# Service guidance: Flood Relief Support 2022

On 17 October 2022, the Victorian Government announced $2.35 million to assist families and funded kindergarten services that have been directly impacted by the Victorian floods.

The package includes:

* Free or low-cost kindergarten for Term 4 for eligible families
* Recovery support grants for eligible community-based sessional kindergarten services

## Free Kinder

Families whose home (primary residence) has been physically impacted by the floods will be able to access Free Kinder in Term 4 at participating services.

The following additional support is available for eligible children at services that agree to the conditions of funding:

* funding of up to $688 per enrolment at participating sessional kindergarten services to provide a free kindergarten program for eligible children for Term 4 2022
* funding up to $550 per enrolment at participating long day care services to directly offset parent fees for eligible children in Term 4 2022
* an additional $497 per enrolment at participating sessional services funded at the Independent School Type 2 rate (paid in addition to the $668 sessional payment).

In three-year-old programs of less than 15 hours a week, a pro-rata payment will be made according to the number of hours of the program.

**Eligibility**

Families with children enrolled in funded three- or four-year-old kindergarten are eligible for Free Kinder if their home (primary residence) has been directly impacted by the floods through:

* damage to their home or
* loss or damage of home contents/belongings.

## Non-eligible children

Families already receiving a free kindergarten program through existing Victorian subsidies, or the Commonwealth Additional Child Care Subsidy – Temporary Financial Hardship in a long day care service will not be eligible for this additional funding.

Families that needed to leave home temporarily are not eligible unless their home has been physically affected by flooding.

**Funding conditions**

## Sessional kindergarten services accessing this funding will be required to:

## provide a free program for eligible enrolments.

## refund or waive any parent fees that have already been paid or charged for Term 4 2022.

**Long day care services** accessing this funding would be required to

* directly offset the full payment from parent fees
* use any surplus funding in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding.

**Interactions with Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy**

The Free Kinder payment should be removed from parent fees for eligible families **after** the families Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy (CCS) has been applied.

The Commonwealth Government has confirmed that the Victorian Free Kinder flood relief payments for eligible children in a funded three or four-year-old kindergarten program is an allowable third-party payment under Commonwealth funding rules. Eligible families in long day care services must receive the full benefit of the Victorian Free Kinder payment on top of their full CCS entitlement.

**Application process**

Families

Families that are eligible will need to complete a [Free Kinder Flood Relief form](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/Free-Kinder-Flood-Relief-forms-for-families.docx) confirming their eligibility and return it directly to the service.

If the family is unable to complete the form, the service can complete it for them after a request from the family to do so. The service should note the date and nature of the request from the parent/guardian (e.g. by email or phone call) on the form in the parent/guardian signature field.

Services

To access Free Kinder funding for eligible families, services should:

* sign the family’s application form – noting that the service needs to have a reasonable belief, based on their direct knowledge of local impacts and a family’s address, or other information provided by the family, that the family’s home has been flooded.
* services must ensure the application form is retained on the child’s service record and be available if requested by the Department.
* contact their local Early Childhood Improvement Branch to confirm acceptance of the funding conditions
* apply for Free Kinder funding by selecting ‘Flood’ in the special subsidy question on the child record in the Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS).

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If services are unable to access KIMS please contact your local Early Childhood Improvement Branch who can support this process on the service’s behalf.

Please ensure that applications are made for all eligible children in KIMS as soon as possible to ensure payment can be provided to services promptly, and services can refund fees to families as quickly as possible (noting they themselves may be flood impacted). The Department will process Free Kinder flood relief funding weekly through KIMS.

## Flood recovery grants for sessional services

There are two types of grants available to support sessional kindergarten services that have been impacted by the floods depending on the type of impact they have experienced:

* grants of up to $15,000 are available for sessional kindergarten services where there has been a direct physical impact on the building or outdoor area by flooding or severe weather on their premises
* grants of up to $5,000 will be available for sessional kindergarten services not directly physically impacted by the floods or severe weather but have multiple staff and/or families attending their service who have been directly impacted.

## What can the grants be used for?

Grants can be used for the following purposes:

* clean up reinstatement activities and replacement of equipment where not covered by insurance or other available grants (applicable for the $15,000 grants only).
* engagement of agency staff to cover teachers and educators who need to relocate or clean up their homes
* additional program supports/resources for children who have been directly impacted and/or traumatised by the floods
* maintaining engagement and supporting learning at home (if the service is closed for an extended period)
* support for children transitioning to school and end-of-year events
* additional administrative support, e.g., to process reimbursements for families eligible for the Term 4 Free Kinder payment.

## How can the grants be accessed?

Service providers should contact their local Early Childhood Improvement Branch to complete a short application form should they wish to access these grants.

Once a grant application has been approved by the Department, the grant will be paid through the Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS).

A short acquittal process of these grants will be required in late 2022 or early 2023.

**Monitoring and compliance**

Service providers are required to keep records for:

* all children of which they have claimed Free Kinder payments on behalf of
* all fees that have been refunded for Term 4 in the case of sessional service or fees offset in the case of long day care services
* the use of any service flood recovery grants. Note there will be a short acquittal process for any grants received in late 2022 or early 2023 after the money has been expended.