



Government of
South Australia

Office for Early Childhood Development

October 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

The QualifySA in Early Childhood Financial Support Program offers financial support of up to **\$7000** (before tax) to South Australian residents who have received a letter of offer or an enrolment confirmation to an eligible early childhood diploma qualification.*

In 2025, financial assistance for individuals wanting to become diploma-qualified educators is only available to those studying the [Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care \(CHC50121\)](#) through TAFE SA, or through an Aboriginal Community Controlled Registered Training Organisation that offers the Diploma of Early Childhood and Care (CHC50121).

Students can apply for this financial assistance to study **in addition to Fee Free TAFE**, though priority will be given to applicants who are unable to access tuition support through other government initiatives.

Financial support recipients can use the funding to offset living expenses while studying and working to cover costs such as course fees, study materials, or accommodation associated with studies.

The payment includes up to \$1,000 for the employer of the student, where the student is currently working in the South Australian early childhood sector. This funding can be used for various purposes such as partially covering the cost of backfilling during a participant's placement, supporting professional learning, allowing the participant to undertake studies without work duties, facilitating planning time, or upskilling another individual.

- All applicants must intend to work in a South Australian early childhood service specifically working with 3-year-old children upon completion of their qualification. Early childhood services include long day care services providing a preschool program, and non-government and government run sessional preschools.
- Applicants must complete their qualification by **31 December 2028**
- Successful applicants will be required to contractually commit to working in the South Australian early childhood sector (preschool) after graduation for a minimum of 2 years.

**Further eligibility requirements apply as outlined under the Eligibility heading.*

Eligibility

To be eligible for QualifySA in Early Childhood financial support, an applicant must be a South Australian resident AND:

- a citizen of Australian or New Zealand or hold a [permanent resident](#) of Australia visa AND
- have been accepted into TAFE SA's Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (those enrolled in a Fee Free TAFE diploma place are still eligible)

OR

- have been accepted into an Aboriginal Community Controlled Registered Training Organisation that offers the diploma in early childhood and has articulation agreements with universities for recognition of prior learning.

If the program receives more applications than it can accommodate, preference will be given to specific groups such as:

- educators in rural and regional areas
- those in metropolitan services with a significant number of vulnerable or disadvantaged children
- educators who have not benefited from financial support, or incentives provided by the Office for Early Childhood Development or another funding source.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – financial support

Financial support of up to **\$9000** (before tax) is being offered to South Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who have received a letter of offer or an enrolment confirmation to an eligible early childhood diploma qualification.*

For more information, refer to the: [Guidelines for financial support – Aboriginal pathways](#).

Regional and remote students – additional financial support

Students in regional and remote areas who face additional barriers to accessing higher education can apply for the Grow Your Own (GYO) allowance. This GYO financial support program provides up to \$10,000 over the course of a recipient's studies, to help them pursue their education, and to build a career in their local region. This funding is in addition to the support offered through the QualifySA in Early Childhood financial support program.

To be eligible for GYO funding, students must:

- be recipients of financial support through the QualifySA in Early Childhood financial 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 in South Australia according to the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard–Remoteness Area classification](#).

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

Funding information

- Applicants should have already been accepted into an eligible course, and all funding is contingent on a recipient submitting satisfactory evidence they have completed study requirements and remain enrolled.
- Students will receive payments per academic year, adjusted for recognition of prior learning (RPL), other reductions in course duration or completed subjects/units of study prior to being approved to receive financial support.
- For the purposes of the funding application, a part-time student must be studying a minimum 0.5 load. This is half of what is considered to be a full-time load by your institution. To calculate this, you will need to confirm the number of units or points your institution deems as full-time and halve that number.
- If your study extends beyond the standard duration of time for expected completion due to circumstances such as studying part-time, not passing subjects, withdrawing, or other considerations (such as completing a 3-year course over 5 years), the timing of your scheduled payments will be adjusted.
- Applicants must complete the qualification by 31 December 2028.
- Applicants should intend to work in a South Australian early childhood service specifically working with 3-year-old children upon completion of their qualifications. This includes working in long day care services providing a preschool program, and non-government and government run sessional preschools.
- A successful applicant will be required to contractually commit to working in a preschool program as an educator in the South Australian early childhood sector for a minimum of 2 years after graduation.
- Eligibility for employment retention payments extends to both fixed term and ongoing roles in the South Australian early childhood sector.

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.

Applications, assessment, and funding recipient obligations

- Applications for this program are submitted online.
- Applications are assessed by an external administrator, in accordance with the eligibility criteria.
- Upon approval, successful candidates sign a legally binding funding agreement outlining rights and responsibilities.
- Financial support is disbursed based on milestone conditions to be met by the recipient, with potential repayment obligations for non-compliance.
- To access the employer payment, applicants must consult with their employer before applying and include their employer's details in the application.

To provide feedback, or to raise concerns about the financial support program, please contact the Workforce team directly at OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au

Employment retention payments and milestone non-compliance

- After completing their approved course, a financial support recipient may qualify for extra retention payments upon starting employment in the South Australian early childhood sector.
- Employment should begin within 6 months of graduation, whether in a fixed-term or ongoing role.
- A recipient is required to maintain continuous employment working in a preschool program that meets specified criteria outlined in the financial support agreement to retain eligibility for payments.
- Financial support recipients must promptly report to the administrator any changes in employment status, conditions, or location to continue receiving retention milestone payments. This includes when circumstances change due to variation in employment contract, or in the case of periods of parental leave.

It is the funding recipient's responsibility to find employment in South Australia to meet the program milestones. The Office for Early Childhood Development does not guarantee employment in the early childhood sector.

If a financial support recipient fails to meet prescribed milestones, they may be required to repay some funding. In exceptional circumstances, the Office for Early Childhood Development may consider waiving repayment obligations, subject to individual evaluation and supporting documentation.

Guideline revisions

The guidelines, which cover program specifications and eligibility criteria, are subject to potential change. Any modifications will be made available on this website.

QualifySA in Early Childhood – financial support 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)

Payment schedule and employment retention	Payment amount
Milestone 1 following enrolment/Census	\$2500
Milestone 2 course completion	\$2500
Funding to support employers (where the recipient is employed while studying)	Up to \$1000
Employment retention payment	\$1000
Total value	Up to \$7000

Contact

Email: OECD.ECWorkforceSupport@sa.gov.au

Phone: 1300 050 509