

Back to school payment scheme - procedures

Read this document with the Back to school payment scheme policy.

Introduction

The purpose of these procedures is to provide clarity for schools and parents about the obligations and expectations associated with the Back to School Payment Scheme (the scheme).

The intent of the scheme is to help families with the cost of purchasing certain items to help their child achieve improved learning outcomes.

The scheme provides eligible students with an entitlement to receive educational items in each school year. Educational items can only be purchased from the eligible student's school.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Eligible school	A Northern Territory (NT) Government school or non-government school established under the <i>Education Act 2015</i> .
Eligible student	A student enrolled in an eligible school.
Parent	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition
Parental responsibility	In regards to the definition of parent refers to a person who has: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) daily care and control of the child, orb) is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the long-term care and development of the child, orc) has daily care and control of the child and the entitlement and responsibilities at (b) and includes a person who has been given the above responsibilities under another state or territory law.
Preschool	Quality early childhood education delivered for 15 hours per week – 600 hours per year – as part of a school.
School community	The teaching staff, parents, students and other persons who have a direct involvement or interest in the school.
School record of payment form	Used to keep a record of how much of the \$200 scheme entitlement has been redeemed by the parent or student.
School representative body	An incorporated body under the <i>Education Act 2015</i> and, therefore, is its own legal entity. This means its functions, responsibilities and obligations are governed by the Act and Regulations. A school council is the most common type.

Term	Definition
Standard curriculum program	<p>The provision of teaching and learning activities, instructional support and instructional materials for delivery of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Early Years Learning Framework • the Australian Curriculum • the senior secondary Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training • Vocational Education and Training.

Roles and responsibilities

Financial Services

Financial Services is responsible for:

- distributing funds to schools to meet the cost of the scheme
- coordinating the acquittal of the scheme.

Principals

Principals are responsible for:

- ensuring the scheme is administered at their school in accordance with the policy
- ensuring that parents or students get value for money for goods and services that complement the standard curriculum program
- ensuring that parents and students are provided with a choice of goods and services
- maintaining appropriate records of payment for the scheme
- providing an electronic acquittal report in the required format within the specified timeframes.

School representative bodies

School representative bodies, in collaboration with school principals, are responsible for:

- ensuring schools comply with the scheme's policy and guidelines.

Procedures

School representative bodies may decide the appropriate goods and services to offer to their school community. The goods and services must provide value-for-money and parents and students should be able to take possession of goods redeemed, or access equivalent services. Schools cannot use scheme funds to purchase classroom or school supplies on behalf of parents and students.

Schools are considered not-for profit entities, and the scheme is not intended to enable school representative bodies to make a profit. Payments should cover the cost of goods and some of the expenditure associated with the administration of the scheme.

In making their decisions the school representative body must ensure that the delivery of the standard curriculum program is provided free of charge to families.

Items provided under the scheme must provide parents with choice and be those items that are described as optional extras in legislation; see conditions below.

If a school chooses to package items they must still offer the contents of the package for individual sale, retaining the ability for parents to exercise choice. Individual entitlements cannot be grouped to the benefit of other students, such as to finance school excursions attended only by a limited number of students.

Entitlement can be used on the purchase of the following goods and services.

Goods and services included	Comments
Textbooks	Textbooks provided under the scheme must remain the property of the student.
Stationery – individual or packaged consumable items such as calculators, USB drives, school diaries, pens, pencils and exercise books	Items provided as stationery will be consumable items and must remain the individual property of the student. Stationery provided under the scheme must not constitute classroom supplies. Items that form part of a package must be available for individual purchase from the school for example, calculators, headphones, USB drives.
Student ID card	Consumable item retained by the student.
Year book	Retained by the student.
Uniforms – including hats and book bags	Parents should be informed of the individual cost of each item.
Resource hire schemes – not including refundable deposits	Resource hire schemes exist in senior secondary schools.
School camps	Payments received for school camps occurring beyond the specified acquittal time frames are non-refundable: however, the school may choose to provide parents with goods/services to an equivalent value where possible.
Excursions – including internal and external performances	Costs associated with excursions are not to be packaged. Parents must be provided with full detail of the proposed excursion, including costings, and retain their right to choose.
Elective activities and subject material costs	Fees that may be charged for the provision to a student of any approved materials, services or facilities not covered by section 75(2) of the <i>Education Act 2015</i> .
Tuition fees – non-government schools only	

Entitlement cannot be used on the purchase of the following goods and services or items.

Goods and services or items not included	Comments
Voluntary parent contributions	This includes donations to the school.
Canteen purchases	Canteen purchases are an additional cost and not considered to be educational items.
Redeemed for cash including the provision of refunds for goods and services purchased under the scheme	Entitlement must be used for eligible items to assist students. If a requested item is unavailable, alternative options must be discussed with a school.
Transferred or shared between students	Individual entitlements cannot be grouped to the benefit of other students.
Transferred to another school	Funds or balances cannot be transferred between schools: however, where a student changes schools and they have not already accessed any of their entitlement, it may be accessed at the new school, provided this is within the timeframe set out in Part 3 of the policy.
Facilitating purchases from a supplier other than the school	Items must be obtained from the school that the student is enrolled in.
Classroom or school supplies	Examples include reams of paper, whiteboard markers and art supplies for the classroom.
Pre-school classroom supplies	Items must be supplied as part of the standard curriculum program.
Whole school specific activities such as kitchen gardens	Whole school activities such as kitchen gardens are deemed to be part of a compulsory teaching program.
Student reporting or grading software	Examples include GradeXpert and MarkBook.

Record keeping

Schools must keep a record of the goods and services redeemed by each parent or student. Schools may use the school record of payment form or can choose another preferred method of record keeping. Schools must provide, on request, a record to parents or student of goods and services redeemed by the parent or student.

School records are to be made available to the department for scrutiny at all times for the purposes of audit and review.

Acquittal

Schools must provide an electronic acquittal report 28 calendar days after the end of term 1. The acquittal should include a preschool enrolment estimate for the remainder of the school year.

Schools must provide preschool acquittals for preschool students enrolled in term 2, 3 and 4 by the end of December.

Principals and school representative bodies must confirm their compliance with the scheme's policy and guidelines.

Remote schools

Remote schools that do not have the ability to offer a wide range of goods and services, due to their isolated location, should first consult with parents about options available. Principals must ensure parents are aware that the cost of goods and services provided to students will be taken from their entitlement of \$200 under the scheme.

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory

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Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1	September 2017	School Support Services	First version
2	November 2022	Corporate Support	Minor changes
3	October 2023	Financial Services	Administrative amendments made to align roles and responsibilities to the structural alignment in effect from 1 July 2022 including NTG template and minor formatting.
4	January 2024	Financial Services	Update voucher amount.