



Fees Policy - Child Care Services

STATEMENT

The Organisation is committed to:

- Providing responsible financial management, including establishing a fee structure that will result in a financially viable Service, while maintaining fees at an affordable level.
- Advising and assisting families to access the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).
- Ensuring financial barriers are minimised for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of families/caregivers.
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts.

OBJECTIVES

This Policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidelines for the setting, payment, and collection of fees.
- Ensure the viability of the Service by establishing and maintaining an appropriate and equitable fee structure.

IMPLEMENTATION

Fees and Charges

NOTE: The Federal Government passed legislation in November 2022, making it a requirement from 1 July 2023, that families using childcare must pay the gap fee using electronic payments.

The Management Committee set fees and charges according to viability and affordability and take into consideration the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) hourly fee cap. Families may also be eligible for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS). To receive ACCS, you must be eligible for Child Care Subsidy, and you need to be one of the following:

- an eligible grandparent getting an income support payment
- transitioning from certain income support payments to work
- experiencing temporary financial hardship
- caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse, or neglect

Fees are reviewed annually and subject to change. Families will be given two weeks' notice of changes to fees (as per R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations) and are notified of any changes to fees and charges through direct correspondence, this includes being notified when this Fees Policy is undergoing review.

PLEASE NOTE: fees outlined are the amounts charged before CCS is applied. CCS is only applied to the actual daily fee and is not available to reduce other charges, eg. membership fee, enrolment fee.

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. 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.

Daily Session Fees

Fees are payable for all sessions, including Public Holidays and any absences due to sickness or holidays. Fees are based on an hourly rate. Daily session fees are reflective of the hours of opening of each venue, and at Oberon, the room that the child is in.

Information in relation to fees and charges is provided to families prior to enrolment. This information is contained in the Information Handbook and can also be accessed on the website

<https://gallopinggumnut.com.au/fees-charges/>

Additional Fees and Charges

Families are required to complete an Online Enrolment Form via our Hubworks system. On acceptance of a place families are invoiced for the fees, outlined below. These fees must be paid prior to their child/ren commencing with the Service.

1. **Enrolment fee (upfront fee) \$50**

PLEASE NOTE: This amount includes the purchase price of a Galloping Gumnut hat.

A re-enrolment fee of \$20 per child is charged annually at the beginning of each calendar year.

Membership of Association Fee (upfront fee). As an Incorporated Association this is a legal requirement.

\$3.00 New Members. A renewal fee of \$2.00 is then charged annually at the beginning of each calendar year. Membership fees are GST inclusive.

2. **Bond (upfront fee)**

O'Connell and Perthville venues - \$50 per child – refundable upon leaving the Service when the required 2 weeks' notice has been given and all fees are up to date.

Oberon venue - \$200 per child - refundable upon leaving the Service when the required 2 weeks' notice has been given and all fees are up to date.

Additional/Casual Days

If a parent/carer is wanting an additional casual day or days for their child/ren, and are offered a place, 48 hours' notice of cancellation **MUST BE** provided if the day is no longer required, otherwise the full fee will be applied to the account.

Discounts

Staff (permanent, contracted and casuals who work a regular weekly or fortnightly shift) and Management Committee members are provided with the following discounts.

Bonds are waived for permanent or contracted staff only.

Permanent and Contracted Staff whose children are enrolled for Child Care Sessions will receive 50% off the gap fee, ie. the daily fee after any CCS has been applied. This appears on the account as 'Discount Staff and Committee'.

Casual Staff who work a regular weekly or fortnightly shift whose children are enrolled for Child Care Sessions will receive 25% off the gap fee, ie. the daily fee after any CCS has been applied. This appears on the account as 'Discount Staff and Committee'.

Management Committee Members whose children are enrolled for Child Care Sessions will receive 25% off the gap fee, ie. the daily fee after any CCS has been applied. This appears on the account as 'Discount Staff and Committee'.

PLEASE NOTE: If fees are outstanding at the end of the period in which discounts are applied, the discount will be forfeited.

Invoices, Receipts and Statements

- All invoicing, receipting and provision of statements is done through the Organisation's third-party software program 'Hubworks'.
- Invoices clearly state the 'Gap Fee' (the amount owing after any CCS that has been applied) that is payable by the family for the child/ren's weekly care (Appendix 1).
- Invoices are sent out weekly. The invoice is for the week the child/ren are attending. If any adjustments in fees are required, these will be made and appear in the following week's Invoice.
- Invoices, receipts, and statements are sent to the email address provided on the online enrolment form, listed under Parent 1.
- Invoices should be checked by parents/carers and any concerns or errors notified to the Directors or office administrator, either by email or phone (see contact details below).
- Fee payment is to be made by EFT into the Organisation's bank account (details are on the Invoice) referencing your child's name and stating that it is for Care. Families are encouraged to set up a Direct Debit weekly, fortnightly, or monthly.
- Fees should always be kept up to date. It is acknowledged that there are occasions in which the allocation of a family's CCS percentage has been delayed. In the event of this occurring families are requested to pay a portion of the fees owing for the week of care. PLEASE NOTE: This is to be negotiated with the Directors.

Outstanding Fees

1. **Fees are to be no more than 2 weeks outstanding from the date of Invoice.** Families should pay regular instalments towards their fees.
2. A report will be generated fortnightly. If a family has made no payments during this period, the family will be contacted via telephone or directly at the Service by the Responsible Person.
3. If at the end of each fortnight an account is in arrears, a request for payment will be made in writing via email, text, or letter.
4. If an account continues to be in arrears, and no payments are being made, one of the Directors will contact the family.

Financial Difficulties

If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a payment plan will be negotiated for enrolment to continue.

Payment Plans

Payment Plans can be established under the authority of the Directors. If a family's account has become overdue one of the Directors will establish with the family an appropriate payment plan to repay the outstanding fees

- A regular payment amount will be required. Payments should be made weekly or fortnightly until the account is finalised.
- Failure to comply with the payment plan will result in the account being submitted to the Management Committee for instruction.

Once a family's account has been submitted to the Management Committee for review, the family will be given two weeks' notice to complete payment of all outstanding fees. If the family cannot comply with this request, the child's place may be cancelled. Depending on the circumstances the Management Committee may also decide to pursue debt recovery. Once a child's place has been cancelled it will be given to the

next eligible child on the waiting list. The family will not be allowed to enrol any other children until all the outstanding accounts are paid in full. A child whose place has been cancelled may re-join the waiting list once payment of all outstanding fees has been received. However, this does not guarantee the child another place.

Bad Debts

The Organisation allows an amount in the budget as a 'bad debt expense'. The Organisation recognises that there will be occasions when, despite all efforts, an account will remain in arrears. This may occur when a family leaves the Service and has an outstanding account. In this instance the Bond will be used to offset any amount owing and the balance will be presented at a Management Committee Meeting for a decision. Bad debts will be either pursued or written off as a bad debt. If pursued, the cost of debt recover would be passed on to the family.

Outside Hours Fees

Staff members have an allocated amount of time each day for travel and preparation of the classroom. Children being dropped off early and/or picked up late has an impact on staff time frames and will cause overtime costs.

If a child is at the Service outside of operating hours, and staff have not been advised of extenuating circumstances, the following fees may be applied to your Invoice:

\$20.00 for the first 15 minutes and \$20.00 for each additional 15 minutes or part thereof.

Continued Early Arrival and/or Late Pick Up

If early arrival and/or late pick-up occur on more than two occasions, the outside hours fees (outlined above) will be charged. Outside hours fees will be added to your child/ren's account. If alternative arrangements are required regarding hours of attendance, please contact one of the Directors.

Cancellations/reduction in days of attendance

Two weeks' notice is required, or the equivalent payment of fees. **PLEASE NOTE:** For cancellations the bond will be applied to any outstanding fees.

Absences

All absences, including when children are unwell or on holidays must be paid for. Parents/Carers are responsible for informing the Directors or Responsible Person at the venue of their child's absence and the reason for that absence. Each child can get up to 42 allowable absence days per child each financial year. If you reach your allowable absence limit, you may get additional absences. Families are encouraged to speak to one of the Directors if their child's allowable absences have been exhausted. You may need to provide them with supporting documents.

Absences can only be used for days your child would normally attend care and get CCS. This includes public holidays. An absence can be used for any reason, including if the child is on a holiday. You don't need to provide evidence for any absences used under the 42-day allowable absence limit. In some circumstances, you may get more allowable absences for a special purpose such as a declared emergency.

NOTE: If a child is absent on the first or last day of their enrolment with the Service, no CCS is applied, and the parent/carer will be liable for the full fee.

Service Closures

Fees are not charged during the Organisation's Annual Close Down period during December/January – families are advised of these dates.

If a Session needs to be cancelled for a full day or days, due to unforeseen circumstances, families will be notified, and **no fees** will be charged.

If a Session needs to finish early, due to unforeseen circumstances, families will be called to come and collect their child/ren. In this circumstance the full daily fee will still be charged.

Confidentiality

All information in relation to fees will be kept in strict confidence. Members of staff and management will not discuss individual names and details openly. Information will only be available to the nominated persons required to act, for example to set up a payment plan or to initiate a debt recovery.

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD and REGULATIONS

QA 6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
6.1	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
QA 7	Governance and Leadership
7.1	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and the effective operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

National Education and Care Regulations

168	<i>Education and care service must have policies and procedures</i>
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures <i>(2) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that parents of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.</i>

RELATED POLICIES and DOCUMENTS

- Arrival and Departure Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Governance Policy
- Natural Disasters/Severe Weather/Road Closures Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Care Agreement and Permission Form
- Child Care Information Handbook
- Fees Procedures
- New Membership of Association Fee Form
- Renewal of Membership of Association Form

REFERENCES and SOURCES

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>

Australian Government Department of Education and Training

<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/child-care-subsidy>

Australian Government Services Australia

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/additional-child-care-subsidy>

Australian Government Services Australia

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy/how-manage-your-payment/if-your-child-absent-from-child-care>

Child Care Centre Desktop

<https://www.childcarecentredesktop.com.au/>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Sample Invoice

MONITORING 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 12 months. 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.

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Policy prepared by: Lisa Masters/Jessica Gearon /Carol Drummond	
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to the method of fee payment.• Changes to additional fees and discounts.• Additional section and information on Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and family responsibility.• Minor change to section on Bad debts.• Expanded 'Monitoring and Review' section to include reference to Regulations.
Policy adopted by Management Committee	
Name:	Position:
Signature:	
Name:	Position:
Signature:	
Date:	
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