

## Introduction

This policy outlines the process by which MACS primary schools will provide fee concessions to families of students experiencing financial hardship, who would otherwise be impeded from receiving a Catholic education. It acknowledges the need for families to meet their school fee obligations according to their capacity to pay, while providing a consistent approach to school fee concessions across all MACS primary schools.

## Purpose

The purpose is to set out the policy and procedures for the provision of fee concessions in MACS primary schools.

## Scope

This policy applies to:

- MACS primary schools
- MACS primary school principals and staff
- MACS primary school students from the 2021 school year, whose families are:
  - of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage
  - holders of Department of Human Services Health Care Cards
  - holders of Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Cards
  - holders of Department of Home Affairs Proof of Identity card (ImmiCard)
  - refugees, where the child has attended a school within Australia for less than five years
  - required to relocate schools to St Michael's Catholic Primary School, North Melbourne, as their (Australian resident) child requires long-term medical treatment at The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne
  - experiencing genuine financial hardship (e.g. loss of family home, and/or loss of income through volunteering to fight bushfires, COVID-19 or illness and/or loss of livelihood/income caused by bushfires, COVID-19 or illness)
- concessional fee decisions made on behalf of MACS primary schools by MACS principals.

## Definitions

Acronyms   terms	Full name and explanatory text
CECV	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd – the company established by the Archbishop of Melbourne and the Bishops of Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale to allocate, distribute and expend government agency grants to Catholic schools in Victoria
CSEF	Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund – Victorian government funding for students of families who are eligible, means-tested Department of Human Services Concession Card (DHSCC) holders. CSEF is used to offset school fees or levies related to camps, sports and excursions
CentrePay	A free and voluntary service to pay bills and expenses as regular deductions from a client’s Centrelink payments
HCC	Department of Human Services Health Care Card which entitles the card holder to receive Australian Government financial and other assistance
DVA Gold Card	Department of Veterans’ Affairs Health Card – All Conditions or Totally & Permanently Incapacitated. Eligible card holders are veterans and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) their widow(er)s and dependents. Eligibility is determined by the level of disability of the veteran or the status of dependents of the veteran, as determined by the DVA
Fee concession	A remission or exemption from school fees payable as a result of financial hardship
FFPOS	Full-fee paying overseas students – overseas/international students on a number of visa sub-classes who are ineligible to receive government funding towards their education
HSS	A home schooled student. Home school students who attend a Catholic primary school on a part-time basis are eligible to receive government funding towards their education on a fractional, full-time equivalent basis
MACS	The Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd company
MACS Board	The MACS Board of Directors
Principal	MACS primary school principals
Refugee	A person who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in a case where the person has a nationality, is outside the country of his or her nationality and, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, is</li> </ul>

	<p>unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in a case where the person does not have a nationality, is outside the country of his or her former habitual residence and owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, is unable or unwilling to return to it. Refer Migration Act 1958 Sect 5H</li> </ul>
School(s)	MACS primary schools
School Advisory Council	School Advisory Council at a MACS primary school
School fees	The fees and levies MACS primary schools charge families for the education of their children

## Principles

This policy is sourced from the principles of Catholic social teaching and, in particular, ‘the dignity of the human person’, ‘preferential option for the poor’ and ‘the common good’.

**Dignity of the human person:** processes for the collection of school fees, granting of fee concessions and recovery of unpaid school fees need to be transparent, fair and just.

**Preferential option for the poor:** Catholic schools should be accessible to all Catholic families irrespective of their capacity to pay. The Catholic Church’s preferential option for the poor obligates Catholic schools to ensure that no baptised Catholic student is denied a Catholic education because of a family’s inability to pay school fees: ‘... the preferential love for the poor represents a fundamental choice for the Church, and she proposes it to all people of good will’.<sup>1</sup>

**The common good:** each MACS primary school is responsible for setting its own fees, taking into consideration both the income needed for the school to operate and the capacity of their families to pay.

## Policy

### 1. Eligibility for Concessional School Fees

- 1.1 Concessional school fees are available to any family that meets the below eligibility criteria:
  - 1.1.1 of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage
  - 1.1.2 holding an HCC and eligible for CSEF
  - 1.1.3 experiencing severe financial hardship
  - 1.1.4 holding a DVA Gold Card
  - 1.1.5 identified as refugees and holding an ImmiCard is strongly encouraged to apply for concessional school fees.
- 1.2 Any family required to relocate their (Australian resident) child to St Michael’s Catholic Primary School, North Melbourne, due to the child requiring long term medical treatment at The Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne will be eligible for concessional student fees. Pro-rata concession is provided for part-year attendance. An annual statutory declaration is required to confirm eligibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome, 2006.

- 1.3 HSS who attend a MACS primary school on a part time basis, who meet any of the criteria detailed in Policy points 1.1 or 1.2 are eligible for concessional student fees.
- 2. Ineligibility for Concessional School Fees**
  - 2.1 FFPOS or full-time HSS are ineligible for concessional school fees as government funding is not available for FFPOS or full-time HSS.
- 3. Concessional School Fees for Eligible Students**
  - 3.1 Students of eligible families are entitled to concessional school fees.
  - 3.2 The school fees for eligible students are:
    - 3.2.1 1 child: \$15 per child per week, direct debit (\$780 per annum or \$195 per term)
    - 3.2.2 2 children: \$23 for the family per week, direct debit (\$1,196 per annum, or \$299 per term)
    - 3.2.3 3+ children: \$30 for the family per week, direct debit (\$1,560 per annum, or \$390 per term)
  - 3.3 The above fees cover both tuition fees and levies.
- 4. Health Care Card Factor Funding and Top-up Grants for Concessional Fees**
  - 4.1 Schools with enrolled students whose families hold a HCC and are registered for CSEF will receive Health Care Card Factor funding for those students.
  - 4.2 Where schools have students eligible for concessional fees detailed at Policy point 3.2 and their total loss of income exceeds the school's total Health Care Card Factor funding, the school may be eligible for top-up grant funding from the CECV or MACS to cover the loss of income.
  - 4.3 Grants received by schools from the CECV or MACS as a result of this policy, such as Health Care Card Factor funding or top-up funding, must only be used for the purpose of enabling financially disadvantaged MACS primary school students to access a faith-based Catholic education and may not be used for any other purpose.
  - 4.4 Health Care Card Factor funding and top-up funding may only be expended on recurrent purposes, i.e. in the same manner as other tuition and levy income.
  - 4.5 Health Care Card Factor funding and top-up funding cannot be expended for capital purposes.
  - 4.6 MACS will conduct periodic reviews to ensure that Health Care Card Factor funding and top-up funding have been expended appropriately by recipient schools.
- 5. Operationalisation of Concessional Fee Policy**
  - 5.1 Principals may apply this policy and procedures from the date of approval of this policy.
  - 5.2 All schools are required to comply with this policy prior to setting fees for 2022.

## Procedures

Concession fee procedures for MACS primary schools have been developed for this policy.

## Related Policies

[MACS Private Income Policy](#)

## References

[Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#)

[Migration Act 1958 \(Cth\) Sect 5H](#)

<b>Responsible director</b>	Executive Director
<b>Policy owner</b>	Director – Finance and Infrastructure Services
<b>Approving body/individual</b>	MACS Board of Directors
<b>Approval date</b>	12 May 2021
<b>Date of next review</b>	September 2023 (for an effective date of 1 January 2024)

<b>POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Related documents</b>	Concessional Fee Procedures MACS Primary School Financial Delegation Instrument MACS Primary School Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual – Chapter 8
<b>Superseded documents</b>	N/A
<b>New policy</b>	New