

7. COMMUNITY AND RECREATION

7.1 KINDERGARTEN SERVICE POLICY

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File No: *CH/08/010*

Attachment1: *Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy Adopted 2004*

Attachment2: *Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy New*

Reference: *Nil*

Summary

This report identifies the requirement to change the focus of the current Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy from operational procedures to strategic service development. It recommends Council adopt the new Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy.

Background

Council recognises the importance of supporting programs which respond to the emerging and changing needs of children and their families. Within this context Council currently provides eight funded kindergarten services to the Mitchell community. Kindergarten programs are also provided by other agencies within the Shire. Kindergarten programs operate in a variety of settings, including community based kindergartens, long day care centres and schools.

Council has a current Kindergarten Services Policy known as the *Mitchell Shire Council Kindergarten Cluster Management Policy* that guides the planning, delivery and evaluation of kindergarten programs provided by Council and other agencies. The purpose of the *Cluster Management Policy* is to bring together a group of kindergartens under the management of a single organisation.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is responsible for ensuring the provision of services to children and young people directly through government schools and indirectly through regulation and funding of early childhood services and non-government schools. The *Victorian Kindergarten Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria* assists organisations currently receiving or wanting to apply for kindergarten funding and to inform early childhood service providers of the policies, procedures and funding criteria associated with the Victorian kindergarten program.

The Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy (Policy) was adopted by Council in 2004. It describes Council's objectives in relation to the provision and oversight of kindergarten services within Mitchell which are to:

- Collect, maintain and enhance knowledge of kindergarten services and use this knowledge to support thriving service provision and innovation.
- Provide flexible and reflective services to respond to the needs of the community within resources available.
- Facilitate and maintain partnerships with policy and funding agencies to advocate for funding and resources.
- Maintain a current and comprehensive knowledge of demographic trends within the municipality to support effective service planning and responsible management of Council's kindergarten services
- Seek and utilise feedback from the children, families, the community, service providers and agencies, to understand expectations and identify opportunities to improve service provision and delivery.

The Policy also describes:

- Influences and drivers in relation to the provision of kindergarten services in Mitchell such as population growth, the need to support the diverse and individual characteristics of the community, Federal and State government policy frameworks and funding arrangements;
- Statutory, policy and service provision requirements in relation to the provision and delivery of funded kindergarten services;
- Service planning influences and processes
- Frameworks for evaluating the quality and appropriateness of kindergarten services and implementing service innovation.
- Financial management arrangements including funding and fees management that support safe and appropriate provision of services consistent with practice standards
- Human resource management
- Evaluation and Continuous Improvement processes

Issues

The Policy in its current form is essentially a procedural document and does not provide an effective or comprehensive policy statement or position for the provision of kindergarten services. In addition the Policy requires revision and does not reflect current legislative context, community demand, council resources, best practice or parent expectations

A new policy has been developed to support and guide decisions in relation to the provision of kindergarten services and growth, service planning and development going forward.

Its objectives are to:

- Children's personal, family and cultural histories shape learning and development. The service is committed to acknowledging and supporting our diverse communities and families.
- Families are the primary influence on children's learning and development. Involvement is encouraged and the voices of all our children and their families are welcomed and valued.
- Every child has the ability to learn and develop. Inclusion and access is promoted to ensure better outcomes for all our young children.
- Contributions from multidisciplinary agencies and professionals provide better support to families. Partnerships are valued and collaboration is facilitated.
- Services, facilities and infrastructure are provided by a range of organisations and governments. All can effectively contribute to the needs of our families and our future plans.
- Population growth in Mitchell will provide new opportunities and better outcomes for all residents. Quality planning and sustainability awareness will support and promote future flexible and responsive kindergarten services.

In addition, the policy also covers the following areas to support the delivery and operation of kindergarten programs.

- Kindergarten services within Mitchell
- Mitchell Shire Council Kindergarten Service Provision
- Service Planning
- Service options, provision and innovation
- Financial management
- Human Resource Management
- Evaluation and continuous improvement

Policy Implications

The new policy responds to the 2009-2013 Council Plan to "*Develop services including kindergartens*" and reflects the values and principles of service development for kindergarten programs in Mitchell Shire.

Financial Resource and Asset Management Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of the new Policy and procedures.

Environment and Sustainability Implications

Sustainability of the service is reliant on its ability to adapt to frequent change within the early year's field. Implementation of new procedures will support this process.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

1. Council revoke the current Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy Adopted 2004 (Attachment1); and
2. Council approve a new Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Service Policy (Attachment 2).

The resolution for Item 7.1, Kindergarten Service Policy is found on page 13 at the end of this section.

COMMUNITY AND RECREATION REPORTS – ITEMS NOT OTHERWISE DEALT WITH:

MOVED: CR. D. CALLAGHAN

SECONDED: CR. T. TOBIAS

THAT: the recommendations contained within Items 7.1 and 7.2 of the Community and Recreation Reports, be adopted.

CARRIED
7/0



COMMUNITY

DOCUMENT NUMBER

FS-01

DOCUMENT TITLE

**KINDERGARTEN SERVICE
ACCESS AND ENROLMENT
FEES (SETTING OF)
HOURS OF OPERATION
HEALTHY SNACKS**

DATE	CHANGE	BY	APPROVED	REVIEW
6/7/04.	Initial Issue	KSCo	6/7/04	1/7/07

Mitchell Kindergarten Service Policy Manual

Access and Enrolment

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff and parents/guardians in regards to applying for a place at the kindergarten.

Values:

The Mitchell Kindergarten Service is committed to:

- Equal access for all children, based on the selection criteria set out in this policy;
- Compliance with the Children's Services Regulations 1998;
- Compliance with the DHS funding requirements;
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the details on enrolment forms.

Purpose:

This policy will define procedures in relation to:

- The criteria for enrolment in the Mitchell Kindergarten Service;
- The process to be followed when enrolling a child, and the basis on which kindergarten places are allocated.

Number of available places:

The kindergarten service model (number of places) at each kindergarten will be reviewed annually based on:

- enrolment applications received;
- availability of Teachers;
- financial viability of program;
- feedback from parents and the benefits to the children attending the service as assessed by the Early Childhood Teacher.

This review will be completed by 31 August each year to assist with planning for the kindergarten programme in the following year.

Enrolment procedure:

Application for a place:

- Enrolment applications will be accepted prior to **August 1** in the year prior to the child attending the service. Applications received after this date will be treated as a late Enrolment Application.
- Enrolment application forms are available from all Mitchell Shire Council Kindergartens, Kilmore Library, Maternal Child Health Centres and Shire Offices in Broadford. Application forms can also be obtained by contacting the Mitchell Shire Council by phone, email, or via our website www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au.
- A copy of the child's birth certificate must accompany the application and the original birth certificate sighted by a member of staff.
- Completed Enrolment Application forms must be forwarded to:
Kindergarten Service Coordinator
Mitchell Shire Council
113 High Street,
Broadford VIC 3658

Access to completed Enrolment Application Forms is restricted to the: Kindergarten Service Coordinator; enrolment administrator; Kindergarten Teacher; Community Services Manager and General Manager Community and Recreation.

Children with additional needs:

- All children have equal access rights to kindergarten services, regardless of ability or level of development.

- The enrolment of a child with additional needs will be done in consultation with staff, the child's parents/guardians and appropriate support services.
- Specific information required to assist the staff in planning for children with additional needs should be included on the Enrolment Application Form.
- Children who will be accessing a second kindergarten year are required to be assessed by the DHS Children's Services Team before they can be accepted as confirmed enrolment.
- Parents/guardians of children applying for a second year of funded kindergarten or who are applying after withdrawing from kindergarten the previous year must resubmit an Enrolment Application Form for the second year of kindergarten.
- Council will provide appropriate staffing resources and training in relation to children with additional needs, this may include application for support from the Special Education Program administered by the Department of Human Services.
- Staff will provide appropriate programs and experiences for children with additional needs.

Late Applications:

- Applications received after August 1 will go to the end of the waiting list and will be allocated places if available, in accordance with the date of receipt of the application (earliest date first).

Allocation of places:

- Places are allocated to eligible children for whom an application form has been received.
- Applicants who are successful in being offered a place will be notified and requested to pay a non-refundable \$20 deposit to accept and secure their enrolment at the kindergarten.
- Applicants who are unsuccessful in being offered a place will be notified and placed on a waiting list.
- Parents/guardians who do not wish to accept the offer of a place, or withdraw their enrolment, will be required to notify Council in writing within 14 days of receipt of offer.
- Places will not be allocated to children until any substantial debt owed by the family to Council for services is paid.

Selection Criteria:

If there are more applications than places available at any kindergarten the following priority of places will be applied:

- Children who have received funding for a second year of four year old kindergarten.
- Children who were eligible to attend in the previous year but deferred or withdrew from a service.
- Children who will have turned four years of age by 30 April in the year they attend kindergarten – Children in this category are allocated by age with the oldest child being allocated first.
- Children who are younger than the eligible age, but whose parents/guardians have submitted a written request for their child to attend school the following year to their regional office of the Department of Education and Training. If the child attends kindergarten early, but does not proceed onto school the following year, the child will be unable to access another year of kindergarten unless they are funded by DHS for a second year.
- Unfunded 2nd year applications are considered where space is available.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the values and purposes outlined in this policy have been achieved, Council will:

- Take into account feedback from parents/guardians and staff.
- Number of children on the waiting list.

Fees (setting of)

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, committee and parents/guardians in regards to the payment and collection of fees.

Values:

The Mitchell Kindergarten Service is committed to:

- Setting fees that will result in a financially viable service.
- Keeping user fees at the lowest possible level.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.
- Complying with all legislative and statutory requirements.

Purpose:

To provide clear guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees, that ensures the viability of the service and equitable fees across the service.

Procedures:

Fee structure:

- Council will set fees for the service each year, taking into consideration; the operational costs of the service and the fees charged by similar services in the area.
- The fees for 2004 will be \$125 per term per child. This may be higher for children attending the kindergarten as an unfunded place.
- A portion of the fees is provided to the committee to assist with purchasing and general administration of the kindergarten as per the Council – Committee Agreement.

Payment of fees:

- Fees are invoiced two weeks prior to the commencement of each term and are due before the end of the second week of that term (see further notes under late payment of fees).
- Payment and cheques should be made to Mitchell Shire Council.
- Payment plans may be negotiated by contacting the Finance Unit at Council.
- A rebate is available for parents/guardians of children enrolled in four year old kindergarten and hold a current Health Care Card or Pension Card. In order to receive a rebate a copy of the current Health Care Card or Pension Card must be provided to Mitchell Shire Council by 1 February and 1 July of the year of attendance or on enrolment, whichever is the latest.
- A concession of 25% of the annual fee is available for twins or other multiple births for children enrolled in four year old kindergarten.
- Fees are non refundable, except where a child leaves the service and has fees paid in advance. A pro rata reimbursement of fees will be paid.
- There will be no refund of fees if the program is unable to operate when the qualified staff member is absent and Council cannot obtain a qualified reliever.

Late payment of fees:

- Council's debt collection policy will be implemented in the case of late payment of fees.
- Withdrawal of a child from the kindergarten programme may take place if fees are not paid in required timeframe. If fees are not received by the end of the second week of any given term, a reminder letter will be sent requesting payment within 14 days. Should payment lapse beyond this time, parents will be advised in writing that their child's access to the kindergarten programme will be suspended within 5 days (and until such time as payment of the outstanding account is made) unless contact is made with Council to discuss payment options.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the values and purposes outlined in this policy have been achieved, Council will:

- Take into account feedback from parents/guardians and staff.

Hours of Operation

The Mitchell Kindergarten Service is available to all children who turn four years of age on or before 30 April in the year they attend the service.

The service provides ten hours of educational programme per week for each child who attends.

The hours of operation are set by Council in consultation with teaching staff and may vary from time to time if agreed to by Council, teaching staff and the Committee of Management. Any changes to a scheduled session time would be advertised to clients in advance. Session times are scheduled on weekdays between the hours of 8.30am and 5.00pm.

The following procedure regarding hours of operation will apply:

- The entry door of the Kindergarten will be locked before and after session times to allow staff to set up activities appropriately for your child and to tidy after the day's activities.
- Teachers will unlock the door at the start of the stated session time ***not before***.
- For security purposes entry doors to individual kindergartens may be locked after 20 minutes and anyone wishing to enter the kindergarten building will need to ring the doorbell.
- Towards the end of the session, the door may be locked to prevent disruption to the programme until the children are ready for dismissal.

The kindergarten service is provided in accordance with the *Children's Services Act 1996* and the *Children's Services Regulations 1998*. Both these documents are displayed at each kindergarten.

Healthy Snacks

Scope:

This policy applies to parents/guardians and staff in regards to the provision of food that may be consumed by children at the Kindergarten. Some medical conditions preclude the eating of certain foods by all children at a centre (eg: peanut allergies/anaphylactic reaction) and this may affect the type of food you can provide for your child. Your teacher will advise if this is the case and offer guidance on suitable alternatives as required.

Your teacher can provide further details about this policy if required.

Values:

The Mitchell Kindergarten Service is committed to:

- Educating children and their parents/guardians about healthy food and healthy eating habits.
- Ensuring the nutritional needs and/or dietary requirements of children are appropriately catered for, while they are attending the kindergarten.
- Complying with all legislative requirements.

Purpose:

This policy will provide guidelines for appropriate food to be consumed during snack time at kindergarten that is of nutritional benefit to children and meets the individual needs of children attending the kindergarten.

Procedures:

Parents will be encouraged to bring snacks for their children for consumption at kindergarten that are within the Dietary Guidelines for Australians, these include:

- Fresh and dried fruit or fruit packed in natural juices.
- Yoghurt, cheese or fruche.
- Fruit bread or bun or English muffin.
- Bread, rice cakes or crackers with spread.
- Vegetable pieces and dip.

Water will be available for children at all times. A copy of the Dietary Guidelines for Australians will be available at each centre.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the values and purposes outlined in this policy have been achieved, Council will:

- Assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved for nutritional issues raised.
- Incorporate relevant questions in the annual client satisfaction survey.
- Take into account feedback from staff on the policy.
- Monitor complaints in relation to food and drink provided at the service.

REVIEW

These policies form part of the Mitchell Kindergarten Service Policy and Procedure Manual, and will be reviewed by 1 July, 2007.



COMMUNITY AND RECREATION

DOCUMENT NUMBER

KINDERGARTEN SERVICES POLICY 2012

ISSUE	DATE	CHANGE	APPROVED	REVIEW
A		Initial Issue		31-12-2014

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CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

STATEMENT

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to guide Council in relation to the planning, delivery and evaluation of the kindergarten programs provided by Mitchell Shire Council Kindergarten Cluster Management.

2 APPLICATION

Council provides eight funded kindergarten services to the community within Mitchell. Council recognises the importance of supporting programs which respond to the emerging and changing needs of children and their families. Council acknowledges that kindergarten programs operate in a variety of settings and are provided by other agencies, including community based kindergartens, long day care centres and schools.

3 DEFINITIONS

Cluster Management - Kindergarten cluster management brings together a group of kindergartens under the management of a single organisation.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – The Department provides services to children and young people both directly through government schools and indirectly through regulation and funding of early childhood services and non-government schools.

Victorian Kindergarten Policy, procedures and Funding Criteria - This document assists organisations currently receiving or wanting to apply for kindergarten funding and to inform early childhood service providers of the policies, procedures and funding criteria associated with the Victorian kindergarten program.

Community-based kindergarten - A kindergarten which is managed by a 'for-profit' organisation.

Long day care service - A centre-based form of child care service providing all day or part-time care.

Funded organisation - A legal entity or organisation that has entered into a service agreement with the Department, receives the funds, and has responsibility for the management of funds and delivery of kindergarten programs. Also known as a service provider. A funded organisation may be responsible for the provision of kindergarten programs at a number of locations.

Funded kindergarten service - The children's service location for which an organisation is in receipt of kindergarten per capita funding and/or kindergarten cluster management grant payments to deliver a kindergarten program. Funded kindergarten services may operate in a variety of settings such as long day care centres, stand alone community-based settings and schools.

Kindergarten for four-year-old children – A universal early childhood program, funded by the State Government, for children in the year prior to commencing primary school (two years before Grade One). Children attending a kindergarten program receive a developmentally appropriate program, planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher, which furthers the child's social, emotional, cognitive, physical and language development.

Per capita grant - An annual amount paid by the Victorian Government for each eligible child enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program.

School – An organisation classified by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as a school.

National Early Years Learning Framework - The development of the National Early Years Learning Framework is linked to the National Quality Standard to ensure delivery of nationally-consistent and quality early childhood education, and underpins access to quality early learning in the year before formal schooling. The National Framework outlines five learning outcomes which are designed to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children across the birth to five age range.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework - The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework 0–8 (the Victorian Framework) was released by the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development in 2009. The Victorian Framework advances all children's learning and development from birth to eight years. It does this by supporting all early childhood professionals to work together and with families to achieve common outcomes for all children.

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 & Education and Care Services National Regulations - All children's services must be licensed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and comply with the National Act and Regulations.

Integrated long day care program – For the purposes of kindergarten funding, an integrated long day care program is a funded kindergarten program and a long day care program offered in the same premises at the same location. Children may or may not attend both programs.

4 REFERENCES

Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2009-2013

Mitchell Shire Council Municipal Early Years Plan 2012-2015
Australian Early Development Index data
Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2012
Early Years Learning Framework
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations

5 POLICY

5.1 Policy Principles

The Mitchell Shire Kindergarten Services Policy has been developed with the following principles:

- Children's personal, family and cultural histories shape learning and development. The service is committed to acknowledging and supporting our diverse communities and families.
- Families are the primary influence on children's learning and development. Involvement is encouraged and the voices of all our children and their families are welcomed and valued.
- Every child has the ability to learn and develop. Inclusion and access is promoted to ensure better outcomes for all our young children.
- Contributions from multidisciplinary agencies and professionals provide better support to families. Partnerships are valued and collaboration is facilitated.
- Services, facilities and infrastructure are provided by a range of organizations and governments. All can effectively contribute to the needs of our families and our future plans.
- Population growth in Mitchell will provide new opportunities and better outcomes for all residents. Quality planning and sustainability awareness will support and promote future flexible and responsive kindergarten services.

5.2 Kindergarten services within Mitchell

Kindergarten services provided in Mitchell are influenced and driven by:

- A growing population
- Policy positions of Federal and State government in relation to the provision and delivery of kindergarten services
- State funding received to meet the costs of providing services
- The need to support the diverse and individual characteristics of the community

Council recognises it is not responsible for the provision and delivery of all kindergarten programs in Mitchell Shire. Across Victoria, kindergarten programs are delivered in a range of settings by a range of providers, including educational institutions, private and

community child care organisations, religious organisations, private and community cluster managers, State and local government.

Council's objectives in relation to kindergarten services within Mitchell are to:

- Collect, maintain and enhance knowledge of kindergarten services and use this knowledge to support thriving service provision and innovation.
- Provide flexible and reflective services to respond to the needs of the community within resources available.
- Facilitate and maintain partnerships with policy and funding agencies to advocate for funding and resources.
- Maintain a current and comprehensive knowledge of demographic trends within the municipality to support effective service planning and responsible management of Council's kindergarten services
- Seek and utilise feedback from the children, families, the community, service providers and agencies, to understand expectations and identify opportunities to improve service provision and delivery.

5.3 Mitchell Shire Council Kindergarten Service Provision

Council will provide funded kindergarten services that:

- Meet requirements of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*.
- Provide programs which meet the requirements of the National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care
- Operate within a licensed children's services premises
- Meet requirements under the Victorian Kindergarten Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria 2010-2012
- Deliver programs underpinned by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and the National Early Years Learning Framework.
- Deliver educational programs planned and delivered by qualified, experienced and knowledgeable staff
- Promote and support early childhood professionals to use the practice principles for learning and development, necessary for every child to learn and develop.
- Make the best and most efficient use of the resources available to council to provide kindergarten services
- Where possible, offer flexible service options within the limitation of Council's budget and human resources.

5.4 Service planning

Regular and ongoing kindergarten service planning will be undertaken to ensure council has a current and comprehensive knowledge of:

- The Mitchell municipality which includes:
 - Demographics
 - Population growth and projected growth
 - The cultural mix and changing diversity of the community
- Service utilisation and projected demand in relation to kindergarten services
- Community expectations of kindergarten services
- Service innovations in the kindergarten environment
- Federal, state and local government policy context and funding in relation to kindergarten services.

5.5 Service options, provision and innovation

Kindergarten services provided by council will be reviewed regularly as part of the ongoing service planning process to determine how effectively the range and provision of services are meeting the needs of the community and the need to modify services.

Services are modified in conjunction with early years staff and consider the needs of the community and the responsible use of Council resources.

A formal business case, including service demand, establishment and operational budgets will be prepared for all proposals for new and/or alternative service options.

Opportunities to collaborate and/or partner with other agencies to develop service options not currently available will be actively sought.

Council will actively explore and investigate opportunities for service innovation within the kindergarten system. Opportunities for innovation may be initiated and driven internally or may be part of alliances, collaborations or partnerships with other agencies or service providers.

5.6 Financial management

Council receive funding for kindergarten services from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in the form of a per capita grant for each eligible child enrolled in the program. Funds received do not cover the full cost of providing and delivering kindergarten programs. Further funding is sought through parent term fees and Council contributions. Council will ensure effective and responsible financial management in relation to the provision and delivery of kindergarten services by quantifying the full cost of providing kindergarten services.

Cost considerations may include but not be limited to:

- Direct contact hours
- Staff recruitment and availability

- Occupational health and safety
- Staff supervision and support
- Best practice standards
- Consumables

6 FURTHER INFORMATION

6.1 Human Resource Management

Council has a legislative requirement to employ specifically qualified early years staff. Staff are required to maintain skills and qualifications which are supported and monitored by Council.

6.2 Evaluation and continuous improvement

Licensed kindergartens are required to undertake and regularly review Quality Improvement Plans for their service, to ensure practice principles under the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework underpin their program planning and delivery, to enhance the learning outcomes for all children within the service.

7 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every twelve months by Council, based on feedback from Councils' early year's staff, the community, families, children and other local early years staff and agencies.