten registration must be completed for each eligible child.

For registration timelines please refer to the Knox City Council, Kindergarten Registration Information: [Register for kindergarten | Knox](#).

All children registering for kindergarten must be eligible to attend in the year they intend to start.

### How to Register for Kindergarten

Families can register for CRS participating kindergarten services using the online form on Knox City Council’s website [Register for kindergarten | Knox](#).

Families will need to provide the following supporting documentation with their kindergarten registration:

| Criteria                                                                    | Documents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Proof of Concession Card (photo or scan copy)                               | Commonwealth Concession Card (i.e. Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran’s Affairs Card, Disability Health Care Card)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Supporting documentation for children and/or families with additional needs | <p>Letter of Support from Medical Practitioner or Specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility under NDIS</li> <li>• Early Childhood Intervention Service Continuity of Support (ECIS COS)</li> <li>• Diagnosed with a disability</li> <li>• Undergoing diagnosis for disability or developmental delay</li> <li>• Complex medical needs that presents barriers to accessing a kindergarten program</li> </ul> <p>Letter of Support from Maternal Child Health (MCH) or similar practitioner (i.e. allied health)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents with developmental concerns that presents barriers to accessing a kindergarten program.</li> </ul> |
| Proof of Address                                                            | <p>Copy of a Rates Notice/Lease Agreement or Utility Invoice; for example, a mobile phone or electricity bill (issued in the last 3 months).</p> <p>Copy of a Driver’s License or current Health Care Card or Pension Concession Card displaying your current address.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Proof of study or work in Knox                                              | <p>Letter or payslip from place of employment.</p> <p>Current course report from training organisation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

- Families can select up to three CRS participating kindergartens and session times in order of preference.

- It is important for families to only list preferences that they are willing to accept if a place is offered.

Once a registration has been submitted families will receive confirmation via email. Council officers will review and audit the registration information provided by families and may contact them periodically to validate, confirm or update details as required. This process ensures the accurate allocation of kindergarten places and management of waitlists in accordance with the procedure.

**Priority of Access** All kindergarten and pre-prep allocations are determined in accordance with the Department of Education’s Priority of Access guidelines (Priority 1 & 2), followed by the Knox City Council local area priority criteria as outlined below:

| Department of Education Priority of Access<br>High Priority One                                               | Criteria and processes to verify need(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including Out of Home Care.<br><i>Eligible for Pre Prep – from 2026</i> | The child is attending a three-year-old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, and/or<br>The family, carer or legal guardian identifies the child as known to or having contact with Child Protection or in Out of Home Care and/or<br>The child or family has previously accessed Flexible Support Packages and/or<br>The parent or carer or child is experiencing family violence and/or has had contact with The Orange Door and/or<br>The child or family is referred by one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection</li> <li>• Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker)</li> <li>• Maternal and Child Health nurse, or</li> <li>• Out-of-Home Care provider</li> </ul> |
| Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children;<br><i>Eligible for Pre Prep – from 2026</i>                | As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families ‘do you identify your child as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?’ and record this information.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Asylum seeker and refugee children<br><i>Eligible for Pre Prep – from 2026</i>                                | The child, a parent, a carer or a legal guardian holds, has previously held, or is applying for, a refugee or asylum seeker visa (see list of visas in the Kindergarten Funding Guide), or<br>The child, a parent, a carer or a legal guardian holds a current or expired Immi Card, or<br>Children, parents, carers or legal guardian who previously held a refugee or asylum seeker visa and now hold Australian Citizenship or permanent residency.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Children and/or families holding concession cards<br><i>Eligible for Pre Prep – from 2028</i>                 | A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veterans’ Affairs Card.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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| <p>Children with families with multiple births<br/><i>Eligible for Pre Prep – from 2028</i></p>                                                                                        | <p>Multiple birth children (i.e. triplets or quadruplets)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>Children and/or families with additional needs who require additional assistance to fully participate in the kindergarten program.<br/><i>Eligible for Pre Prep – from 2034</i></p> | <p>The child and family with additional needs who meet one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is eligible under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or undergoing a continuing assessment of a disability under the NDIS (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist)</li> <li>• Is eligible for Early Childhood Intervention Service Continuity of Support (ECIS COS)</li> <li>• Is diagnosed with a disability or developmental delay or are undergoing diagnosis (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist)</li> <li>• Presents with developmental concerns that presents barriers to accessing a kindergarten program (supported by a letter or other evidence from a MCH nurse or similar practitioner such as an allied health practitioner)</li> <li>• Has complex medical needs that presents barriers to accessing a kindergarten program (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist)</li> <li>• Holds a Disability Health Care Card.</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <p>The child has previously accessed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program, Commonwealth Inclusion Support Program or similar program</li> </ul> <p>Or the child is referred by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Disability Insurance Scheme</li> <li>• Early Childhood Intervention Service Continuity of Support (ECIS COS)</li> <li>• Preschool Field Officer program, or</li> <li>• MCH nurse or similar professional such as an allied health specialist, where developmental concerns have been identified.</li> </ul> <p>Parent or Carer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is eligible under the National Disability Insurance Scheme or undergoing a continuing assessment of a disability under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist)</li> <li>• Has complex medical needs that present barriers to accessing a kindergarten program (supported by a letter from a medical practitioner or specialist)</li> </ul> |

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|                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds a Disability Health Care Card</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Children accessing an additional year of Three or Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep           | Children assessed with delays in two or more areas and are identified as eligible for an additional year of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Department of Education Priority of Access High Priority Two</b>                                | <b>Criteria and processes for verify need(s)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Children currently attending the service                                                           | <p>Children attending the service in the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program and seeking to access Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep at the same service for continuity of learning.</p> <p>Priority should be given to these children to remain at the same service for their Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep year to ensure continuity of learning.</p> |
| <b>Local Priority Criteria</b>                                                                     | <b>Criteria and processes for verify need(s)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Priority Three</b><br>Residents - Integrated Long Day Care Attendance                           | Child/ren that are residents and are currently utilising Council's Long Day Care Services – registration for first preference for sessional kindergarten at the two Council Hubs.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Priority Four</b><br>Local Community Area - Twins or Siblings                                   | Live within Local Community Area with twins/siblings registering for the same kindergarten service.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Priority Five</b><br>Local Community Area - Siblings with previous connection                   | Live within Local Community Area with an elder sibling who currently or previously attended the kindergarten selected as the 1 <sup>st</sup> preference within (3) years of the new registration.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Priority Six</b><br>Local Community Area                                                        | Lives within the Local Community Area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Priority Seven</b><br>Resident outside Local Community Area - Twins or Siblings                 | Live outside the Local Community Area with Twins or Siblings registering for the same kindergarten service who do not meet the above criteria.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Priority Eight</b><br>Resident outside Local Community Area - Siblings with previous connection | Live outside the Local Community Area with an elder sibling who currently or previously attended the kindergarten selected as the 1 <sup>st</sup> preference within (3) years of the new registration.                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Priority Nine</b><br>Resident outside Local Community Area                                      | Live outside the Local Community Area and do not meet the above criteria.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Priority Ten</b><br>Non-Residents - Integrated Long Day Care Attendance                         | Non-Residents currently utilising Council's Long Day Care Services – registration for first preference for sessional kindergarten at the two Council Hubs.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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| <b>Priority Eleven</b><br><a href="#">Local workforce or study link</a>      | Non-resident where a parent or guardian works or studies within the Knox municipality.                                              |
| <b>Priority Twelve</b><br><a href="#">Non – Residents -Twins or Siblings</a> | Non-resident with twins or siblings with no connection to Knox registering for the same service who do not meet the above criteria. |
| <b>Priority Thirteen</b><br><a href="#">Non-Residents</a>                    | Non-resident with no connection to Knox.                                                                                            |

### Exceptional circumstances

Families who believe they are experiencing extenuating circumstances regarding kindergarten placement that do not align with the criteria outlined above should contact the Kindergarten Team on 9298 8000 to discuss their individual situation.

## Stage 3 - Allocation

Kindergarten allocations are processed through Enrol Now, an online system designed to ensure a consistent, transparent and equitable allocation process in accordance with the Priority of Access criteria. Children with the highest priority are allocated places in the first instance. In circumstances where the number of registrations with the same priority exceeds the available places, a randomised ballot will be conducted to determine the allocation of kindergarten places.

### First round allocations

First-round allocations are based on registrations being received before June 30 and all three preference selections. These allocations are processed through the online system and offers are issued to families via email in July of each year.

### Second round allocations

Second-round allocations are based on service availability and all three preference selections. These allocations are processed through the online system and offers are issued to families via email in August of each year.

### Third round allocations

Third-round allocations are based on service availability and all three preference selections. These allocations are processed through the online system and offers are issued to families via email in September of each year.

Kindergarten allocation rounds after this will be processed on a 2–4-week cycle as required.

If a family does not receive an offer in an allocation round, they must wait for the next round of allocations.

If vacancies are unavailable across all three preferences, the applicant will be placed on the waiting list and notified accordingly.

Through the State Government Priority of Access Tier 2, Council aims to allocate children at the same kindergarten for both 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten however this is not guaranteed due to the allocation of Priority 1, Tier 1 children in the first instance. Kindergarten service providers are required to comply with licensing requirements as part of the National Regulations regarding maximum enrolment numbers. In instances where an excess of Priority 1, Tier 1 children register, which reduces the number of available places, some children may not be offered a 4-year-old place at the same kindergarten they attended for their 3-year-old program.

## Stage 4: Respond to an Offer

Kindergarten offers will be issued to families via email using the contact details provided on the registration form. The email will include clear instructions on how to respond to the offer. An SMS message will also be sent to alert families to the offer email.

Families are required to respond to the offer within seven (7) days. An SMS reminder will be sent two (2) days prior to the response due date and again on the due date if no response has been received. Upon receipt of the family's response, a confirmation email will be issued.

If a family does not respond to an offer within seven (7) days, Council will assume that a kindergarten place is no longer required and the registration will be withdrawn. An email notification confirming the withdrawal will be sent to the family.

### Offer response options include

**Accept:** family accepts offer being made.

**Accept and wait:** family accepts offer being made for kindergarten and remains on the waiting list for a different preference kindergarten.

**Decline and wait:** family does not wish to accept offer being made and wants to remain on the waiting list for a different preference kindergarten.

**Defer:** family wishes to defer offer to the following year; this does not guarantee an allocation for the following year (option only for 3-year-old children born between 1 January – 30 April).

**Withdraw:** family does not require offer being made and cancels kindergarten registration. The registration will become inactive.

### Kindergarten transfers after accepting an offer

If a family wishes to change their kindergarten placement after accepting an offer, they may contact the Early Years Registration and Support Officers to request a transfer.

Children without a kindergarten place will be allocated before transfers are considered.

### Waitlist

Council aims to allocate children to one of their preferred kindergartens however this is not always possible. After each round of offers children who have not been allocated will receive an email they have been placed on the next round offer list.

Following second round allocations, a list of available kindergarten places will be emailed to families.

Families may then choose to update their preferences based on current vacancies or remain on the waiting list for their preferred kindergarten. Kindergarten placements are not guaranteed until an offer has been made.

Waiting lists are subject to change and are updated regularly due to a range of factors. As a result, Council is unable to provide families with an exact position on the waiting list. Families will be contacted directly when a place becomes available.

### **Reserved places for high priority children**

The Department of Education (DE) specifies that registration processes must assist children at risk of disadvantage to access a funded Kindergarten program.

A specific number of places may be reserved to accommodate 'high priority' children who do not receive a place in accordance with the standard priority of access process outlined above in this document.

Council will make every effort to provide a funded kindergarten place to all 'high priority children'. However, this may not be at their first preferred kindergarten group.

### **Feedback and complaints**

Feedback and complaints regarding the kindergarten registration and allocation process can be directed to the Coordinator, Early Years Partnerships, or to Customer Service on 9298 8000. Council values feedback as an important tool for continuous improvement and service excellence.

All feedback received will be reviewed carefully to help enhance the registration and allocation process and ensure it remains fair, transparent, and responsive to community needs.

## **5. References**

### 5.1 Knox Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

- Strategy 1.2 Our community can access diverse training and life-long learning opportunities through delivery, promotion and partnerships with relevant organisations.
- Strategy 2.1 Our community's diverse needs are addressed by ensuring equity and inclusion are considered in decision making and strategic planning.
- Strategy 2.3 Our community is supported to thrive during all stages of life through the promotion and provision of services, advocacy and partnerships with local service providers.

### 5.2 Knox Council Reconciliation Plan.

- 7.7 Continue to build understanding of First Nations services and histories in our Early Years Centres and youth programs, to build culturally safe and inclusive settings for families and children.

### 5.3 Relevant Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020
- Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme Practice Guide
- Best Start, Best Life Reform – Victorian State Government
- Victorian Government Kindergarten State Funding Guide
- Education and Care Services National Regulations

#### 5.4 Charter of Human Rights

- This policy has been assessed against and complies with the charter of Human Rights.

#### 5.5 Related Council Policies and Procedures

- Councillor Equal Opportunity Policy
- Kindergarten Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Unreasonable Complaints Conduct Procedure

## 6. Definitions

| Term                                    | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| Ballot                                  | The process of a random selection via the online system to determine which registered applicants are offered a place in their nominated kindergarten group. This occurs in situations where there are a greater number of registrations with the same Priority of Access criteria than there are places available in the preferred kindergarten group. |
| Best Start, Best Life                   | A suite of Victorian Government initiatives designed to transform early childhood education by expanding access to two years of funded kindergarten before school. The reforms aim to give every child the best start in life, ease cost-of-living pressures for families, and support parents to participate in work, study, or community life.       |
| Central Registration Scheme             | Knox City Council's process of registering children in kindergarten for families, ensuring the process is simple, consistent, inclusive and equitable.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| CRS Participating Kindergarten services | Kindergarten services participating in the Central Registration Scheme.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Eligible Children                       | Children who are assessed in accordance with the State Government's Priority of Access requirements as eligible for a funded kindergarten place.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Kindergarten Funding Subsidy (KFS)      | Promotes participation by enabling eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge in the two years before school.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Maternal Child Health Service           | A free, universal primary health service for all Victorian families with children from birth to school age. It includes the Universal MCH program, Enhanced MCH program and the MCH Line, a 24-hour telephone support service.                                                                                                                         |
| Non-resident                            | Families who reside outside of the Knox City Council municipality                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| Preferences              | List of top three preferred kindergarten services and groups provided by families during the kindergarten registration process                                                                                 |
| Pre-Prep                 | Four-Year-Old Kindergarten’ will transition to the name ‘Pre-Prep’ from 2025 – 2036. These changes will have a flow on effect to the way Kindergarten is planned for and managed each year.                    |
| Priority of Access (POA) | The criteria used to allocate kindergarten places designed to ensure that children who are identified as vulnerable or experiencing disadvantage are given priority access to kindergarten programs.           |
| Registration             | Information provided by families through an online form to register for 3-year-old, 4-year-old kindergarten and pre-prep programs. This information is used to allocate children to kindergarten and Pre-Prep. |

## 7. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Procedure, such a change may be made administratively on approval of the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate. Examples of minor administrative changes include change to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this Procedure, it must be considered by Chief Executive Officer.

Where an administrative update has been made.

| V#    | Date       | Section        | Changes (Brief)                                                                                                                                       |
|-------|------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| V 5.0 | 02/12/2025 | Whole Document | This document has been updated in response to the State Government updated Priority of Access Criteria and updated Knox Central Registration Process. |