



Government of
South Australia

Office for Early Childhood Development

June 2024

**QualifySA in Early Childhood
Educator Financial Support Program**



From the heart

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the First peoples of South Australia and as custodians of the lands, waters, skies and communities where we live, learn and raise children.

We recognise Aboriginal peoples as having the longest living culture, raising children safe and strong in their identity, community, culture, and connection to country.

We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and their role as the first knowledge sharers for children. We follow in their footsteps.

Aboriginal peoples, working with and for children, are central in shaping our work. Their wisdom, advice, and guidance enriches our practices, creating a more inclusive and culturally safe environment for children and families. We respect Aboriginal peoples' ways of being, doing and wise practices guiding our continual learning. Together we walk and build stronger, more supportive communities for all children.

QualifySA in Early Childhood

Financial support for individuals undertaking qualifications in early childhood aims to reduce barriers, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue rewarding careers.

This program seeks to amplify opportunities for individuals to enter and thrive in the early childhood education and care field, fostering equality, building our workforce and enhancing the quality of care and education provided to children.

About the program

- This program offers financial assistance to South Australian residents enrolled and studying a Diploma of Early Childhood Education, who are committed to working as an educator in the early years (preschool) sector in South Australia.
- In 2024, this financial assistance is exclusively accessible to students enrolled and studying at TAFE SA.
- Funding **up to \$7,000** (before tax) is available for students who have commenced their study in 2024.
- This includes up to \$1,000 for the employer of existing early childhood sector employees. The funding can be used for various purposes such as partially covering the cost of back-filling during the participant's placement, supporting professional learning, allowing the participant to undertake studies without work duties, facilitating planning time, or upskilling another individual.
- Students can apply for this financial assistance in addition to Fee Free TAFE, though priority will be given to those who couldn't access tuition support through other government initiatives.
- Students who receive this funding support can utilise them to offset living expenses while they study and work. This may include course fees, study materials, or accommodation and living costs to facilitate their studies.
- Successful applicants will be asked to contractually commit to working in the South Australian early childhood preschool sector in South Australia after graduation for a minimum of 2 years.

Grow Your Own

The Grow Your Own (GYO) allowance aims to support students in regional and remote areas who face additional barriers to accessing higher education. This program provides up to \$10,000 over the course of the recipient's studies to help them pursue their education and build careers locally. This funding is in addition to the support offered through the QualifySA Early Childhood Funding Support Program.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for GYO funding, students must:

- be recipients of financial support through the QualifySA in Early Childhood Funding Support Program
- reside in and intend to work within a local regional or remote community, specifically in locations classified as very remote, remote, or outer regional according to the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard – Remoteness Area classification](#).

Eligibility will be determined by the administrator based on your residential address.

Funding information

- All program funding is contingent on satisfactory evidence being submitted each year. For example, while studying, a QualifySA recipient must submit evidence that they have completed study requirements and remain enrolled.
- Retention funding eligibility extends to both fixed term and ongoing roles.
- Financial support payments for casual roles will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECDE).
- Students will receive payments per academic year, adjusted for recognition of prior learning (RPL) or other reductions in course duration.
- Part-time students will receive pro-rated payments.
- Support under the program for multiple tertiary courses per individual, whether diploma, bachelor or master's degree will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Eligibility and approved courses

- To be eligible, applicants must be Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens, or hold a permanent residency visa, and be South Australian residents. They should have been accepted into or are currently studying an approved course. Part-time students must be studying a minimum 0.5 load.
- Applicants should intend to work, or continue working, in one of the following South Australian early childhood service types upon qualification completion: long day care services providing a preschool program, sessional preschool provided by non-government preschools and government preschools. Applicants must complete the qualification by 31 December 2032.
- Applicants receiving any other OECD or Department for Education scholarship, financial support, or grant for the approved course will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Those enrolled in Fee Free TAFE programs are deemed eligible.
- If the program receives more applications than it can accommodate, preference will be given to specific groups. This includes educators in rural and regional areas, those in metropolitan services with a significant number of vulnerable or disadvantaged children, and educators who have not benefited from the, financial support, or incentives provided by OECD.

Application process and funding arrangements

- Managed by an external funding administrator on behalf of the OECD, the initiative requires online applications with evidence of meeting eligibility criteria
<https://www.earlychildhood.sa.gov.au/working-in-early-childhood>
- To access the employer payment, applicants must consult with their employer before applying and include their employer's details in the application.
- Upon selection, successful candidates sign a legally binding funding agreement outlining rights and responsibilities.
- Funding payments are disbursed based on milestone conditions, with potential repayment obligations for non-compliance.
- If you are studying full-time and your study period extends beyond the standard duration due to circumstances such as not passing subjects, withdrawing, or other considerations (e.g., completing a 1 year course over 2 years), your final payment will not be received until your completion. Consequently, you will not receive study payments for extended period.
- For part-time students, payments are made on a pro-rata basis, as articulated in the application process.

Considerations before applying

- Applicants must assess their financial situation, as they are responsible for additional expenses beyond the awarded amount.
- Funding amounts are pre-tax, and recipients must seek independent advice on potential impacts on taxation and government benefit schemes.
- Employment to meet program milestones is the recipient's responsibility, as the OECD does not guarantee employment in the early childhood sector.

Employment changes and milestone non-compliance

- After completing the approved course, recipients of funding support in South Australia's early childhood sector may qualify for extra retention payments upon starting employment.
- Employment should begin within 6 months of graduation, whether in a fixed-term or ongoing role, with assessments for casual roles conducted case-by case by the OECD.
- Continuous employment, meeting specified criteria outlined in the Funding Support Agreement, is crucial for retaining eligibility for payments. Recipients may hold successive approved positions at various services, as long as they meet OECD criteria for funding support milestones.
- Changes in employment status, conditions, or location must be reported promptly to the administrator to receive retention milestone payments. This includes instances like successive fixed term contracts or periods of parental leave. Casual employment will be considered for milestone payments on a case-by-case basis, particularly when regular, long-term casual work is demonstrated.
- Failure to meet milestones may require repayment of financial support payments. In exceptional circumstances, the OECD may consider waiving repayment obligations, subject to individual evaluation and supporting documentation.

Guidelines

- Guidelines Revision: The guidelines, which cover program specifications and eligibility criteria, are subject to potential change. Any modifications will be made available on the department's website.

QualifySA in Early Childhood Educator Support

Funding payment milestones

The table below shows the funding support payments. Recipients will receive these payments after they provide the evidence needed for each milestone. The evidence needed is described in the funding support agreement and is checked by the funding administrator.

Educator Financial Support (Diploma)

Eligibility	Study milestone payments <i>Part-time study paid at pro-rata</i>		+ employer support	+ Employment / retention payments	Total value
	Milestone 1 Following census date	Milestone 2 course completion	Funding to support employers	End of first year in the sector following completion of qualification	
Cert III qualified, studying diploma	\$2,500	\$2,500	Up to \$1,000	\$1,000	Up to \$7,000

Contact

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