



Dear interested parent

Thank you for enquiring about our centre. We understand that access to childcare is a sensitive and emotional issue and that all parents want the very best for their child. We also understand the stresses that parents are under to access childcare with work and family responsibilities. Unfortunately, owing to a crisis in the availability of places – particularly in Community Childcare Centres - we are often unable to meet everybody's needs.

Fawkner Park Children's Centre is governed by a Committee of Management made up of local parents, many of whom have first hand experience of the very issues you are facing. We aim to treat all prospective parents to the Centre with integrity and respect, so below we have provided answers to a range of your most commonly asked questions.

Getting onto the waiting list

When a parent first inquires about childcare at our Centre, we endeavour to provide him or her with relevant verbal and written information (such as this letter). All parents are entitled to ask that we place their child on our waiting list. As you might imagine, our waiting list is long, so we would like to outline for you some of the factors that influence where a child is prioritised on the list.

Factors that impact on our criteria for selection

Some of the conditions that dictate or influence our criteria for selection include:

- a. The Federal Government's guidelines for access to childcare, which we are bound by law to follow
- b. The fact that we are auspiced by the City of Melbourne, and that the Council encourages the prioritisation of residents as child care recipients
- c. Family considerations of existing members
- d. The conditions of our licence, which limits the number of spaces we are able to offer on any one day in any one room
- e. The balance of ages and genders of children in any room (which impacts on the ability of staff to provide individual care); and
- f. The Centre's status as a co-operative, with the incumbent responsibilities of parents to take an active role in the operation and decision-making of the Centre

Criteria for selection

Given the factors above, we have a set of criteria for selection which we have set out below in order of importance:

- a. Federal Government Policy
The centre offers places to children in accordance with Federal Government policy, such as to children that are deemed 'at risk' under that policy
- b. Prioritising siblings
The centre offers places to the siblings of children
 - Who have been enrolled in the Centre for at least twelve consecutive months, and who continue to be enrolled
 - Whose parent(s) or guardian(s) have been actively involved in co-operative activities such as general meetings, fundraising initiatives, social activities or working bees
 - Whose parent(s) or guardian(s) are employed (either full time or part time), undertaking study or training and/or actively looking for work
- c. Supporting those who live or work in the City of Melbourne



Next, when vacancies arise, the centre offers places to children whose parent(s)/guardian(s),

1. **live AND work or study** within the South Yarra, St Kilda Road, Southbank or CBD boundaries of the City of Melbourne
2. **live** but DO NOT work or study within the South Yarra, St Kilda Road, Southbank or CBD boundaries of the City of Melbourne
3. **work or study** but DO NOT live within the South Yarra, St Kilda Road, Southbank or CBD boundaries of the City of Melbourne

'Work' means that a parent is either employed full time or part time or actively looking for work. Under Section 'C', siblings of children who were past enrollees for twelve months or more will be given priority. Finally

- d. All others on the waiting list are taken into account.

As you can see, the Centre has to balance a range of issues in its selection process. Two other factors are considered in relation to Sections C and D.

- The age of a child are taken into account to ensure balance in the rooms (an appropriate age balance provides for a greater quality of care for individual children)
 - Staff can take into account relative waiting times on the list (for example, if two families meet the same criteria but one has been waiting much longer than another, the longer waiting family, may be offered a priority place.)
- e. The Centre's Committee also reserves the right, in its absolute discretion, to make a selection in "special circumstances" upon the written application of a parent who is a present or past member of the Fawkner Park Children's Centre co-operative. In exercising its discretion the Committee may take into account any of the above factors or any other matter raised by the parent.

Parents should understand that using the selection criteria above means parents who put their name down before others may not necessarily be offered a place first. Someone behind you on the waiting list may be offered a place first because they meet our priority criteria. We know these guidelines are detailed; however this level of detail helps us to make consistent and fair decisions. Having said this, where the guidelines are not clear in a particular case, or where an outcome would be unjust, our Committee of Management will make a determination on behalf of the Centre.

Because of our passion about quality childcare, we play a role in speaking to local and federal representatives about the issues surrounding childcare – particularly concerns that local parents have about the limited number of places. If you have any concerns about the availability or quality of childcare in your area, may we suggest you contact your local City Councillor and your local members of Parliament (both State and Federal.)

We thank you for your interest in Fawkner Park Children's Centre, a Centre that nurtures children, supports families and builds communities.

Tatyana Skorkina
Centre Director