



# Changes to ECEC Worker Retention Payment Grant Opportunity Guidelines

## April 2026

What has changed	Section reference
Remove reference to application form in relation to historical leave liabilities	Section 3
Removed references to specific columns and tables	Section 4.3
Update to the impact of Gender Undervaluation Proceedings	Section 4.3
Update reference to applicable award	Section 5.3
Update reference to applicable award	Section 9.1
Update Table 6 to insert end date of 28 February 2026 in columns 4 and 5	Schedule A – Minimum Rates
Update Table 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title updated to clarify employee’s engagement date</li> <li>Remove and replace Column 5</li> <li>Add/update footnotes</li> </ul>	Schedule A – Minimum Rates
Insertion of Table 9	Schedule A – Minimum Rates

## February 2026 - update number 2

What has changed	Section reference
Update Table 8 Colum 6 for the following classifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level 3A.1</li> <li>Level 3A.2</li> <li>Level 4A.5</li> </ul>	Schedule A – Minimum Rates

## February 2026

What has changed	Section reference
Contents page updated	Contents
Update to table references to account for additional Schedule A tables	Section 4.3
Update to the impact of Gender Undervaluation Proceedings to reflect the Fair Work Commission’s decision on the <i>Children’s Services Award 2010</i> , with an award rate increase to most classifications, a new simplified classification structure and operative date.	Section 4.3
Update to the wording regarding Schedule A for clarity	Section 9.1
Update to relevant CGRP section to due formatting error	Section 10
Update Table 6 to insert end date of 28 February 2026	Schedule A – Minimum Rates
Insertion of Table 8	Schedule A – Minimum Rates
Update to wording regarding Columns 4 and 5 to note that rates have not increased from 1 December 2025 and no longer equate to 15% and 5% respectively of the new award rate. This is to absorb the impact of the gender undervaluation proceedings per Section 4.3	Schedule A – Minimum Rates

## November 2025

What has changed	Section reference
Inclusion of a line on fee constraint eligibility from 2 December 2024	Section 4.1
An addition to the fee constraint condition to allow for a cumulative fee increase of up to 8.6 per cent between 8 August 2024 and 7 August 2026 4.2 per cent in the second year (and by no more than 4.2 per cent from 8 August 2025 to 7 August 2026); and for each subsequent period by no more than the amount equivalent to the specified growth rate based on the Childcare Services Cost Index developed by the ABS, to be eligible from 1 December 2025	Section 4.1
Clarified Annual Wage Review exception wording and included reference to 2026 rates	Section 4.3

Update to the fee constraint condition for grantees who have exceeded the first year increase, must now adhere to a maximum 8.6% increase between 8 August 2024 to 7 August 2026 (with no more than a 4.2% increase between 8 August 2025 and 7 August 2026) ); and for each subsequent period by no more than the amount equivalent to the specified growth rate based on the Childcare Services Cost Index developed by the ABS, to be eligible from 1 December 2025.	Section 9.1
Update to the wording regarding applying for an alternative fee growth cap, in the initial Grant Application or via the Grant Agreement Variation request form.	Section 9.1
Update to guidance on how to advise of a Change of Situation or Transfer of Services using the Grant Agreement Variation request form	Section 11.1
Updates to table column names for clarity	Schedule A – Minimum Rates
Insertion of Table 6	Schedule A – Minimum Rates
Insertion of Table 7	Schedule A – Minimum Rates

## June 2025

What has changed	Section reference
Updated table references to account for additional Schedule A tables	Section 4.3
Included additional wording to clarify the minimum rates required as a result of the Fair Work Commission's Annual Wage Review decision	Section 4.3
Included an exception to not being able to use grant funding to subsidise wage expenditure as a result of the Fair Work Commission's gender undervaluation proceedings	Section 5.3
Updated the backdating provision with a new end date and clarified what a submitted application refers to	Section 6.3
Included additional wording on applications that are submitted after 30 September 2025	Section 6.3
Updated Schedule A as a result of the Fair Work Commission's Annual Wage Review decision	Schedule A

## February 2025

What has changed	Section reference
Correction of typo in columns 4 and 5 of Table 3 (now 1 January 2025 instead of 2024)	Schedule A

## December 2024

What has changed	Section reference
Included additional wording to clarify that workplace instruments that expressly state the allowance is not to be calculated for the purpose of penalties, loadings, termination payments, leave payments and superannuation will not be eligible workplace instruments	Section 4.3
Updated wording on backdating including examples	Section 6.3
Included Table 3 in Schedule A to reflect the <i>Children's Services Award 2010</i> rate increase for Level 1.1 workers from 1 January 2025 to align to the National Minimum Wage	Schedule A

## November 2024

What has changed	Section reference
Clarified that trainees who are undertaking duties covered by the <i>Children's Services Award 2010</i> or the <i>Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020</i> (or equivalent state award) are considered eligible ECEC workers	Section 2
Inclusion of seasonality and payment smoothing details to explain that payments will be adjusted to account for seasonality across the year and to assist in reducing viability concerns for Providers	Section 3



Added the Childcare Services Cost Index developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) of 4.2 per cent to apply from 8 August 2025 to 7 August 2026	Section 4.1 and Section 9.1
Clarified that Providers must take all reasonable steps to cover all eligible workers by workplace instrument(s) and the inclusion of a minimum threshold	Section 4.3 and Section 9.1
Clarified the requirement that the workplace instrument(s) needs to include an increase by at least 5 per cent from 1 December 2025	Section 4.3
Inclusion of a requirement for Providers to provide information to all eligible ECEC workers on the types of compliant workplace instrument	Section 4.3, Section 9.1 and Section 11.1
Added 'equivalent state processes' for those workers covered by state industrial instruments and for whom the Annual Wage Review (AWR) does not apply	Section 4.3
Clarified AWR requirements	Section 4.3
Added further detail on the impact of Gender Undervaluation proceedings	Section 4.3
Added further detail on the Historical Leave Liability process	Section 5.2
Clarified what grant money cannot be used for	Section 5.3
Updated section on backdating provision to align with changes made to section 4.3	Section 6.3
Clarified that applications need to be accurate and complete in order for an assessment to be finalised	Section 7
Inclusion of a grant condition in the Grant Agreement section capturing the requirements to pay eligible ECEC workers in accordance with Section 4.3	Section 9.1
Inclusion of further detail regarding the ongoing obligation to pay at least 10 per cent above the applicable award rates, and provide a further 5 per cent from 1 December 2025	Section 9.1
Added information on Providers who already pay workers above the applicable award rate	Section 9.1
Clarified that compliance and monitoring activities will extend to all grant conditions, not only the Fee Constraint Condition, and that Providers may be asked to provide information from time to time confirming they still meet grant conditions	Section 11
Removed 'authorised representative' definition from the glossary as it is not referenced in the Guidelines	Section 13
Added 'relevant award' to the glossary	Section 13
Inclusion of detail under Schedule A to clarify how junior employees are expected to be paid	Schedule A
Inclusion of detail under Schedule A to clarify how casual employees are expected to be paid	Schedule A
Inclusion of detail under Schedule A to clarify how trainees are expected to be paid	Schedule A
Clarified that the rates in Schedule A must be applied to leave and superannuation entitlements	Schedule A
Updated notes below the tables in Schedule A to align with Section 4.3	Schedule A
Updated workplace instrument to workplace instrument(s) throughout to be applicable to multiple instruments	Throughout

