



# Wheelers Hill Child Care Centre

303-307 Jells Road, Wheelers Hill VIC 3150 – (03) 9561 7789

wheelershillccc@bigpond.com  
www.wheelershillchildcare.com.au



## Payment of Fees

### POLICY

#### POLICY STATEMENT

Our organisation is committed to providing all families with the opportunity to enrol their children at our services, with a clear, transparent, fair and inclusive fee structure. Our organisation ensures that we are compliant with Family Assistance Law.

#### BACKGROUND

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service.

#### LEGISLATION

- National Regulations – 111, 168, 170, 171, 172
- National Quality Standard – 6.1, 7.1

#### RELEVANT POLICIES

- Dealing with Complaints
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Governance and Management
- Staffing Arrangements

#### LOCATION OF INFORMATION

- Centre Policy and Procedure Handbook
- Wheelers Hill Child Care Centre Website

#### MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is required to be reviewed at least annually by the approved provider, in conjunction with nominated supervisors, responsible persons, staff, families and children.

- Dates of Review: January 2024  
January 2023  
January 2022



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## Payment of Fees

### PROCEDURES

#### FEE STRUCTURE

- The fee structure is as follows:  
Full Day's Care – \$161.00                      Full Week's Care – \$775.00

#### COMMENCING CHILD CARE

- Upon enrolling at the service, one week's full fees are payable as a deposit to secure a child's position. This deposit pays for the child's first full week of care.
- Until Child Care Subsidy (CCS) has been approved, full fees will be charged. Families are required to supply the service with the customer reference numbers (CRN) for both the account holder and the child starting care.
- Once Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is applied, the family will go into credit which will carry over into the next week of care. As soon as the service has received this payment, the booking will be confirmed.
- The deposit payment may be made by cash, eftpos or credit card. This is the only payment where the service will accept alternate methods.
- Payment of fees are to be made at the full fee rate, until the service receives official notification from *Services Australia* about a family's Child Care Subsidy (CCS) rate. This will occur once they have confirmed the enrolment online.

#### PAYMENT OF FEES

- Family fees payable to the service are calculated according to each family's eligibility for CCS.
- Once a family is booked into the service, fees are to be paid through *DebitSuccess*, which is a direct debit system, from either a bank account or from a credit card. Please note that this policy is not negotiable, and all payments are to be made this way.
- DebitSuccess* charges a one-off administration fee with the first payment, and a transaction fee occurs along with each debit. Any defaulted payments will attract a dishonour fee each time. All of these charges are the responsibility of the account holder.
- Fees are due and payable at least one week in advance or at the very latest, the last day of any part-time care used during that week.
- Fees are paid via a direct debit system through a credit card, savings or cheque account. Please note that cash payments **WILL NOT** be accepted.
- Families wishing to pay fortnightly or four-weekly are required to discuss this with management, as this will need to be in advance.
- As of July 1st, 2023, gap fee payments must be paid electronically.



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## LATE PAYMENTS

- The service will contact families if fee payments are not made within the required timeframe.
- A reminder notice will be issued by the service if fees are not paid within one week.
- If fees are in arrears for more than two weeks, the child's position will be cancelled and the vacancy filled.
- If fee payments are continually made late or in arrears, the child's position at the service may be jeopardised.

## LATE PICK-UP PAYMENT

- Families must notify the service if late collection may occur. There is a late fee after 6.30pm of \$2.00 every minute, per child, which is equally divided between staff doing overtime.
- The late fee also occurs for any minute after 4:00pm on our early closure dates over the Christmas and New Year period.
- The organisation realises that sometimes running late is unavoidable, so out of courtesy, the service expects a notification via phone call.
- The late pick-up fee is based on the service's need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages.

## FEE SCHEDULE

- A current fee schedule is given to new families upon enrolment. It is also on display in the foyer.
- Fees set by the organisation are as affordable as possible. The service will ensure 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, and the guidelines contained within the Child Care Provider Handbook.

## FEE INCREASES

- Fees are subject to increase annually, or as required, in line with inflation, increased staff wages and/or service running costs.
- A minimum of 14 days written notice will be given to families when changes or increases occur to the fee schedule.
- The fee schedule is determined in response to inflation and business-related expenses to maintain and improve the quality of the service.
- The approved provider reserves the right to review the fee schedule at any time in response to wage increases, inflation and other budgetary requirements.

## ACCOUNT STATEMENTS

- Families are provided with accurate fee statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes.
- Account fee statements outline the full fee charged, the amount of CCS applied, and the gap fee. The "gap fee" is the amount owed by families to the service once CCS has been applied.



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- It is the responsibility of parents, guardians and authorised nominees to sign their children in and out of care on the QikKids Kiosk each time they deliver or collect their child.
- It is each family's responsibility to check their account statement each week to ensure that their child's bookings and absences are correct, and to notify the service of any discrepancies.

## CASUAL DAYS

- The service is able to provide once-off casual days to families if:
  - A space is available in that particular room on the day.
  - Adequate staff are available to ensure the required ratio is maintained.
  - The family requiring the extra day does not have an account in arrears.
  - The casual day was pre-organised with management in writing
- If a casual day is cancelled, it will still be charged, unless we receive at least 24 hours written notice of the cancellation.

## HOLIDAY REDUCTIONS

- The service offers up to 2 weeks of holiday fees of each child's current booking per financial year. The amount is determined by how regularly the child attends, *e.g., a child that attends for 2 days per week receives 4 days at the holiday rate per financial year.*
- Holidays will be charged at 50% of the usual fee. This is applicable if the family has notified management in writing at least two full weeks before they require the leave for holidays.
- Absences due to public or personal holidays, illness or other miscellaneous reasons are still payable and, as a general rule, the service is not able to swap days in lieu.
- To receive the holiday rate, children must be absent from the service. It cannot be granted if children are still in attendance.
- Holiday leave is at the discretion of management and may not be granted in certain circumstances, *e.g., account in arrears; late or insufficient notice.*
- Holiday leave entitlements are reset at the start of a new financial year and any unused entitlements will not roll over into the next financial year.
- Families will become eligible to receive holiday leave entitlements after 6 months of continuous attendance at the service. Any leave applications submitted during the first 6 months of enrolment will not be granted and will be marked as an absence only.
- Holiday leave entitlements are based on a child's current attendance. If a family permanently reduces their days, their allowance will go down, and any unused days will be invalid. If a family increases their days, their allowance will go up accordingly.

## PUBLIC AND PERSONAL HOLIDAYS, SICK DAYS AND ABSENCES

- Families with permanent bookings pay their usual daily fee for all public and personal holidays, sick days and any other miscellaneous absences that fall on their child's booked days. Fees are due and payable in advance as per this policy, prior to taking any holidays.
- If a family does not use a purchased day of care, *e.g., the day is no longer needed or the child is absent due to being unwell*, the family will still be charged the full usual cost of the day.
- The service may be able to cater for occasional bookings in addition to regular booked days. The service needs at least 24 hours' notice, in writing, if a family requires an extra booking. If an extra



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booking is cancelled, it will still be charged, unless the service receives at least 24 hours written notice of the cancellation.

- Our organisation does not allow day swaps. If a family requires an extra day, they must pay for their current booked days as well as the extra day. The service cannot supply day swaps if the child's booked day falls on a public holiday or if the child had an absence due to illness or a personal holiday.

## EARLY CLOSURES

- Each year, the service closes at 4:00pm on two days over the Christmas/New Year period rather than the normal 6:30pm closing time. Generally, these closures are on Christmas Eve (December 24<sup>th</sup>) and New Year's Eve (December 31<sup>st</sup>), or the Friday beforehand. Families will still be charged their normal daily fee on these days.

## REDUCTION OF BOOKED DAYS

- When a family no longer requires a certain booked day or days for their child, but they still require a permanent booking for other days, a minimum of two full weeks written notice via email is required to enable the service sufficient time to fill the vacancy.
- The notice period starts from when the service receives the day reduction application.

## CANCELLATION OF ENROLMENT / WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE

- When a family no longer requires a place for their child, a minimum of two full weeks written notice via email is required to enable the service sufficient time to fill the vacancy.
- All outstanding accounts must be paid in full at this time.
- The notice period starts from when the service receives the withdrawal application.
- Full fees are charged for the cancellation period when a child does not attend the service after the date that the cancellation email is received at the office.
- Families need to be aware that failure to attend on the last day of the notice period will result in no CCS forthcoming from *Services Australia* and full fees will be charged from the child's last day of attendance. Therefore, full fees will be payable during this period.
- Families leaving the service with unpaid fees will incur the cost of a debt collection process.

## CESSATION OF CARE

- *Services Australia* automatically adjusts cessation of care every 14 weeks. This means that after non-attendance for 14 consecutive weeks, all paid Child Care Subsidy will be removed back to the last date of actual attendance and full fees will be charged for that entire 14-week period.
- Accounts will be adjusted when there is a cessation of care change from the Child Care Subsidy System, and families will in turn have a debt to repay to the service.

## DEBT COLLECTION

- A debt collection agency will be engaged to recover any outstanding debt owed to the service.
- If outstanding debt is sent to the organisation's nominated debt collection agency, they will add additional fees on top of the figure making it much higher.



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- Costs incurred associated with debt recovery will be the responsibility of the family, including debt collection agent costs, repossession costs, location search costs, process server costs and solicitor costs.
- Once the debt has been sent to the debt collection agency, the account is out of the organisation's hands and all correspondence regarding the account will be between the debt collection agency and the account holder.
- The account holder is deemed to be the person who has stated they are "*liable and responsible for the cost of childcare & payment of fees*" in the declaration on the child's enrolment form.
- No further enrolments of children from the family will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

## FEE REFUNDS

- When a child's enrolment ends, families will receive a final statement.
- Once all child care subsidy allocations have been confirmed, generally after two full weeks, the service will assess whether a fee refund is required.
- If a refund is owed, the service will apply for the refund to be processed on the family's behalf.
- If the service does not hold current bank account details for the family, the service will request that the family provide accurate details.
- There will be no refund of fees in circumstances including, but not limited to:
  - a child's short-term illness.
  - public holidays.
  - family holiday during operational times.
  - closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.
  - where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

## COMPLAINTS

- If a family has a disputation regarding their account, the organisation would expect that the family discuss the matter with management prior to any escalation to a third party.
- The organisation will confidentially record all correspondence, conversations, and messages with the account holder, for the purpose of maintaining a written record of interactions, actions, account changes and credit history.

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR FAMILIES

- The organisation provides an inviting, safe, open and welcoming environment for all that attend our services; therefore, all families are required to abide by the *Code of Conduct for Families*.
- The *Code of Conduct for Families* can be found in the Enrolment and Orientation policy.
- A breach of the *Code of Conduct for Families* may result in a child's enrolment being terminated.
- Families must ensure their emergency contacts are aware of this code of conduct.
- Cancellation of child care due to a breach of the *Code of Conduct for Families* is at the discretion of management and may occur without notice. Management reserves the right to terminate a child's enrolment for any reason.



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## CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (CCS)

- The service is participating in the *Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy Scheme* for which all families are eligible.
- Our organisation complies with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved Education and Care Service for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy, reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS.
- Child Care Subsidy is paid fortnightly and reduces fees automatically.
- The current Child Care Subsidy system operates under the normal *Services Australia* guidelines. This means that CCS percentages are determined by gross combined or single level incomes, hours of work/study/etc., and other individual circumstances.
- To get Child Care Subsidy, the account holder must:
  - care for a child aged 13 or younger, who's not attending secondary school, unless an exemption applies.
  - use an approved child care service.
  - be responsible for paying the child care fees.
  - meet residency and immunisation requirements.
- The information is sent through to the Family Assistance Office electronically each week, therefore, it is important that the service has the necessary Customer Reference Numbers (CRN's) of the child/ren and the parent/guardian whom is registered with *Services Australia*.
- Families need to complete an online Child Care Subsidy assessment using their *Services Australia* online account through *MyGov*. This is the only way families can authorise enrolments and, therefore, allow the Child Care Subsidy to be paid to the service, reducing the fee amount payable. All families need to ensure they have an active *MyGov* account.
- It is the enrolling family's responsibility to apply for CCS, maintain their eligibility and accept the enrolment offer sent by our service in their *MyGov* account.
- Until a family has organised their Child Care Subsidy, they will be required to pay full fees to the service. If the family organises their CCS and it comes through with a zero percentage or zero hours, the family will continue to pay full fees to the service.
- Child Care Subsidy cannot be paid, including Additional Child Care Subsidy, before a child has physically attended care, or after the last session the child was physically in care, unless the child has previously used all of their 42 absence days and there is evidence for an additional absence.
- To work out how much Child Care Subsidy a family is eligible for, *Services Australia* will look at all of the following:
  - the family's income.
  - the hourly rate cap based on the type of approved child care used and the child's age.
  - the hours of activity the account holder and their partner do.
  - the number of children in the account holder's care.
- The amount of subsidised child care a family can access per fortnight applies to each child.
- Families will be charged full fees if:
  - They are not eligible for Child Care Subsidy.
  - They do not provide the service with the necessary information required to claim for a subsidy within allowed timeframes.



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- A subsidy they were originally entitled to is later withdrawn, even if this takes place after the child's enrolment with the service has ended.

## IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

- To be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy, a child must also meet immunisation requirements. Children must be immunised according to the standard vaccination schedule, be on an eligible catch-up vaccination schedule or have an approved exemption from being immunised.
- There is a short immunisation grace period which provides some flexibility for families to meet the vaccination requirements where they may have missed or forgotten a scheduled vaccination.

## COMPLYING WRITTEN ARRANGEMENTS

- All families are required to sign a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) upon commencement at the service. As part of enrolment, the service requires families to confirm acceptance of their sessions and fees in order to be able to receive Child Care Subsidy on their behalf.
- Families are required to make any changes to their bookings, in writing, with at least two (2) full weeks' notice. Changes are also required to be approved in *MyGov* within seven (7) days of the change being approved.
- Families have 28 days to confirm a CWA, before Child Care Subsidy is ceased. Full fees are charged until the CWA is approved during this period of time, and families will be required to pay the debt now owing.
- Families need to confirm:
  - That the details in the enrolment form, as well as the details of the child being enrolled, are correct.
  - That they have agreed to days of care within the service and understand the start and end times of these sessions of care.
  - That care may be provided on a casual or flexible basis, where available, upon request.
  - That the family is liable to pay fees for the care of the child, and if applicable, in other information the service has provided which are subject to change over time based on advice from the provider and acceptance by the family.
- As of 10th December, 2021, there will no longer be an annual cap for families who get Child Care Subsidy.
- If income details or family circumstances change, parents/guardians must inform the service and *Services Australia* immediately.
- Contact the *Family Assistance Office* at *Services Australia* for more information on 136 150.

## WITHHOLDING OF PAYMENTS

- The amount that a provider will be paid and that the individual will receive in the form of fee reductions, will be 5 per cent less than the individual's Child Care Subsidy entitlement.
- Withholding some of a family's entitlement to Child Care Subsidy is a way to reduce the likelihood of families incurring a debt at the end of a financial year.
- At the end of the financial year, after the individual and partner have lodged their tax return, the amounts paid to and withheld from the individual will be reconciled. A review of the individual's entitlement will be conducted based on the individual's actual adjusted taxable income.





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- Where, because of the review, it becomes clear that there was overpayment, the overpayment is recoverable as a debt by deducting from the amounts withheld.
- Where, because of the review, it becomes clear that there was an underpayment, the individual will be paid the amounts withheld and any additional amount as a lump sum.

## CHILD CARE SUBSIDY BALANCING

- Families must confirm their income each financial year to ensure they are paid the correct amount of Child Care Subsidy. This process is called balancing or reconciliation.
- Families confirm their income by either:
  - lodging a tax return.
  - submitting an advice to *Services Australia* and the *Australian Taxation Office (ATO)* that they are not required to lodge a tax return.
- After the end of each financial year, when the account holder and their partner settle their tax affairs, the total entitlements and payments for each child will be reconciled against the individual's and partner's actual adjusted taxable income for the year.
- After this review, any outstanding subsidy amount will be paid to the individual or they will be advised of any debt that they have incurred.
- If a family has a Child Care Subsidy overpayment following the balancing process, *Services Australia* may use some of a family's CCS each fortnight to pay this back.
- Where a family is unsure about the details of a debt raised by *Services Australia*, they will need to log into their *Services Australia* online account for further details or raise their questions with *Services Australia*.
- To reduce the risk of debt throughout the year and at balancing, families should keep their income and activity estimates updated with *Services Australia*.

## ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (ACCS)

- Some families can get Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS). *Services Australia* pays it on top of Child Care Subsidy to provide extra support with child care fees.
- There are 4 different types of Additional Child Care Subsidy that families can apply for. Families can apply if they are either:
  - 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.
- The following applies to all types of Additional Child Care Subsidy. They:
  - don't have an annual cap.
  - aren't subject to a withholding amount.
  - aren't balanced at the end of the financial year.

## ACCS – GRANDPARENT SUBSIDY

- Guardians entitled to the Grandparent Subsidy amount are able to access 100 hours of subsidised care each fortnight for their grandchild.
- *Services Australia* will pay the lower of either:
  - 100% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap.



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- up to 120% of the hourly rate cap, where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.
- There's no time limit on how long families can get this additional subsidy as long as they remain eligible.

## ACCS – TRANSITION TO WORK SUBSIDY

- The length of time a family can get this depends on whether they are studying, looking for a job, working or training.
- *Services Australia* will pay the lower of either:
  - 95% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap.
  - up to 95% of the hourly rate cap, where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.
- The length of time a family can get this subsidy while studying depends on:
  - the level of study
  - whether they are full time or part time.
- The parent or guardian needs to be studying either at least:
  - 25% of a full-time study load to be part-time.
  - 75% of a full-time study load to be full-time.
- Families can get a maximum of 26 weeks of this additional subsidy for a job search or work-related activity. They don't have to use this all at once. They can use a number of shorter time periods until they've used the full 26 weeks.

## ACCS – TEMPORARY FINANCIAL HARDSHIP SUBSIDY

- Families are able to access 100 hours of subsidised care each fortnight if experiencing temporary financial hardship.
- *Services Australia* will pay the lower of either:
  - 100% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap.
  - up to 120% of the hourly rate cap, where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.
- *Services Australia* will only pay this additional subsidy for a maximum of 13 weeks per event.
- Families can apply for a higher percentage in exceptional circumstances.

## ACCS – CHILD WELLBEING SUBSIDY

- Families are able to access 100 hours of subsidised care each fortnight if the child they are caring for is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.
- *Services Australia* will pay the lower of either:
  - 100% of the fee charged where it's equal to or below the hourly rate cap.
  - up to 120% of the hourly rate cap, where the fee charged is above the hourly rate cap.
- If eligible, families can receive this subsidy for up to 6 weeks.
- After the initial 6 weeks, the service may think the family needs to keep getting this additional subsidy. If this is the case, the service can apply for longer periods of up to 13 weeks.
- The service can apply for up to 52 weeks if any of the following apply to the child:
  - they are on a long-term protection order.
  - they are in formal foster care.
  - they are in a formal kinship care arrangement.



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## SESSIONS OF CARE

- The organisation offers 11.5-hour and 10-hour sessions to families each day.
- The 11.5-hour session is a full day session and runs from 7:00am to 6:30pm.
- There are two 10-hour sessions to choose from – an AM session from 7:00am to 5:00pm or a PM session from 8:00am to 6:00pm.
- Families can opt into any session of their choosing, as long as they stay within their booked timeframe.
- There is a 15-minute buffer period either side of the 10-hour sessions that will not attract any additional fees. However, going over the allocated buffer time will push the family into the 11.5-hour session, which in turn, will change the cost of fees significantly for that particular fortnight.
- The percentage and number of subsidised hours allocated is different for each family and subsidised hours may not cover the full fortnight's child care usage.

## ADDITIONAL ABSENCES

- Families will receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for 42 absence days per child each financial year. These can be for any reason, *e.g., illness, personal or public holidays*, and any range of miscellaneous reasons, without having to bring in documentation such as a medical certificate. However, once they reach 42 absences, any absent day following that will be charged at the full fee unless there is supporting documentation.
- Families cannot claim absences if their child has not started care or has stopped care. They also cannot claim an absence if they have notified the service that they are taking their child out of care on a set date and then change their mind and remove the child earlier.
- Fee assistance is not payable before the child has physically attended care or after a child has physically ended care at the service.
- An absence cannot be reported for a child before they start attending care at the service unless it is for an additional absence reason and the child has already used their 42 initial absence days at another service.
- An absence cannot be reported for a child after the last day they physically attend the service unless it is for an additional absence reason with supporting documentation and the child has already used their 42 initial absence days.
- If the family has advised that their child will leave the service on a particular day, but that child does not attend their last session(s) of care, the family may only receive CCS for the days the child was expected to attend if the child's 42 absence days have been exhausted and the absence is an additional absence. Initial 42 absence days may not be claimed for these days.
- CCS and ACCS are payable for all additional absences and there are no limits on the number of additional absence days a recipient may claim, providing the absence days are taken for specified reasons and supporting documentation, where required, is provided.
- Specified reasons are:
  - the child, the individual who cares for the child, the individual's partner or another person with whom the child lives is ill and the service has been given a medical certificate by a medical practitioner.
  - the child is attending preschool.



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- alternative arrangements have been made on a pupil-free day.
  - the child has not been immunised against an infectious disease, the absence occurs during an immunisation grace period and a medical practitioner has certified that exposure to the infectious disease would pose a health risk to the child.
  - the absence is because the child is spending time with a person other than the individual who is their usual carer as required by a court order or a parenting plan, and the service has a copy of the relevant court order or parenting plan for the child.
  - the child cannot attend because of a period of emergency, for up to 28 days after the emergency.
  - the individual who cares for the child has decided the child should not attend the service for up to seven days immediately following the end of a period of emergency.
- Medical certificates do not cover the absent day fee. Fees are charged as normal when a child is away due to illness, regardless of documentation. However, if a child is away and has used up all of their 42 absences, a medical certificate will allow an additional absence to be claimed. Therefore, the child will receive CCS as normal, rather than being charged the full fee.

## KINDERGARTEN FEE SUBSIDY

- Children attending three-year-old kindergarten are offered in excess of 5 hours per week of subsidised kindergarten.
- Children attending four-year-old kindergarten are offered in excess of 15 hours per week of subsidised kindergarten.
- Children who receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) applied to the fee for the time spent in the kindergarten program are ineligible for kindergarten fee subsidy.
- Long day care families cannot access kindergarten fee subsidy, and sessional kindergarten families cannot access Child Care Subsidy.

## VICTORIAN 'FREE KINDER' REFORM

- All early childhood education and care providers that deliver a funded kindergarten program in Victoria are eligible to receive *Free Kinder* funding from 2023 onwards, subject to meeting specified terms and conditions.
- Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by
  - providing a free 15-hour program to four-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service.
  - providing a free 5-to-15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service.
  - offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service.
- All children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program at a participating service are eligible for *Free Kinder* from 2023 onwards.
- If a child attends more than one service that offers a funded kindergarten program, *e.g., a sessional service for some days and a long day care service on other days*, the family must nominate which service they will receive their funded kindergarten program and therefore their *Free Kinder* funding.
- Some children move from one service to another during the kindergarten year. In these cases, the *Free Kinder* will move with the child, with the regular payments made to the new service for the rest of the year (or the duration of time that the child remains at that service).



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- The subsidy received will depend on the number of hours of *Free Kinder* offered. All 4-year-old children will receive the 15-hour subsidy, whereas for 3-year-old children, it will be dependent on their attendance.

Kinder Attendance Hours	Amount
5 Hours	\$683.33
7.5 hours	\$1,025.00
10 Hours	\$1,366.66
15 Hours	\$2,050.00

- The service will apply the *Free Kinder* payment for both 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten on a regular basis to family accounts. The amount will appear on family invoice statements as "*Victorian Government Free Kinder Offset*".
- Payments are only made during the school terms when the funded kinder program is running. Children attending the service outside of the school terms, or over the 15 hours, will be charged at the service's normal fee.
- Children attending kindergarten in long day care are still eligible for Child Care Subsidy.
- Under Department of Education guidelines, the service must prioritise any Free Kinder funded children. So, it's possible a child may lose their place if there are no open spots and a funded child joins the waitlist.

## EARLY START KINDERGARTEN FEE SUBSIDY

- Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection are eligible to attend a funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. The service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria.
- To be eligible, the child must turn three by April 30<sup>th</sup> in the year they start kindergarten, and:
  - from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
  - identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or
  - the family has had contact with child protection.
- Children can also access free or low cost Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

<b>Approved Provider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.</li> <li>Set fees for children to enrol at the service and ensure policies and procedures are in place relating to the fee schedule and payment options.</li> <li>Take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, responsible persons, and staff follow this policy.</li> <li>Notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>affect the fees charged or the way they are collected.</li> <li>significantly impact the service's education and care of children.</li> <li>significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Review the current budget to determine fee requirements.</li> <li>Consider any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling in the organisation and remove those barriers wherever possible.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that this policy is readily accessible at the service.</li> <li>• Provide all families with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child.</li> <li>• Ensure fees are collected and receipted.</li> <li>• Read, understand, follow and enforce the organisation's policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Persons</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.</li> <li>• Take reasonable steps to ensure that staff follow this policy.</li> <li>• Ensure that this policy is readily accessible at the service.</li> <li>• Provide all families with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child.</li> <li>• Communicate with families at enrolment about fees, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the amounts charged.</li> <li>○ payment periods and methods.</li> <li>○ how Child Care Subsidy will be applied.</li> <li>○ notice periods.</li> <li>○ how they can access copies of statements and receipts.</li> <li>○ financial hardship considerations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure fees are collected and receipted.</li> <li>• Provide ongoing communication with families about their account.</li> <li>• Monitor the application of the Child Care Subsidy or other subsidies.</li> <li>• Read, understand, follow and enforce the organisation's policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Educators and Staff Members</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support families to approach the nominated supervisor or responsible persons with any fee-related questions.</li> <li>• Inform management of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service.</li> <li>• Read, understand, follow and enforce the organisation's policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parents, Guardians and Families</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the service's fee requirements and expectations at enrolment.</li> <li>• Sign and comply with the payment of fees.</li> <li>• Raise any fee-related questions with nominated supervisor or responsible persons.</li> <li>• Notify management if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.</li> <li>• Provide the required documentation if applying for Additional Child Care Subsidy – Child Wellbeing Subsidy.</li> <li>• Apply for ACCS directly with <i>Services Australia</i> (except for child wellbeing).</li> <li>• Notify the service and <i>Services Australia</i> if there are any changes to subsidy entitlements.</li> <li>• Ensure details are current within the <i>MyGov</i> system to ensure entitlements are correct.</li> <li>• Ensure fees are paid on time.</li> <li>• Pay the additional fees associated with bank and credit card transactions.</li> <li>• Update the service when bank or credit card details change.</li> <li>• Attend to dishonoured payments immediately.</li> <li>• Pay the additional fees associated with dishonoured payments.</li> </ul>



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- Pay full fees pending the outcome of Child Care Subsidy assessment.
- Sign children in and out of care on the QikKids Kiosk each time they deliver or collect their child.
- If attending two kindergarten services, nominate which service is deemed to be the child's kindergarten program so funding can be allocated.
- Provide a minimum of two full weeks written notice via email when reducing a booking or withdrawing a child from care.
- Read, understand and follow the organisation's policies and procedures.

## SOURCES

- ACECQA – *Payment of Service Fees* – August 2021
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
- Australian Government – *Child Care Provider Handbook* – October 2023
- Australian Government – *Child Care Subsidy Payments and Fees* – October 2023
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – September 2023
- Department of Education and Training
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2016
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 – July 2023
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 – July 2023
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 – July 2023
- Services Australia – *Additional Child Care Subsidy* – December 2021
- Services Australia – *Child Care Subsidy* – July 2023
- Victorian Government – *Free Kinder Guidelines for Services 2023* – July 2023
- Victorian Government - *Free Kinder Funding Requirements for 2024* – October 2023