

POLICY STATEMENT

Children Services Unit

ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION

POLICY

AUTHORISATION

POLICY TYPE:	Operational
POLICY LOCATION:	Corporate
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Children Service Coordinator
AUTHORISED BY:	Director Corporate and Community Services
DATE ADOPTED:	03 October 2023
ADOPTED BY:	Manex
MINUTE NO: (If required)	
REVIEW DUE DATE:	August 2025
REVISION NUMBER:	
RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN	This Policy supports Council's Delivery Program Strategy 4.2: Provide quality, accredited and affordable Education and Care Services within Bland Shire and surrounds (Bland Preschool, Family Day Care, Mobile Resource Unit, Vacation Care and Toy Library services).

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS <i>Include names of former policies that this policy will replace if applicable</i>	AMENDED BY (Where required)
0	May 2009		CSU Coordinator
1	July 2012		CSU Coordinator
2	June 2014		CSU Coordinator
3	October 2016		CSU Coordinator
4	May 2018		CSU Coordinator
5	August 2020		CSU Coordinator
6	August 2023		CSU Coordinator

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed within two (2) years from the date of adoption or as required in the event of legislative changes. The Policy may also be changed as a result of other amendment that are to the advantage that Council and in the spirit of this Policy. Any amendment to the Policy must be by way of a Council Resolution for all policies categorised as "Council" policies or the approval of the General Manager for all policies categorised as "Operational" policies.

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to guide staff and families through the Enrolment and Orientation process to meet the needs of the child, family, service, regulation compliance and to ensure a fair and consistent outcome for all stakeholders.

2. Scope:

This policy document applies to all staff, educators and families seeking enrolment within a Bland Shire Children Services Unit service.

3. Outcomes:

To provide a successful enrolment of children into an Early Childhood Education and Care Service. Working with the families, and within regulations (including meeting the Priority of Access guidelines) to match the needs of the child, family and the service to provide the best outcome for all parties.

4. Roles and Responsibilities:

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will-

- Ensure the prescribed documentation in regard to a child's enrolment is accurate, stored accordingly and as per the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Documents are available to the parent/s (as listed on enrolment form) of their enrolled child at the service upon request.

The Service will-

- Provide the family with relevant/specific information as required.
- Collaborate with families an orientation plan to provide the best possible start for the child at the service.
- Invite the family to accept or refuse a position within an agreed timeframe with the service.
- Collect all required documentation prior to the commencement of care allowing adequate time for system entries and processing.
- Seek information and/or request a meeting with families where there are current family court orders/parent plans in place for an enrolled child.
- Endeavour to provide a translator during the enrolment process if required.
- Encourage families to share information, concerns, anxieties and doubts through the "About My Child" form when enrolling at the service.
- Provide a Family Handbook to all enrolling families.
- Provide access to Third Party Software – Electronic PIN/Signature has been distributed to parents /guardians and nominated authorised persons.
- Upon a successful enrolment the service encourages ALL families to advise by phone or text message if their child will not be attending their service that day for any reason. If the service does not hear from the parent/family to explain an absence, a text message will be sent to the primary parent to confirm their child's absence. Should the parent not reply a follow up phone call will be made to those families that use the School Bus Services to account for their whereabouts.

The Educators will-

- Participate and interact with children during the orientation process (without compromising ratios and active supervision of other children should this occur on a Preschool day).
- Become familiar with enrolling children through the enrolment and "About My Child" forms prior to the child commencing. Ensuring any medical conditions are noted, Medical Management Plans are in place and Buddy Bags are correct and stored appropriately.
- On the child's first day educators will welcome families and provide a space for the child's belongings. Educators will reassure families, help with separation and communicate with families throughout the day if children are unsettled.

The Families will-

- Be responsible for informing the Nominated Supervisor of any custody and access arrangements at the time of enrolment and at any time an arrangement is changed.
- Provide a current "Up to Date" Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register prior to the commencement of care, and whenever the child receives further vaccinations.
- Remain onsite with their child during any Open Day visit.
- Be responsible for informing the service (via phone or text message) when their child is absent from the service for any reason.

The right of the individual to view their personal information-

Parents listed on a child's enrolment form may request to view the documentation to provide changes to the information by request to the Nominated Supervisor. Parents will only view their own documentation and will not be given access to any other person's information.

Enrolment Form

It is required that all families complete an enrolment form (sent electronically to primary parent email) for each child prior to commencing care. A separate enrolment is required for each service.

Families are encouraged to provide further information about their child which will support continuity of care between home and the service (medical conditions, allergies, developmental concerns). The service will, where possible, provide a translator for families that are not fluent in English to assist in communication.

Each child's enrolment form will include the following information:

- Full name, date of birth and address of the child.
- Name, address and contact details of each known parent of the child.
- Name, address and contact details of any emergency contact, authorised nominee, any person authorised to consent to medical treatment or administration on medication, any person authorised to give permission to the educator to take the child off the premises and any person permitted to authorise the service to transport the child or arrange transportation of the child.
- Details of any court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans
- Immunisation status of the child
- Gender of child
- Language used in the home environment
- Cultural background of the child and their parents
- Any special considerations for the child – cultural, religious or additional needs
- Authorisation for the service to seek medical treatment and/or ambulance transportation of the child
- Authorisation for the service to take the child on regular outings
- Name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service
- Child's Medicare number (if available)
- Specific healthcare needs of the child including any medical conditions or dietary restrictions
- Details of any allergies or anaphylaxis/asthma/diabetic management or risk minimisation plan

Change of details forms are available for all enrolled families to ensure correct and current information is captured and maintained. Families are to advise the service immediately if any of the previously documented information changes.

Waiting List

Waiting lists are open all year round for all Bland Shire Children Services. Families will be contacted when “Expression of Interests” are sought, to clarify positions are still required, and to update any changes.

Access guidelines

Bland Preschool – Start Strong guidelines for Community Preschools require Bland Preschool give equal priority of access to:

- Children who are at least 4 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and not enrolled or registered at a school
- Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and are –
 - Children from low income families
 - Children with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background
 - Children with a disability or additional needs
- Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year with English language needs
- Children who are at risk of significant harm (from a child protection perspective)

Priority must be given to the groups outlined above before any other groups. There is no “regulated” order of priority assigned to the list of points above however, Bland Preschool will give priority to children attending formal schooling the following year and to children that are not enrolled in any other Education and Care service (i.e enrolled in another service on the same day as a Bland Preschool service). Priority into the Pre-Kindy class is also given to children that utilised the Junior Preschool service the year prior.

It is mandatory for all families to complete a declaration form and advise if they opt in/out to receive the Start Strong Fee Relief Payment.

Ungarie Mobile Preschool and Family Day Care

Priority of enrolment will be given to children who are:

- At risk of serious abuse or neglect
- A child of a sole parent who satisfies, or parents who both satisfy the activity test through paid employment

Priority must be given to the groups outlined above before any other groups. There is no “regulated” order of priority assigned to the list of points above.

Enrolment Pack – Bland Preschool and Ungarie Mobile Preschool

At a minimum an Electronic Enrolment pack will include:

- An enrolment form (all mandatory sections to be completed and documents uploaded)
- “About My Child” form
- Service information booklet, inclusive of the service philosophy, exclusion guidelines, ECA Code of Ethics, National Quality Framework and National Quality Standards information and service specific curriculum of Early Years Framework and/or My Time, Our Place.
- Current fee structure and payment information
- Information to access policies, including but not limited to, those required under Regulation 168

- **Ungarie Preschool** families will receive information about Child Care Subsidy, and will be required to complete a 'Complying Written Agreement' (CWA) as part of the enrolment documentation requirement

Service specific information, in addition to the above requirements

Bland Preschool – Start Strong for Community Preschool funded

Children eligible for funded preschool places will be:

- At least 4 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year in the year before they attend school and not in compulsory schooling (Pre-Kindy class),
- At least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year (Junior Preschool class)
- Enrolled for a minimum of 15 hours per week (2 days per week)

Bland Preschool will prioritise enrolments for children attending formal schooling the following year (Pre-Kindy class).

Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be sought the year prior to preschool commencing (families currently on the waiting list will be contacted and advised to submit their EOI) via Newspaper and Social Media platforms, (families utilising the Junior Preschool class will also be contacted via text/third party software).

Submitting an EOI does not mean your child has secured a position.

From the EOI, draft classes will be formulated around the information received, and could change from year to year to meet the current need. ie – One year there may be two classes of Pre-Kindy and two classes of Junior Preschool as enrolment ages are even. Another year may be three classes of Pre-Kindy and one of Junior Preschool as the enrolment need is greater for four year old children attending formal schooling the following year.

Online enrolments will be distributed to all families seeking to enrol their children, and an enrolment close date will be appointed. After the close date, the Coordinator and Service Leader will allocate children into classes (all application requests will be considered however, the Coordinator and Service Leader will have the final decision on classroom placements and will work in line with the priority of access guidelines. From this, some children may still not be secured a spot and will be placed on the waiting list).

Any late enrolment applications (received after the enrolment close date) will be placed on the waiting list and allocated as per the vacancy availability and priority of access guidelines. Children that are not 3 years old at the commencement of Term 1, will be added to the waiting list. Families will be contacted if there is a place available one week before their child's third birthday.

Bland Preschool will hold an open day around September/October the year prior to commencing preschool. Parents/Families/Carers and children are welcome to come along for a tour of the centre, meet educators and ask questions. Parents/family members must remain with their child whilst at the service.

Preschools with spare capacity can continue to enrol and charge fees for children who aren't eligible for a funded place, but will not receive government funding to reduce fees for these children, therefore full fees as outlined on the fee schedule will be charged.

Ungarie Mobile Preschool – Community Child Care Fund Restricted (Families eligible for Child Care Subsidy (CCS))

Enrolments are available for children aged 2 – 5 years of age.

Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be sought the year prior to Ungarie Preschool commencing via Newspaper and Social Media platforms. Families with children eligible to return the following year will be sent an EOI via text/third party software.

Families are encouraged to start the process of applying for Child Care Subsidy through Centrelink. Families will be required to submit financial and activity information in order to be

eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy. This is a lengthy process and can take up to six weeks to be approved.

Online enrolments will be distributed to all families seeking to enrol their children, and an enrolment close date will be appointed. After the close date, the Coordinator and Service Leader will allocate children into classes (all application requests will be considered however, the Coordinator and Service Leader will have the final decision on classroom placements and will work in line with the priority of access guidelines. From this, some children may still not be secured a spot and will be placed on the waiting list).

Any late enrolment applications (received after the enrolment close date) will be placed on the waiting list and allocated as per the vacancy availability and priority of access guidelines. Children that are not 2 years old at the commencement of Term 1, will be added to the waiting list. Families will be contacted if there is a place available one week before their child's second birthday.

Ungarie Mobile Preschool families are welcome to arrange a suitable time to visit the service, where they can meet educators, view the classrooms and ask questions. Parents/family members must remain with their child whilst at the service.

Enrolment acceptance

On successful enrolment, an information letter will be sent to the family offering a place and providing the following information:

- Room name
- Teacher/Room Leader
- Days enrolled
- Things to bring
- Subsidy information (if applicable)
- My Day At Preschool booklet

If your child was not successful on a place, a letter advising they have been placed on the waiting list will be emailed.

On the child's first day of attendance, educators will welcome the family and child, and familiarise them with the following:

- Locker for belongings
- Fruit Break/Morning/Afternoon tea buckets/fridge
- Child's individual box for notes and artwork
- Bathrooms
- Sign in/out procedure and location
- Medication procedure (if applicable)

Bland Preschool - A parent information presentation will be offered to families or sent electronically to families' week two of term 1 (depending on RSVP's). Information may include, but not limited to:

- Introduction of teaching staff
- Preschool information booklet
- Program/curriculum
- Parent app
- Settling in
- Suitable food options
- Sun safety
- Bus travel – an agreement between the School Bus Service and Family
- Communication between families and staff
- Behaviour guidance
- Parent committee
- Fees and payments

Family Day Care

Families may make a request for care through the Coordination Unit or directly through an Educator. Where a request for care is placed through the Coordination Unit, staff will record information including family and child details, care required and contact details. This will then be communicated with Family Day Care Educators with possible vacancies. If a suitable Educator is not available, the Coordination Unit will offer to place the family on the waiting list.

Family Day Care Educators with vacancies will then contact the family to request a pre-enrolment interview.

The Coordination Unit, or Educator if more convenient for the family, will provide the family with an Enrolment Pack prior to the pre-enrolment interview.

Information provided during the pre-enrolment interview may include Educator specific information including:

- Approaches to documentation, curriculum and planning
- The physical environment
- Administrative matters, cost, and fee payment methods
- Suitable food options
- Behaviour guidance
- Availability and placement agreement
- An individual process of orientation in collaboration between Educator and family

5. Definitions:

In this policy 'staff and educators' refers to staff/educators employed by Bland Shire Council Children Services Unit and educators registered with the Bland/Temora Family Day Care Scheme. Families and children refers to all those enrolled with a Bland Shire Children's Service.

6. Legislation and Supporting Documents:

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010.

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 168(2) (k), 160, 161, 162, 177, 183.

National Quality Standard: 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1.