PAYMENT OF FEES POLICY

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, an approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are 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 policies and procedures are followed. (ACECQA, 2021).

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.

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	
111	Administrative space
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017	Family Law Act 1975
Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017	A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
Family Assistance Law – Incorporating all related legislation as identified within the Child Care Provider Handbook in https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook	

RELATED POLICIES

CCS Accounts Policy Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Governance Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy Delivery of Children to, and Collection from and Education and Care Service Premises Enrolment Policy	Fraud Prevention Policy Governance Policy Orientation of Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Record Keeping and Retention Policy Termination of Enrolment 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers 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 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. 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 $·50· is charged upon confirmation of enrolment. This fee must be paid prior to commencement at the Service
- A bond is $150 to be paid to hold a child's position at the Service

- 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.

GENERAL FEES

• CCS is paid directly to the Service, and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's statement)

• Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care

• Families are required to make a co-contribution to their childcare fees. This is the difference between the fee charged and the childcare subsidy amount- the 'gap fee'

• 'Gap fees' must be paid via only **OWNA DIRECT DEBIT. No other payment method is not acceptable. • Invoices will be generated via OWNA for each payment [Third-Party Software Provider]**

• Fees are to be paid per week through a direct debit.

• Fees may be payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the Service. This includes pupil free days, sick days, and family holidays but excludes periods when the Service is closed. The Service may be directed to close due to periods of local emergency such as bushfire or flood or a pandemic

• If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees. CCS may be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays

• Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours any day) • Families are requested to contact the Service if their child is unable to attend a particular session • Casual 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 documentation to support the CCS payment
- Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy
- Parents must:
- care for their child at least 2 nights per fortnight or have 14% share of care o be liable for childcare fees at an approved early childhood education care service to meet residency requirements
- The child must:
- be 13 or under
- not attending secondary school (unless an exemption applies) o meet immunisation requirements
- Childcare must be provided by an approved provider
- Families level of Child Care Subsidy will be determined by:
- family income estimate o activity level

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children o number of children in care
- 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 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**.
- Child care discounts for early childhood workforce will only be offered as outlined in the CCS Handbook.

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 dishonor 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 legislation.

Non-CCS Families

Families who are not eligible for, or not claiming, the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) are required to pay the full daily fee for their child's enrolment. The current full daily fee for non-CCS children is $85 per day. This fee is subject to review and may be adjusted in line with service operating costs and annual fee reviews.

Payment must be maintained as per the service's payment schedule. Failure to keep fees up to date may result in the suspension or cancellation of the child's enrolment, in accordance with the centre's Payment of Fees Policy.

The service encourages families to discuss any financial concerns or eligibility queries regarding CCS with the Centre Director or Administration Team to ensure transparency and support in managing payments.

ABSENCES FROM THE 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**

[Fee charging practices are commercial decisions made by each childcare service and are not a matter regulated by the Family Assistance Law. Source: Australian Government Department of Education]

- **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.**
- 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.
- In a period of emergency (declared by the Australian Government), such as bushfire or flood, extra allowable absences for the duration of the emergency will be automatically applied in the CCS system

ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

- Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) provides extra help with the cost of early education and care
- There are four different payments under 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
- Grandparents—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
- Temporary financial hardship—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
- Transition to work—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorization of the approved provider.

DEBT RECOVERY PROCEDURE

- **If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder letter may be issued after one week and then again, after two weeks if the fees are still outstanding , another reminder letter may be issued.**

• 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 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 will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

LATE FEES

- **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 $15.00 per 10 minutes block or part thereof will be incurred by the family**
- **A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late with fee payment.**

CHANGE OF FEES

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of four weeks written notice is given to all families (Regulation 172 requires a minimum of 14 days' notice)
- 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/guardians are to provide two weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the Service
- 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
- 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.

RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT

The approved provider and nominated supervisor are responsible for:

- ensuring that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Regulations are met

- ensuring the service and all Persons with Management and Control (PMC) comply with the rules under Family Assistance Law (FAL)
- ensuring Persons with Management and Control (PMC) are considered 'fit and proper' persons
- taking reasonable steps to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers follow the *Payment of Fees Policy* and procedure
- ensuring all families are aware of our *Payment of Fees Policy*
- ensuring enrolments are submitted correctly with the appropriate enrolment information
- providing families with regular statement of fees payable
- Providing families with receipts/invoices of fees paid via third-party software provider
- Notifying families of any overdue fees
- Providing families with reminder letters/Email/Text messages as required
- terminating enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- discussing fee payment with families if required
- providing at least 4 weeks written notice to families of any fee increases or changes to the way fees are collected

[Please note: Reg. 172 states a minimum of at least 14 days' notice regarding changes to policies must be provided to families]

RESPONSIBILITY OF FAMILIES

- 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
- ensure payment of fees as per policy
- notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement
- confirm their child's enrollment through the parents MyGov account.

THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS

Parents are generally liable to pay the co-contribution for childcare fees. However, third-party payments are allowed which need to be communicated by the parents. In the event of cancellation of third-party payments are liable to pay back the remaining gap fees. Our Service will record all documentation regarding any third-party payments.

STAFF DISCOUNTS

Our Service offers educators and cooks a staff discount for children that attend our Service, after CCS has been applied. The staff discount applies to employees who are employed, contracted or engaged to work with our services as an educator, early childhood teacher or cook.

Centre directors are eligible to receive the staff discount if they hold an early childhood education and care qualification and are working at a Service. The staff discount is calculated at 50% of full-service 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

Email: tipoffline@education.gov.au

Resources and information for families

Child Care Subsidy

Centrelink Customer Reference Number

Absences from childcare- Australian Government

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Payment of Fees Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually in consultation with families, staff, educators and management.

CHILDCARE CENTRE DESKTOP- RELATED RESOURCES

Fee Increase Letter – General Overdue Fee Payment Letter	Overdue Fee Payment Procedure Payment Plan Template Staff Discount Application

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). *Guide to the National Quality Framework.*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Payment of Service Fees and Provision of a Statement of Fees Charged by the Service.*
Australian Government Department of Education Child care discount for early childhood workforce https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-package/early-childhood-workforce/child-care-discountearly-childhood-workforce
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/earlychildhood
Australian Government Department of Education (2024). *Help in an emergency*
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).
Education and Care Services National Regulations. (Amended 2023).
Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED		**NEXT REVIEW DATE**	
POLICY REVIEWED		**NEXT REVIEW DATE**	
POLICY REVIEWED		**NEXT REVIEW DATE**	
POLICY REVIEWED	May 2026	**NEXT REVIEW DATE**	May 2027
POLICY REVIEWED	December 2025	**NEXT REVIEW DATE**	May 2026
POLICY REVIEWED	September 2025	**NEXT REVIEW DATE**	December 2025

POLICY REVIEWED	September 2024	NEXT REVIEW DATE	September 2025
VERSION NUMBER	V18.05.24		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy maintenance • updated CCS eligibility (effective July 2023) • added content to responsibility of approved provider/management • sources checked for currency and hyperlinks updated		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
MAY 2023	• policy maintenance • minor formatting edits within text • information added regarding staff discounts • Change in payment of Gap Fees by EFT (effective 1 July 2023) • Staff discount section added		MAY 2024

SEPTEMBER 2022	• Update of Department name from Department of Education, Skills, and Employment to Department of Education • minor formatting edits within text • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required • links within sources updated to education.gov.au • link to Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations added in 'Sources' • Continuous Improvement/Reflection	MAY 2023
	section added • Childcare Centre Desktop Resource section added	
MAY 2022	policy maintenance – related policy name change- Arrival and Departure Policy to Delivery of Children to and from EEC Service Policy • no major changes to policy • minor formatting edits within text • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required	MAY 2023
AUGUST 2021	• Update of Related Legislation • Policy revised to align with recommendations with ACECQA's policy guide (August 2021) • Updated Related Policies • Check of links used within policy	MAY 2022
MAY 2021	• Policy reviewed following updates in October 2020 as part of yearly review cycle • Policy content and sources current • Resource-*Overdue Fees Procedure* information added	MAY 2022
OCTOBER 2020	• Minor adjustments recorded • Additional information added- ACCS, absences, responsibility of families, CCS tip-off line and complaints.	MAY 2021
MARCH 2020	Policy statement added Implementation information added CCS section included Absences section added Responsibility for Management expanded Resources and information section added	MAY 2021
MAY 2019	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	Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard	MARCH 2018
MARCH 2017	Minor changes made to ensure compliance with regulations and government requirements.	MARCH 2018