

<b>Payment of Fees Policy</b>		 <b>Longreach Regional Council</b> <small>Ilbarramda: Koolberril Longgoorlil Yarrulan</small>
Policy Number:	12.07	
Policy Category:	Childcare Centre	
Authorised by:	Res-2023-12-325	
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## PURPOSE

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.

We endeavour 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 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, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor and visitors of the Service.

## LEGISLATION

*Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023)*

*Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. (Amended 2023)*

*Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017*

*Family Law Act 1975*

*Family Assistance Law – Incorporating all related legislation for Child Care Provider Handbook*

## DEFINITIONS

**Department of Education - Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)** – Regulatory Authority responsible for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services in their jurisdiction in accordance with the national legislative framework and in relation to the National Quality Standard.

**National Quality Framework (NQF)** – provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services across Australia.

**National Quality Standard (NQS)** – sets a high national benchmark for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services in Australia. The NQS includes seven quality areas that are important outcomes for children. Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the NQS, and given a rating for each of the 7 quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.

**Child Care Subsidy (CCS)** – is the main way the Australian Government helps families with child care fees. Families must meet eligibility criteria to get CCS.

**Gap Fee** – families who get CCS must make a co-contribution to their child care fees. This is a requirement under Family Assistance Law. They do this by paying the difference between the Service fee and the CCS amount. This is known as the gap fee.

**Kidsoft** – is a cloud-based Child Care Software system designed to service Early Childhood Education and Care and Outside School Hours Care Services in Australia.

**iDebitPro** – is a payment processing gateway integrated with Kidsoft that allows a Service to collect automatic fee payments as a simple and efficient way of paying their fees.

**Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)** – provides extra help with the cost of early childhood education and care to families facing difficult or challenging circumstances. ACCS will usually cover all of a child's early childhood education and care fees.

**Parents/Guardians** – a person who has parental responsibility for the child.

**Staff** – employee of Longreach Regional Council based at the Longreach Childcare Centre.

**Nominated Supervisor** – a person with responsibility for the day to day management of an approved service.

**Leadership Team** – an internal group of leaders within the Childcare Centre comprising of the Childcare Services Director, the Childcare Services Assistant Director and the Staff Engagement and Development Officer.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

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.

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.

## **POLICY**

### **General Fees**

- a) Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care and the type
- b) CCS is paid directly to the Service and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's statement)
- c) Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged by the Service and the subsidy amount- this is referred to as the 'gap fee'
- d) A dated receipt can be provided via email upon request
- e) Fees are to be paid at least fortnightly through a direct debit system. If families wish to pay fees on a weekly basis, this can be arranged with the Service
- f) Fees are payable for every session that a child is enrolled at the Service. This includes sick days, public holidays and family holidays but excludes periods when the Service organises the closure e.g. Christmas closure period and Staff Professional Development days
- g) If a session of care falls on a public holiday, families are required to pay normal fees. CCS will be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays for CCS eligible families
- h) Fees are charged for full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours)
- i) Families are requested to contact the Service if their child is unable to attend a particular session
- j) Casual days may be offered to families if available within the Service's license.

### **Child Care Subsidy (CCS)**

- a) Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their [myGov](#) account linked to Centrelink and provide documentation to support the CCS payment
- b) Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy. The child must:
  - 1) be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child' and
  - 2) be 13 or under and not attending secondary school and
  - 3) meet immunisation requirements
- c) The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner must:
  - 1) meet residency requirements and
  - 2) be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement (their written agreement) with their childcare provider
- d) Childcare must be provided by an approved provider
- e) Families level of Child Care Subsidy will be determined by:
  - 1) combined family income
  - 2) activity test of parents
  - 3) type of early learning and childcare Service
- f) Child Care Subsidy will be provided directly to the Service and this amount deducted from the parent/family account

- g) 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)
- h) 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.
- i) Discounts will only be offered as outlined in the CCS Handbook.

### **Payment of Fees:**

- a) Families are required to pay fees using the Service's direct debit system, iDebitPro. The family is required to provide banking details to facilitate set up of the direct debit account
- b) Fees and charges associated with direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment
- c) A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees
- d) Families will be issued with a *Customer Account Statement* on a weekly basis in accordance with the fee payment and Regulatory requirements
- e) The *Customer Account Statement* will include details of the sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts
- f) The *Customer Account Statement* is generated using CCS Software, Kidsoft, which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law legislation
- g) The service uses Kidsoft to issue *Customer Account Statements*
- h) The service uses iDebitPro, through Kidsoft to collect the GAP fee from Families
- i) The Gap Fees must be paid using Direct Debit
- j) Fees will be paid by Direct Debit via iDebitPro, which will be setup at the time of enrolment
- k) Invoices will be generated by the Service via Kidsoft on a weekly basis on Tuesday and emailed to families
- l) Direct Debit payments will be processed on a weekly basis on Thursday
- m) All banking information is collected securely through iDebitPro and the Service does not retain any bank account records
- n) The Service will cover the cost of transaction fees for Direct Debit from bank accounts. There is no extra cost to a family for Direct Debit from a bank account
- o) Direct Debits from a credit card account attract a surcharge which is charged to the family (10 cents + 1.55% added to the weekly fees payment)
- p) Where a payment fails to be deducted, the dishonour fee is charged to the family (\$4 added to the weekly fees payment)
- q) A review of the child's enrolment will occur where fees dishonour on a regular basis

### **Absences from Service:**

- a) Families are requested to contact the Service if their child is unable to attend a particular session
- b) Families must still pay the gap fee to the Service if their child is unable to attend

- c) 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
- d) Allowable absences can be taken for any reason. Families do not have to provide evidence
- e) Additional absences can be claimed for the specified reasons as defined by the Family Assistance Law
- f) Records and evidence will be kept by the Service for each additional absence, where required
- g) Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via [myGov](#)
- h) In a period of local emergency, such as bushfire or pandemic, and our Service is temporarily shut down on public health advice, families *may* be provided with additional absence days as per Family Assistance Law legislation

### ***Financial Difficulties:***

- a) Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance if they are experiencing temporary financial hardship
- b) There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:
  - 1) 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
  - 2) 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
  - 3) Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
  - 4) 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:***

- a) If the Direct Debit payment has been declined, the dishonour fee will be added to the family's account
- b) An SMS will be sent to the family and will advise the parent to contact the Service in relation to the dishonour. The Service can then reset the invoice and process the overdue fee.
- c) If the payment is declined again, the family will be contacted again to determine a suitable time to reset the invoice and process the overdue payment.
- d) 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

- e) A child's position will be terminated if payment has not been made after two weeks. The family will be contacted for immediate payment and if payment is not received, the family will receive a letter terminating the child's position. At this time the Service will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

### **Late Collection of Children Fees:**

- a) It is unacceptable to pick children up late from the Service. A late fee will apply where children are not picked up by 5.30pm
- b) A fee of \$20 per 15-minute block or part thereof will be incurred by the family (e.g. if you are 5 minutes late you will be charged for a 15-minute block. If you are 20 minutes late you will be charged for a 30-minute block, etc.)".
- c) A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently picking children up late

### **Change of Fees:**

- a) Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of fourteen days written notice is given to all families
- b) CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at the commencement of each financial year
- c) Any CCS hourly rate increases are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software, Kidsoft.

### **Termination of Enrolment:**

- a) Parents are to provide two weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the centre. Normal fees will continue to be charged for the two week notice period.
- b) 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
- c) In some circumstances CCS may not be paid for sessions if the child has not physically started care
- d) 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 the Nominated Supervisor:**

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- a) ensuring all families are aware of our *Payment of Fees Policy*
- b) ensuring enrolments are submitted correctly with the appropriate enrolment information
- c) providing families with regular Customer Account Statements
- d) notifying families of any overdue fees
- e) providing families with reminder letters as required

- f) terminating enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- g) discussing fee payment with families if required
- h) providing at least 14 days written notice to families of any fee increases or changes to the way fees are collected

### **Responsibility of Families:**

- a) provide the Service with the correct enrolment details to facilitate the CCS claim, if required, including:
  - 1) Centrelink Reference Numbers for child and CCS claimant
  - 2) Date of Birth for child and CCS claimant
- b) ensure payment of fees as per policy
- c) notify Centrelink of any changes that may affect their CCS entitlement
- d) confirm their child's enrolment through the parents myGov account.

### **Third Party Payments:**

Parents are generally liable to pay the co-contribution for childcare fees. Only state and territory governments (and their agencies) can contribute to the cost, in part or full, of childcare fees for families.

Where an agreement has been made between an employer or charity to assist in the contribution of fees the fees must be reduced accordingly before CCS has been applied. Our Service will record all documentation regarding any third party payments.

### **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](mailto:tipoffline@education.gov.au)

### **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION**

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

### **REVIEW**

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Elissa Balke	Childcare Services Director	05.12.2023
POLICY REVIEWED	DECEMBER 2023	NEXT REVIEW DATE	DECEMBER 2024

Authorised by resolution as at 14 December 2024:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Walsh', written over a horizontal line.

Brett Walsh  
Chief Executive Officer