



Guideline/Procedure

Guideline/Procedure no:	School Fees - Concession Cards
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School Fees - Concession Cards

Purpose

The enrolment policy for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Cairns says no child will be denied a place in a Catholic school because of genuine financial hardship. This guideline/procedure outlines a process by which genuine financial hardship can be determined and appropriate arrangements made.

Application

This will be used by all schools in the Diocese of Cairns to assist them in determining and managing fee concessions.

Guideline or Procedure

OPTIONS FOR OFFERING SCHOOL FEE DISCOUNTS

There are two options for determining eligibility for school tuition fees concessions:

1. When a parent or carer presents a current means tested Centrelink Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card with the appropriate codes (see Attachment 1 – Administration Guidelines, Attachment 2: Health Care Card Tuition Fee Discount Form). This provides an automatic fee remission.
2. There will still be instances where the Principal and Parish Priest will exercise additional pastoral judgement and discernment when warranted. These instances will generally relate to families facing extraordinary circumstances. This might result in the approval of a remission in addition to the automatic health care card remission. Schools may wish to use Attachment 3 to determine the financial circumstances through which an additional remission might be applied.

PROMOTION OF THE AVAILABILITY OF SCHOOL FEE DISCOUNTS

Schools and CES will widely promote the availability of tuition fee concessions, especially to families who might not otherwise consider a Catholic school because of financial hardship. The availability of means-tested discounts will be promoted through school and CES publications and websites, through media releases, and as part of the enrolment process.

RESPECT FOR CONFIDENTIALITY AND FAMILY DIGNITY

At all times school and CES staff will respect the dignity of those seeking discounted tuition fees. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained at all times. It is important that staff know that the presentation of a valid concession care card confers an automatic fee remission – this is not negotiable. Families who receive a fee concession may offer to support and contribute to the school in other ways, such as volunteer activity. Wherever possible such requests should be viewed positively as it reflects both family pride and a commitment to their child's school.

DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF THE AUTOMATIC FEE REMISSION

CES in consultation with schools, will determine the amount of the automatic fee concession each year as part of the annual budget development process for the following year. The amount of the concession will be widely promoted in school and enrolment information.

DETERMINING HOW REMISSIONS ARE FUNDED

The annual fee review process will also determine how automatic remissions are funded by the school and system. This will be expressed as a percentage of the remission that will be met by the system and school.

Procedures for determining additional concessions or for concessions that are not Health Care Card based:

The following procedures are suggested:

1. Families wishing to apply for a fee concession complete the 'Application for remission of school fees and levies form' (Attachment 3) and submit it to the school or parish office.
2. Information on the form is then used in an interview by the Principal/Parish Priest with the family to discuss a fee concession.
3. Alternatively the School/Parish might appoint an independent person of standing to undertake the interview and assessment. This might take place away from the school, eg at the Parish Centre.
4. The poverty line schedule may be used to assist in consistent treatment of all applicants. Updates can be accessed at www.melbourneinstitute.com - > publications -> economic and social indicators -> poverty lines -> Australia -> download -> latest quarter. The application form provided by the parents provides the information to determine the family income's relationship to the poverty line.
5. This information will then be used to negotiate a concession, as appropriate, with the family concerned.
6. The family will then be asked to sign 'Remission acceptance form' (Attachment 4) which indicates the amount to be paid and the method of payment.

Enquiries

Catholic Education Services – SSAT

Catholic Education Services – Director – School Development

Reflection

See also (Related Policies and Guidelines)

Policy – Enrolment in Catholic Schools Policy

– Privacy

Centrelink Confirmation eService Fact Sheet

Attachments

1. Concession Card Tuition Fee Discount Scheme Administration Guidelines
2. Concession Card Tuition Fee Discount Scheme (electronic forms available from schools)
3. Application for remission of school fees and levies (electronic forms available from schools)
4. School fee remission acceptance form (electronic forms available from schools)

Attachment 1:

Concession Card Tuition Fee Discount Scheme Administration Guidelines

(Acknowledgement and thanks to Townsville Catholic Education Office)

1. What do the cards look like and what information do they contain?

Two categories of cards are eligible for the automatic Tuition Fee Discount. A sample copy of each card can be seen below.

A. Health Care Cards



Eligible cards will show the parent's names and those of the students who are covered by the card. If the child is over 16 years of age he/she will be issued with his/her own card, their name will not appear on the family card. These students are still eligible for the discount.

Only cards with the following codes are means tested and eligible for the reduced tuition fee rate:

- FA (Family Allowance)
- PP/PPP (Parenting Payment (partnered))
- JSP/JS (Job Seeker Payment) includes old codes NSA/NA/SA (New Start & Sick Allowance)
- PA (Partner Allowance)
- SL/SpB (Special Benefit)
- WA/WDA (Widow Allowance)
- LI/LIC (Low Income)
- Austudy
- FH (Farm Household Allowance)
- CP/CAR/CD (Carer Payment/Allowance)
- MO (Mobility Allowance)

Health Care Cards may be issued in the name of a child who is in foster care or has a disability. These are not means tested and therefore ineligible for the discount.

B. Pensioner Concession Cards



Only cards with the following codes PPS are eligible for the reduced tuition fee rate:

- PPS (Parenting Payment Single)
- PP/PPP (Parenting Payment (partnered))
- JSP/JS (Job Seeker Payment) includes old codes SA Sick Allowance
- PA (Partner Allowance)
- SL/SpB (Special Benefit)
- WA/WDA (Widow Allowance)
- CP/CAR/CD (Carer Payment/Allowance)
- AGE
- DSP

Centrelink occasionally issues interim or temporary cards which are valid for a period of two weeks. Families should be asked to return when the new permanent card has been issued in order to claim the discount.

C. Which Concession Cards are not eligible under this Scheme?

Centrelink issues cards for a variety of reasons. For some cards the income test requirements are stringent whilst for other cards it is more generous or non-existent. The aim of the Scheme is to assist families with limited financial resources and therefore, only cards with the lower income test requirements are automatically eligible.

The Scheme does **not** apply to:

- ABSTUDY students who can access alternative government support;

2. What about families on other cards and other low income families without any Centrelink card?

Centrelink issues a number of cards for a variety of reasons. For some cards the means testing requirements are stringent; for others it is more generous and for others, there is no means testing. Families who do not have the "correct" card or who have limited financial resources should be invited to approach the school to discuss their individual circumstances – as has always been the case. It should be explained then that because the means testing for their card is more generous than the Scheme's guidelines, they need to provide substantiation to show they should receive some form of tuition fee discount. Centrelink customers should be asked to provide an Income Statement from

Centrelink which shows their financial position. This can be obtained by them via the internet, by telephone or from a Centrelink office.

It should be noted that these families do not qualify for the System Assistance Rebate.

3. What if the card expires during the year?

The customer must reapply for the concession by completing a new application form and provide a copy of their new card.

4. What if a family is no longer eligible for the Centrelink card or if it qualifies during the year?

The family should receive the discount for the proportion of the year it holds an eligible card. For example, if a family becomes eligible in June, it should be charged two terms at the full rate and two terms at the reduced rate.

At the discretion of the Principal, HCC concession may be backdated however it is not recognised as a HCC concession. Schools are to treat this as a normal concession and processed via the concession module at the same rate of 100% off tuition after all other discounts. As this concession is not recognised as a HCC it is not eligible for the System rebate.

5. How do I know if the card is still valid?

Centrelink Confirmation eService is an online facility provided by Services Australia which allows organisations providing concessions to Centrelink customers to confirm a customer's entitlement. This facility will allow schools to confirm customer details such as their name, payment type, concession type, concession card status, date of assessment and if they are deceased. It is mandatory that 100% of customers are looked up and verified in Terms 1 and 3 prior to fee run. Minimum 10% of customers must be looked up and verified in Term 2 and 4. Print out or electronic copy of the confirmation screen must be kept to be eligible for the System rebate.

Refer to Centrelink Confirmation eService Fact Sheet.

Centrelink confirmation eService lookup will display one of the following 3 results:

Example A - Customer holds a card with FA code – Family Allowance.

HCC and/or PCC Entitlement will display YES

Payment Details will display Payment Type – *Not On An Appropriate Payment*

Payment Status – *Not Applicable*

In this scenario the customer is eligible for the HCC concession.

Customer Confirmation Results

Help Close service

Example A

CRN searched: [REDACTED]

Confirmation date: 11 June 2019

Customer Match Results

Match type	Result
First Name	Yes
Middle Name	Not Provided
Surname	Yes

Customer details

Characteristic	Result
Deceased	No

Card entitlements

Characteristic	Result
PCC Entitlement	No
HCC Entitlement	Yes

Payment details

Characteristic	Result
Payment type	Not On An Appropriate Payment
Payment status	Not Applicable

[Return to Top](#)

Previous Enquiry Print New Enquiry

Example B - Customer holds a card with FA code – Family Allowance but was also receiving a primary payment.
HCC and/or PCC Entitlement will display YES
Payment Details will display Payment Type – *PPS,PP,NS,PA,SA & WA etc. This reflects the cancelled payment type*
Payment Status – *Cancelled*
In this scenario the customer is eligible for the HCC concession.

Centrelink Confirmation eServices

Customer Confirmation Results

Help Close service

Example B

CRN searched: [REDACTED]

Confirmation date: 11 June 2019

Customer Match Results

Match type	Result
First Name	Yes
Middle Name	Not Provided
Surname	Yes

Customer details

Characteristic	Result
Deceased	No

Card entitlements

Characteristic	Result
PCC Entitlement	No
HCC Entitlement	Yes

Payment details

Characteristic	Result
Payment type	Parenting Payment Single
Payment status	Cancelled

Previous Enquiry Print New Enquiry

Example C - Customer holds a card with FA code – Family Allowance but was also receiving a primary payment.
 HCC and/or PCC Entitlement will display YES
 Payment Details will display Payment Type – PPS,PP,NS,PA,SA & WA etc.
 Payment Status – Current
 In this scenario the customer is eligible for the HCC concession.

Centrelink Confirmation eServices

Customer Confirmation Results

[Help](#) [Close service](#)

CRN searched: [REDACTED]

Example C

Confirmation date: 11 June 2019

Customer Match Results

Match type	Result
First Name	Yes
Middle Name	Not Provided
Surname	Yes

Customer details

Characteristic	Result
Deceased	No

Card entitlements

Characteristic	Result
PCC Entitlement	Yes
HCC Entitlement	Yes

Payment details

Characteristic	Result
Payment type	Parenting Payment Single
Payment status	Current

[Previous Enquiry](#) [Print](#) [New Enquiry](#)

[Return to Top](#)

Example D – Customer does not hold a HCC/PCC but receives a Carer Payment or Allowance
 Do not look up the HCC issued to the student as they are unable to provide consent required for CCEs

HCC and/or PCC Entitlement will display NO
 Other Payment Details will display Payment Type – Carer Allowance or Carer Payment
 Payment Status – Current
 In this scenario the customer is eligible for the HCC concession.

Customer Confirmation Results

CRN searched:

Confirmation date: 22 May 2020

Customer Match Results

Match type Result

First Name Yes
Middle Name Not Provided
Surname Yes

Customer details

Characteristic Result

Deceased No

Card entitlements

Characteristic Result

PCC Entitlement No
HCC Entitlement No

Payment details

Characteristic Result

Payment type Newstart Allowance
Payment status Cancelled

Other Payment details

Characteristic Result

Payment type Carer Allowance
Payment status Current

[Previous Enquiry](#)

[Print](#)

[New Enquiry](#)

[Return to Top](#)



6. What if I know a family does not meet the requirements of a particular card and is using it fraudulently?

When a Principal knows, not just suspects, a family is using the card fraudulently; the matter needs to be addressed. The Principal should, in the presence of a witness, discuss the evidence with the applicant. The family should then be given the opportunity to withdraw the application for a reduction of the fees purely on the basis of the card. If the family continues with the application, the Principal should exercise discretion in deciding on whether to grant the full discount. The family may decide to withdraw the application under the Scheme and pursue a claim on a financial hardship basis. The latter application should also be assessed on its merits.

7. What about separated families and foster carers?

Entitlement to the automatic discount should be granted only if the eligible card holder is legally responsible for payment of the fees. Split families and foster care arrangements will need to be assessed on an individual basis where the separated or divorced spouse had been paying the fees and then decided not to continue due to the fact the custodial partner has a Health Care Card. In this situation, it is important to establish who has the legal responsibility for paying the fees. If it is the non-custodial parent who has this responsibility and does not have an eligible card they cannot automatically access the discount. If a fee reduction is sought, an approach should be made to the Principal personally and the case considered

individually. The important principle is that holders of the approved cards should not have to provide additional information except in exceptional circumstances thereby maintaining their dignity.

8. What about seasonal workers who have the potential to earn their income over a short time and have periods where their income is nil?

Seasonal workers who stop work do not automatically become eligible for a Centrelink card when they stop earning money. There are qualifying periods of low (or no) income. Averaging the income over these qualifying periods, which would include the time when they were working and the time after they finished, should preclude families with an annual income above the Scheme's threshold from obtaining a card and hence wrongly claiming the discount. Where a parent is employed in seasonal work the Principal may decide to interview the parent and explain the intent of the scheme. The family needs to be informed that, due to the variety of expiry dates, the validity of the card will be checked with Centrelink. If the family continues with the application, the reduction will be proportional to the length of time it holds a valid Health Care Card.

9. What do I do when a parent/guardian requests a Tuition Fee discount under this scheme?

- Ask to see the HCC or PCC;
- Check that the card is eligible under the scheme;
- Provide a *HCC Tuition Fee Discount Scheme Form* (per customer/card holder);
- On receiving the completed form, sign off that the details are correct and take a copy of the HCC. Attach the copy to the form Update the School Information System applications to ensure the remission is correctly calculated when term invoices are generated. File the completed form.
- Alternatively to the point above, the school should retrospectively apply the discount for the current term if the claim is received by the last day of that term.

10. How do system primary schools and Diocesan Colleges access the System rebate?

Week 1 of each school holiday period the *Discount and Concessions Report* is generated from Dynamics AX by SSA Team. Rebate is calculated on this report. Concessions processed after this time for late starters are not eligible for the System rebate.

11. How much is the rebate?

The System rebate will be determined each year by CES as part of the annual budget development process.

12. When will the rebate be paid?

The rebate will be available during the school holidays at the end of each term based on that term's data.

13. If a family has filled in an application form last year and the card has not expired, does a new application form need to be completed?

Customers are only required to complete an application form at the time of initial application, new enrolments and then again on expiry of card. Customers may also be required to complete an application prior to expiry of their card if there are any changes to the terms and conditions set out by either Services Australia or CES.

14. Where can I get more information or where can I direct others who seek further information?

More information can be obtained on HCCs on the Centrelink website:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>