



PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

Quality early education and care provides the foundation for children’s development and social engagement whilst supporting workforce participation of parents and carers. Our Service is committed to providing quality education and care to all children at an affordable fee for families. Our service also provides a kindergarten program for children in the year before school and we are committed to ensuring we exhaust all avenues to enable all families to access our service or another suitable kindergarten program through various means.

As an approved childcare service, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is available to reduce fees to eligible families. Our fee structure is based on our ability to provide the requirements of the Education and Care National Law and National Regulations, Family Assistance Law, the Australian Taxation Office and guidelines contained in the Child Care Provider Handbook.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Arrival and Departure Policy	Orientation of New Families Policy
Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Governance Policy	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
Enrolment Policy	Termination of Enrolment Policy
Governance Policy	

PURPOSE

For parents to gain a clear understanding of the Service fee structure, payment requirements and Child Care Subsidy benefits prior to enrolment. This policy explains the process of fee payment and the necessity of ensuring children's fees are paid on time and consequences for failure to pay fees on time. It also outlines our commitment to ensuring that all families have access to early education and kindergarten.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service aims to ensure families understand the fee schedule and payment process required for education and care to be provided for their child. We are committed to meeting our obligations to maintain financial integrity and comply with all Child Care Subsidy legislative requirements. We have effective compliance systems in place to ensure childcare funding is administered appropriately. Our Service ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to the Service about the enrolled child and family.

Our fee structure includes:

Enrolment Fee and Bond Payment

- An enrolment fee of \$30 is charged upon confirmation of enrolment. This fee is paid for the cost of the centre tour, the administration time of entering enrolment forms and connecting families to the CCS systems. This fee must be paid prior to commencement at the Service.

- 2 weeks of fees is to be paid within the first week of attendance. Fees are then to be maintained at two weeks in advance.

Families may speak to the centre director if they are having difficulties paying the bond fee, two weeks of fees or any fees in general and a suitable, alternative arrangement will be made.

General Fees

- Fees are charged for each session of care and may vary depending on the age of the child in care and the family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS)
- CCS is paid directly to the Service and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's statement).
- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount - the 'gap' amount
- Fees must be kept in advance of a child's attendance.
- Fees are to be paid fortnightly or weekly through a direct debit system. If families wish to pay fees in a different way, they can discuss this with the centre director.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the Service. This includes public holidays, sick days, family choice and family holidays. The Service may be directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood or a pandemic and fees wouldn't be charged in this case.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay a fee at a discounted rate. CCS will be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays in the allowable absences.
- Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours within that session).
- Casual days/make up days may be offered to families if available within the Service's license.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

- Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their [myGOV](#) account linked to Centrelink and provide supporting documentation.
- Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy:
 - The child must:
 - be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child' and
 - be 13 or under and not attending secondary school and
 - meet immunisation requirements

- The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy or their partner must:
 - meet residency requirements and
 - be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement (their written agreement) with their childcare provider
 - childcare must be provided by an approved provider
- Families' level of Child Care Subsidy will be determined by:
 - Combined family income
 - Activity test of parents
 - Type of early learning and childcare Service.
- Child Care Subsidy will be provided directly to the Service and this amount deducted from the parent/family account.
- Families must regularly check their details are correct and report a change in circumstance to Centrelink (family income, activity levels, relationship changes or any other changes to their circumstances).
- Any dispute with CCS payments is the responsibility of the family. The family is the customer of Centrelink, not the centre.

Payment of fees

- Fees are set up using the Service's direct debit system.
- Families will be issued with a fee statement on a weekly basis in accordance with the fee payment and Regulatory requirements.
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees. This fee is \$15 and is charged by ezi debit.

Absences from Service

- Families are requested to contact the Service if their child is unable to attend a particular session.
- Families must still pay the 'gap' fee to the Service if their child is unable to attend.
- Under the Child Care Subsidy families are allowed 42 absent days per child, per financial year and may be entitled to additional absence days in certain circumstances. (See Child Care Subsidy Handbook). These absences are called 'allowable absences' and these are the number of absences that can be taken from the centre and CCS will still be paid.
- Allowable absences can be taken for any reason, including public holidays and when children are sick.
- Records will be kept by the Service for each absence.

- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via [myGov](#).
- In a period of local emergency, such as bushfire or pandemic, and our Service is temporarily shut down on public health advice, families may be provided with additional absence days as per Family Assistance Law legislation.

Financial Difficulties

- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of the centre director. We are committed to assisting families to accessing early learning either by attending our service or through another suitable service
- Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink if they are in temporary financial hardship. ACCS provides extra assistance for up to 13 weeks.

Failure to Pay

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder letter will be issued after one week and then again, after two weeks if the fees are still outstanding. Families are encouraged to speak with the centre director if they are having difficulties meeting their fee obligation.
- A child's position may be terminated if payment has not been made after three weeks, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position. At this time the Service may initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

Late Fees

- Our Service is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. This is a breach of the Education and Care Regulations.
- Our service rosters our educators to maintain ratios, and children cannot remain outside of their session times.
- It is unacceptable to pick children up late from the Service. A late fee will apply where children are not picked up prior to closing time.
- Currently, a fee of \$2 per minute per family block or part thereof will be incurred by the family.
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late.

Change of Fees

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of four weeks written notice is given to all families.

Termination of Enrolment

- Parents are to provide two weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the centre.
- The child must attend on their last day or CCS is not payable and the full fee will be charged to the family.

Responsibility of Management

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring all families are aware of our *Payment of Fees Policy*
- ensuring enrolment information includes the parent/guardian's Customer Reference Number (CRN) and date of birth and the child's CRN and date of birth
- providing families with a regular statement of fees payable
- notifying families of any overdue fees
- providing families with reminder letters as required
- terminating the enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- discussing fee payment with families if required

Responsibility of the families

Families of the service are responsible for:

- Reading and being aware of the centre's fee payment policy
- Ensuring you meet and continue to meet the requirements for payment of CCS
- To contact Centrelink if there is an issue with your CCS
- To ensure all fees are paid up to two weeks in advance
- To speak to the centre director if you are having trouble paying any fee
- To collect your child within the agreed times listed on the CWA.

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Our service provides a high-quality 4-year-old kindergarten program for children in the year before school. Our program is an LDC style kindergarten, facilitated by our Bachelor qualified teacher. This section of the fee payment policy is to give clarity around the enrolment and fees for our kindergarten program (see also our ‘enrolment policy’).

Priority of access

Our Service must notify all families of the priority of access that applies when they enrol their child.

In instances where more eligible children apply for a place at a kindergarten service than there are places available, services must:

- prioritise children based on the criteria listed below
- work with other local kindergarten services and the regional Department office to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.

High priority children	Process that may be used to verify need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care	The child is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attending a three-year-old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning, or is - referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Protection ▪ Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) ▪ Maternal and Child Health nurse, or ▪ Out-of-Home Care provider.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children	As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families ‘is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?’ and record this information in KIM.
Asylum seeker and refugee children	An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker.
Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran’s Affairs Card, or ▪ multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets).
Children with additional needs, defined as children who: require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program require a combination of services which are individually planned have an identified specific disability or developmental delay	The child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten ▪ holds a Child Disability Health Care Card ▪ has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the National Disability Insurance Scheme ▪ Early Childhood Intervention Service ▪ Preschool Field Officer, or ▪ Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Sessions and Attendance

Our kindergarten program runs on Tuesday-Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm. Our teacher is not in attendance on Mondays for lesson planning and on school holidays. An educational program still runs outside of these hours for families who need it (6:30am-6:30pm, Monday-Friday).

Children must attend the kindergarten for a minimum of 15 hours per week. Families must enrol their child for a minimum of two days Tuesday-Friday in order to meet this criteria.

Kindergarten Fees

Our service provides a full, whole foods menu to kindergarten children along with supplying all nappies, wipes, sunscreen and bedding if required. We also allow families to attend up to 5 days per week Monday-Friday through school holidays and the flexibility of booking extra days when required. Therefore, our fee system works the same as an LDC childcare centre (see above information). The cost is currently set at \$118 per day, with families paying the gap fee after CCS. Families are advised that they may be able to access a 15 hour kindergarten program free of charge at another local service. These Services are typically known as 'sessional kindergarten'. Sessional kindergarten enables eligible families to claim Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS).

Please speak with the centre director if:

- You require support in locating and enrolling into a sessional kindergarten.
- You are having difficulties with enrolling twice per week
- You are having difficulties paying
- You have any other barriers to accessing our kindergarten service
- You need help with any other aspect of accessing early education for your child.

Available funding for families:

Childcare Subsidy (CCS) (accessed at LDC services such as Alphabet Preschool only): Child Care Subsidy is the main way the Government assists families with their childcare fees. The Child Care Subsidy that commenced on 2 July 2018: replaced the Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) with a single, means-tested subsidy. It is generally paid directly to childcare providers to be passed on to families.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) (accessed at LDC services such as Alphabet Preschool only): provides additional childcare fee assistance to an individual (or provider) for children at risk of serious abuse or neglect. It helps to address cost barriers families may experience so that children can either enter or remain engaged with childcare

Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) (accessed at LDC services such as Alphabet Preschool only): designed to provide short-term support (up to 13 week free childcare) to families who are experiencing significant financial stress due to exceptional circumstances beyond their control. This will help ensure continuity of care for the child and ensure that families are provided with support when they need it most.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): (accessed through 'sessional kindergartens' (SK) only) A state government subsidy paid directly to kindergartens to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

Early Start Kindergarten (accessed at either LDC or SK): A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection or referred to Child FIRST to attend an additional kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours. Details are available at

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/Pages/default.aspx>

Early Start Kindergarten extension grant (accessed at either LDC or SK): available to assist vulnerable and Aboriginal children who are not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy to access a free kindergarten program in the year before school. Details are available at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/early-start-kindergarten.aspx>

Resources and information for families

[New Child Care Package Information for Families Resources](#)

[Child Care Subsidy](#)

[Child Care Package Overview](#)

[Centrelink Customer Reference Number](#)

[Absences from childcare- Australian Government](#)

[Kindergarten Funding Guide](#)

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Education Child Care Provider Handbook
https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/child_care_provider_handbook_0.pdf

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Early Childhood and Care*
<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood-and-child-care-0>

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Information for childcare providers when a period of local emergency occurs*

Kearns, K. (2017). *The Business of Childcare* (4th Ed.).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard (2020)

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	Oct 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE	June 2021
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy statement added • Implementation information added • CCS section included • Absences section added • Responsibility for Management expanded • Resources and information section added • Kindergarten requirements added 		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grammar, punctuation and spelling edited. - Sources/references alphabetised. - Minor formatting for consistency throughout policy. - 'Related policies' alphabetised. 	May 2020	
May 2018	Changes made to comply with Regulations and changes to Child Care Subsidy	May 2019	
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard 	March 2018	
March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor changes made to ensure compliance with regulations and government requirements. 	March 2018	