



BOURKE AND DISTRICT CHILDREN'S SERVICES

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

POLICY NAME: FEES

POLICY STATEMENT

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. This policy details the service fee structure, payment requirements and Child Care Subsidy (CCS) benefits. Families will be provided with accurate fees statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes and the necessity of ensuring children's fees are paid on time and consequences for failure to pay fees on time.

BACKGROUND

The Education and Care Services National Regulations requires Approved Providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place in relation to the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service. 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.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is available to reduce fees to eligible families whose children are enrolled at our Childcare Service and there are currently no fees for attending our Preschool Service. 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. We are committed to meet 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.

OVERALL STRATEGIES / HOW WILL IT BE DONE?

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (CCS)

- Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their [myGov](#) account linked to Centrelink and provide documentation to support the CCS payment.
- Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive CCS. The child must:
 - Be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child'.
 - Be 13 or under and not attending secondary school.
 - Meet immunisation requirements.
- The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner must:
 - Meet residency requirements.
 - 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 (such as BDCS).
- 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/guardian 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 disputes with CCS payments are the responsibility of the family. The family will be referred to contact Centrelink directly for any enquiries regarding CCS payments.

BOND PAYMENT

- All children enrolled in the Childcare service must pay a \$200 bond, per child at the time of enrolment.
- The bond payment will be refunded to families if all accounts are paid in full and no amount is outstanding when the child leaves the Service.
- No bond is required for the Preschool service.

GENERAL FEES



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- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care (The fees are updated at the start of each year and can be viewed in the family handbook which is available online at BDCS.org.au, a physical copy can also be requested from the service).
- 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.
- 'Gap Fees' must be paid via Direct Debit.
- Fees must be kept in advance of a child's attendance.
- Fees are to be paid fortnightly through a direct debit system.
- Fees are payable for every session that a child is enrolled at the service. This includes:
 - When the child is unwell and can't attend the service. (Unless two weeks written notice is given, in which case a discounted daily rate of 50% will be applied).
 - Family reasons (for example, going on holiday). (Unless two weeks written notice is given, in which case a discounted daily rate of 50% will be applied).
 - In both of these above instances, each absence will count towards the 42 days of 'allowable absences' as defined by Family Assistance Law.
- Fees are not required:
 - During the Christmas and New Year closure period.
 - On Public Holidays
 - When the service is directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as a pandemic
 - When the service has chosen to close (for example, so maintenance work can be completed)
- Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours any day).

PAYMENT OF FEES

- Families are required to pay fees using the service's direct debit system. The family is required to provide banking details to facilitate set up of the direct debit account.
- Fees and charges associated with direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment.
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees.
- Families will be issued with a Statement of Entitlement on a fortnightly basis in accordance with the fee payment and regulatory requirements.
- The Statement of Entitlement will include details of the sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts.
- The Statement of Entitlement is generated using our CCS Software which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law.

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, unless two weeks written notice is given, in which case a discounted daily rate of 50% will be applied.
- Under the Child Care Subsidy families are allowed 42 absence days per child, per financial year and may be entitled to additional absence days in certain circumstances. (See Child Care Subsidy Handbook).
- Allowable absences can be taken for any reason. Families do not have to provide evidence.
- Additional absences can be claimed for the specified reasons as defined by the Family Assistance Law.
- Records and evidence will be kept by the service for each additional absence, where required.
- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via myGov.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of the Approved Provider.
- Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance if they are experiencing temporary financial hardship.
- There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:



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- Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)—to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support who are at risk of harm.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.

DEBT RECOVERY PROCEDURE

- 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.
- At any time of the debt recovery process the family will be encouraged to enter a debt agreement with the service to repay outstanding fees. A written contract will be provided for the family to sign outlining repayment plan details. The repayment plan will provide information as to the duration and amount of the repayments as well as steps that will be taken if the repayment plan is not adhered to
- A child's position will 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 will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

LATE FEES

- A late fee will apply where children are not picked up prior to closing time.
- Currently, a fee of \$50.00 per 15 minute block or part thereof will be incurred by the family for each child who is not collected by the close of service.
- More information in Late Collection of Children Policy.

CHANGE OF FEES

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of four weeks written notice is given to all families
- CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the CPI at the commencement of each financial year.
- Any CCS hourly rate increases are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software.

TERMINATION OF ENROLMENT

- Parents are to provide two weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the centre
- If termination from the service is required without notification, families may lose their Child Care Subsidy, resulting in the payment of requirement for full fees to be charged.
- In some circumstances CCS may not be paid for sessions if the child has not physically started care or if the child doesn't attend during the 2 week period.
- Additionally, CCS may not be paid for absences submitted after a child's last physical day of care, unless conditions have been met as specified by Family Assistance Law.

STAFF DISCOUNTS

- Our Service offers certain employees a staff discount for children that attend our service, after CCS has been applied. The staff discount applies to employees who hold or are working towards an early childhood education and care qualification.
- The Staff discount is calculated at 95% of gap fees after CCS has been applied and does not affect CCS eligibility. (Department of Education – [Childcare discount for early childhood workforce](#)). (Staff must continue to pay at least 5% of the gap fee).

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

- Families who wish to raise concerns regarding the management of Child Care Subsidy should speak with the Nominated Supervisor in the first instance. The Nominated Supervisor will follow the steps as outlined in this policy, including advising the Approved Provider of all grievances.
- Families can raise concerns regarding management of the Child Care Subsidy to the dedicated Child Care Tip-Off Line either via phone or email:
Phone: 1800 664 231



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Email: tipoffline@education.gov.au

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE APPROVED PROVIDER AND NOMINATED SUPERVISORS WILL:

- Ensure there are policies and procedures in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed.
- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Ensure educators (including casual staff) receive information and induction training to fulfil their roles effectively, including being made aware of the Fees Policy, their responsibilities in implementing it, and any changes that are made over time.
- Ensure students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy.
- Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements.
- Develop a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability.
- Consider any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible.
- Ensure enrolments are submitted correctly with the appropriate enrolment information,
- Providing families with regular statement of fees payable and ensure they are aware of any overdue fees.
- Discussing fee payment with families if required.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- Refer parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisors.

FAMILIES WILL:

- Ensure payment of fees as per policy.
- Provide the Service with the correct enrolment details to facilitate the CCS claim, if required, including:
- Centrelink Reference Numbers for child and CCS claimant.
- Date of Birth for child and CCS claimant.
- Notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement.
- Confirm their child's enrolment through the parents myGov account.
- Record the arrival and departure times of their child attending care.
- Notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our Fees Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with children, families, staff, educators, and management.

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

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| Standard 1 | Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture |
| Standard 3 | Families and communities are informed and involved |
| Standard 10 | Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe. |

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

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| 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 AND NATIONAL LAW

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|-----|--|
| 168 | Education and care services must have policies and procedures |
| 170 | Policies and procedures must be followed |
| 171 | Policies and procedures to be kept available |
| 172 | Notification of change to policies and procedures |
| 177 | Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider |

STATUTORY LEGISLATION & CONSIDERATIONS



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- [A New Tax System \(Family Assistance\) Act 1999](#)
- [Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Family Assistance Law](#)
- [Family Law Act 1975](#)

SOURCES

Acknowledgement to Community Early Learning Australia and Childcare Centre Desktop.
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2014).
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2023). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2021). [Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service. Policy Guidelines](#).
 Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.V2.0](#), 2022.
 Australian Government Department of Education Child Care Provider Handbook
<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook>.
 Australian Government Department of Education Early Childhood and Care <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood>.
 Australian Government Department of Education Information for child care providers when a period of local emergency occurs.
 Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
 Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017). (Amended 2023).
 Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2023).
 Revised National Quality Standard. (Amended 2023).

RELATED POLICIES

- Arrival and Departure Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Governance and Management of the Service Policy
- Privacy, Confidentiality and Children's Records Policy

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Direct Debit Agreement
 Enrolment Form
 Late Collection Form

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| POLICY AUTHORISED BY | Prue Ritchie | POLICY REVIEWED | 10/05/24 |
| NEXT REVIEW DATE | 10/05/25 | | |
| MODIFICATIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policy format • Update of related legislation (if applicable) • Child Safe Standards added and updated with links • Preschool fee information removed • Extra information added including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bond payment ○ Termination of enrolment ○ Staff discount ○ CCS complaint | | |
| PREVIOUS REVIEW | | | |



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| POLICY AUTHORISED BY | Prue Ritchie | DATE | January 2021 |
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