



FEES

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Policy Statement

Our service has a commitment to ensuring our fees are as affordable as possible and that all families have access to any subsidies that are available to reduce these fees. The setting and payment of fees takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the Australian Government Child Care Service Handbook. All records held at the service will be maintained in accordance with the service Confidentiality and Privacy Policy. Families will be provided with accurate fees statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes.

Goals / What are we going to do?

To enable our service to provide high quality early education and care for children we need to ensure we are financially viable at all times. Our service's financial health and access to our service will be maximised by ensuring families are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolment.

Strategies / How will it be done?

Fee Payable/Accounts

- ◁ The Approved Provider will determine the required fee level to meet budget prediction for the year.
- ◁ The fee schedule and fees payment policy will be fully explained to families during the enrolment process.
- ◁ Fees payable will be based daily amounts.
- ◁ Families will be given a minimum of 14 days' notice of any fee increase.
- ◁ The same fee will be charged to all families for equivalent care arrangements.
- ◁ A statement of fees will be sent to parents/guardians per term, in advance for Preschool, or as required for casual places, and fortnightly in arrears for Centre Based Day Care (CBC).
- ◁ Fee payment will be recorded according to Australian Government Guidelines. For CBC fees, Families may also view details about their child care usage and total fees charged and the fee reductions calculated by the Centrelink office (FAO) on the View Child Care Attendance online statement available through the FAO website.

◁ Families should contact the service to advise of their child's inability to attend as soon as this is known. Fees for permanent bookings will still be required on days the child would normally attend.

◁ Casual bookings will be charged if the Centre is not notified of withdrawal by office hours the day before attendance.

Child Care Subsidy System CCS

◁ Our service will comply with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved education and care service for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy (CCS), reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS will be maintained by the service.

◁ It is the enrolling parent/guardian's responsibility to register for CCS through their myGOV account, provide their projected annual income, activity levels and the name of our service.

◁ All fees are charged at the full rate. Each family's eligibility for CCS is then calculated and the service is then forwarded these funds. Deductions may then be made to each individual family's accounts.

◁ Any changes in a family's financial circumstances may result in changes or cancellation of CCS. It is the family's responsibility to keep their details on myGov current and contact the Centrelink office if they wish to dispute assessments or discuss it further.

◁ Families will only be eligible for CCS if child care attendance records are accurately completed and signed by the parent/guardian or other responsible adult, and other eligibility requirements are met.

◁ Families are entitled to 42 absence days for each registered child in each financial year. CCS is paid for these days provided that the child would normally have attended on that day, and fees have been charged.

◁ Additional absences can be claimed when the first 42 days have been used. Supporting documentation may be required for approval of additional absences.

◁ All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request.

Family Leave

Permanent day care bookings fees are entitled to "Family Leave" whereby fees are not charged during this time as long as the following conditions are met:

◁ Fee payments must be up-to-date;

◁ One week notice must be given;

◁ Leave can be taken at the rate of:

» 2 days per year – when enrolled for 1 day permanent

» 4 days per year – when enrolled for 2 days permanent

» 6 days per year – when enrolled for 3 days permanent

Payment of Fees

◁ Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid by the due date of the invoice.

◁ Fees may be paid by electronic funds transfer, direct deposit (internet banking) or cash.

Overdue Fees

◁ Parents/guardians with overdue fees will be encouraged by the Director to discuss any difficulties they may have in meeting payments and make suitable arrangements to pay, including the option of a payment plan. If this is not done, or the agreed arrangements are not kept, the matter may be referred to a debt collector and/or cancellation of the child's booking may occur.

Non-Payment of Fees Procedure:

The following will be carried out until payment is made:

◁ Following month's statement – Re-issue with reminder sticker

◁ Plus one week – Director to make contact with family via phone or discreetly in person

◁ Plus one week – follow letter process listed below

Letter process

1st If fees remain outstanding, a letter will be sent with payment plan options and notifying the family that their child may have their attendance at the Centre reduced.

This course of action will be decided upon, at the discretion of the Director and Management Committee President. The family will be notified by phone and in writing of the decision and which day(s) will be reduced.

2nd If, after a further two weeks, no response has been received, a second letter will be required. This letter should include information concerning the Centre's legal course of action (this may include a summons from the Sheriff's Office) and information relating to the reduction of the child's attendance.

3rd The Director and Committee Member (President or Treasurer or one of the executive) to call on the family to confirm that all correspondence has been received and that they are aware of the consequences of their not having paid the outstanding fees.

4th That any cost from proceeding to a summons from the sheriff's office will also incur a cost in addition to the amount they owe to the Centre.

Repeat Offenders - Families who have received the 1st letter on two separate occasions within 12 months, during their child's attendance, will be required to pay their fees for either service in advance. This payment arrangement will remain in place for the duration of attendance for that family at the Centre.

Late Collection Charge

◁ Our service reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/ guardians have not collected their child/ren from the service before closing time. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management and based on the service’s need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages. It is currently set at \$1.35/minute.

Preschool Subsidy:

◁ There is a component in the funding to provide economic relief to parents of preschool children whose income is less than \$....., and they can provide proof of this in the form of a Health Care Card. Parents eligible for a subsidy must complete a form including proof of income. These forms should be completed annually upon enrolment. As circumstances change, it is the parents’ responsibility to notify the Centre of these changes.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility For
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◁ Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011. ◁ Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements. ◁ Developing a fee policy that balances the parent’s/guardian’s capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability. ◁ Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible. ◁ Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges. ◁ Ensuring that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service ◁ Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected. ◁ Enter into a CWA with a parent or guardian, to provide childcare in exchange for fees. A CWA is an agreement between the Early Learning Childcare Centre service provider and a parent or guardian, to provide childcare in exchange for fees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The provider and parents contact names and details » The date the arrangement is effective from » The child or children’s full name and date of birth » Session days and start/end times » Details of the fees to be charged ◁ Update any changes to the CWA as required.
Director/ Administration Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◁ Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges. ◁ Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable. ◁ Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.
Early Childhood Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◁ Referring parents’/guardians’ questions in relation to this policy to the Director.

Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◁ Reading this policy and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the Director. ◁ Obtain a Customer Reference Number from Centrelink as soon as practical before enrolment at the service for Centre Based Day Care (CBC). ◁ Record the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending care. ◁ Ensure all fees are kept up to date. ◁ Provide documentation for additional absence days as required. ◁ Provide 2 weeks notice of withdrawal from service. If child does not attend during this 2 week notice period full fees will be chargeable. ◁ Notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.
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Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

RELATED GUIDELINES, STANDARDS, FRAMEWORKS ◁ National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership – Standard 7.1

SOURCES

- ◁ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – www.acecqa.gov.au
- ◁ CCS Information – www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy
- ◁ CELA Sample Policy – Reviewed Sep 2018

Ratified Date: Aug 2019

Reviewed: Dec 2020