Payment of Fees Policy

Quality Early Education and Care provides the foundation for children's development and social engagement whilst supporting workforce participation of families 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 that is child safe
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe
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	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
183	Storage of records and other documents
184	Storage of records after service approval transferred

RELATED LEGISLATION

Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017 A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999	Family Law Act 1975 Family Assistance Law – Incorporating all related legislation for Child Care Provider Handbook in Appendix G https://www.dese.gov.au/resources-child-care-providers/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 Governance Policy Orientation of Families Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Termination of Enrolment Policy

PURPOSE

For families to gain a clear understanding of the service fee structure, payment requirements and Child Care Subsidy benefit 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, 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. We are committed to ensuring that children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and practices including those relating to the payment of fees, recognising the importance of continuity of education and care for all children.

ENROLMENT FEE AND DEPOSIT PAYMENT

- A deposit consisting of 1-week full fee is to be paid to hold a child's position at the service.
- The deposit payment will not be refunded to the family as it will be used for the last week of notice period.

GENERAL FEES

- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care and the family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS). CCS is paid directly to the service and ~~this~~ is used as a fee reduction (visible on family's statement).
- The Service will issue families an invoice outlining fees charged for each session of care, any discounts provided and any CCS payments applied

- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount – the 'gap' amount.
- 'Gap Fees' must be paid via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) (effective 02 July 2023)
- Fees must be kept in advance of a child's attendance.
- Fees are to be paid weekly through a direct debit system.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled at the service. This includes pupil free/public holidays, 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 will be paid for sessions that fall on public holidays.
- It has been our policy to require every enrolment to have a minimum of ~~2 permanent~~ 3 permanent day booking per week in order to enjoy the normal daily fee applicable for any other additional days. Anyone not enrolled for the minimum days required will be charged the casual rate.
- Fees are charged at full sessions only (regardless of the actual attendance hours on any day).
- Casual bookings may be offered to families based on availability within the service's licensing capacity.
- Fees are to be paid weekly through a direct debit system. If families wish to pay fees on a fortnightly or monthly basis, it is a requirement that the family pay in advance and are not in arrears
- Fees and charges associated with direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment
- The family is required to provide banking details to facilitate set up of the direct debit account
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees
- Families will be issued with a *Statement of Entitlement* on a weekly 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 including prescribed and non-prescribed recording obligations

CHILDCARE SUBISDY (CCS)

- Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their myGOV account linked to Centrelink and provide supporting documentation.
- All eligible families are guaranteed at least 72 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight (3 days per week) regardless of activity levels
- Basic requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy. The child must:
  - be a 'Family Tax Benefit child' or 'regular care child' and
  - be 13 or under and not attending secondary school and
  - meet immunisation requirements

The person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner must:

- meet residency requirements and

  - be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement (their written agreement) with their childcare provider
  - childcare must be provided by an approved provider
- Families level of Child Care Subsidy will be determined by:
    - family income estimate
    - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
    - 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.
- Discounts will only be offered as outlined in the CCS Handbook.

ABSENCES FROM SERVICE

- Families are requested to contact the service if their child is unable to attend a particular session
- Families must still pay the 'gap' fee to the service if their child is unable to attend. [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. (See Child Care Subsidy Handbook).
- Allowable absences can be taken for any reason; Families do not have to provide evidence. (unless it is for additional sick days) Families will then need to provide with a medical note to be able to apply for an additional absence
- Additional absences can be claimed for the specified reasons as defined by the Family Assistance Law
- Records will be kept by the service for each absence.
- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via myGov
- 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.

ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

- Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) provides extra help with the cost of early education and care

- If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of the Approved Provider.
- Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink if they are in temporary financial hardship.
- There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:
    - Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)—to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support who are at risk of harm
    - Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
    - Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
    - Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment

FAILURE TO PAY

- If a family fails to pay the required fees on time, a reminder letter will be issued after one week and then again after two weeks if the fees are still outstanding. A child's position will be terminated if payment has not been made after three weeks, for which the family will receive a final letter terminating the child's position. At this time the service will initiate its debt collection process, following privacy and conditional requirements.

CHANGE OF FEES

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

HOLIDAYS

- Centrelink will continue to pay CCS for up to 42 absences per financial year; an absent day only counts if the family would otherwise have received CCS on that day, and includes absences due to holiday, sickness or Public Holidays
- A discounted holiday fee (as set out in the fee schedule issued by the centre) is available to all families, provided the centre receives written notification ~~two (2) weeks~~ four (4) weeks prior to the start date of the holiday. The holiday discount days may be taken on single days or in one-week blocks. The holiday discount days apply per financial year and are capped at the annual holiday discounted days listed in the table below. Any unused holiday discount days are forfeited at 30 June each year.

Holiday Discount Entitlements

Days Enrolled per Week (Permanent Booking only)	Annual Holiday Discounted Days (per Financial Year)
- 5	- 10
- 4	- 8
- 3	- 6
- 2	- 4
- 1	- 2

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

on a child's regular (permanent) booked day, one (1) of the below two (2) options is
All Public Holidays relevant to the state or Local Governing Area in which the Centre is located, where a Public Holiday falls on a child's regular (permanent) booked day, the follow option is available to families:

- One (1) Swap Day may be taken where a Public Holiday falls on a permanent booked day of care. One (1) Swap Day is available per one (1) Public Holiday on any permanent day of care. Swap Days can only be taken after a Public Holiday has occurred and provided the centre receives written notification ~~two (2) weeks~~ four weeks (4) prior to the requested date for the Swap Day to occur. Swap Days are subject to availability. A Swap Day cannot replace an existing permanent booked day. Any unused swap days are forfeited at 30 June each year.

CASUAL BOOKINGS & CANCELLATIONS

Families wishing to cancel a casual booking must provide a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours' notice.
For the purpose of this policy, the 48-hour notice period is calculated using the Service's operating hours of Monday to Friday, 6:30am to 6:30pm.
The table below provides examples of the latest time by which a cancellation must be received:

Casual Booking Day	**Cancellation Must Be Received By**
Monday	Before **6:30am on the preceding Thursday**
Tuesday	Before **6:30am on the preceding Friday**
Wednesday	Before **6:30am on the preceding Monday**
Thursday	Before **6:30am on the preceding Tuesday**
Friday	Before **6:30am on the preceding Wednesday**

Where less than forty-eight (48) hours' notice is provided, the full casual daily fee for the booked session will be charged.

ADDITIONAL CASUAL BOOKINGS & DAILY FEE RATES

Families with a permanent booking pattern of three (3) or more days per week are eligible to book additional casual days at the service's **standard** daily fee rate, subject to availability.
Families with a permanent booking pattern of fewer than three (3) days per week are eligible to book additional casual days at the service's applicable **Casual** daily fee rate, subject to availability.

Where a child attends on a casual booking and is subsequently marked absent on their final booked session, with no future bookings recorded after that absence, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) may not be payable in accordance with CCS legislation. In these circumstances, the family will be responsible for payment of the full fee for the affected session(s) and any CCS adjustment or debt raised by Services Australia.

TEMPORARY REDUCTIONS TO PERMANENT BOOKINGS

Permanent booking changes are intended to reflect an ongoing change to a family's care requirements and are not designed to facilitate temporary absences, holidays or travel.
Where a family requests to reduce or cancel permanent booked days and subsequently requests to reinstate the same booking pattern within eight (8) weeks, the request will be treated as a new booking request and may be subject to availability of the requested days.
The Service reserves the right to decline repeated temporary changes to permanent booking patterns where it considers the requests are being made to avoid payment of fees while retaining a permanent place.

PROMOTIONS & DISCOUNTS

From time to time, Cuddles Early Learning may offer promotional discounts, referral rewards, incentives, account credits or special fee arrangements to eligible families. Promotions may be offered to specific families, centres, enrolment types or circumstances and may be subject to eligibility criteria, availability, minimum attendance requirements, promotional periods and other conditions.

Promotions and discounts do not alter Cuddles Early Learning's standard published fees and should not be considered a permanent reduction in fees. Unless expressly stated otherwise, promotional offers cannot be combined with any other discount, promotion or special fee arrangement.

Referral rewards or promotional credits may be applied as a credit to a family's account toward future childcare fees, subject to the Terms & Conditions of the applicable promotion. Account credits have no cash value and cannot be redeemed or exchanged for cash.

Each promotion may have its own eligibility requirements and Terms & Conditions. Where a family applies for or participates in a promotion, the specific conditions of that promotion will be provided through the relevant application, enrolment form or promotional material and will apply in addition to this Payment of Fees Policy and the family's enrolment agreement.

Cuddles Early Learning may limit the number of places available under a promotion and reserves the right to amend, suspend or withdraw a promotion, including for existing participating families. Where this results in a change to the fees payable by an existing family, Cuddles Early Learning will provide the

applicable notice required under this Policy, the enrolment agreement and relevant regulatory requirements.

Families are responsible for notifying Cuddles Early Learning of any change in circumstances that may affect their eligibility for a promotion. Cuddles Early Learning may review a family's eligibility at any time and may cease a promotional discount, reward, credit or special fee arrangement where the eligibility requirements or conditions of the promotion are no longer met.

All promotions, discounts, referral rewards and account credits will be administered in accordance with applicable Child Care Subsidy requirements, Family Assistance Law and other relevant legislative or reporting requirements.

TERMINATION OF ENROLMENT

- Families are to provide four weeks written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the centre.
- If termination from the service is required without notification, families can lose their Child Care Subsidy, resulting in the requirement for full fees to be paid
- 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.

RESPONSIBLIT OF MANAGEMENT

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- 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 that children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration of all Service decisions and practices
- setting fees for children to enrol at the Service
- ensuring all families are aware of our *Payment of Fees Policy*
- ensuring enrolment information of includes the parent/guardian's Customer Reference Number (CRN) and date of birth and the child's CRN and date of birth
- providing families with regular statement of fees payable
- notifying families of any overdue fees
- providing families with reminder letters as required
- terminating enrolment of children should fees not be paid
- discussing fee payment with families if required

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 enrolment through the parents myGov account.

PRESCRIBED AND NON-PRESCRIBED THIRD-PARTY PAYMENTS

Parents are generally liable to pay the co-contribution for childcare fees. State and territory governments (and their agencies) can contribute to the cost, in part or full of childcare fees for families with no impact on CCS payments (in some circumstances).
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, these will be recorded and submitted as non-prescribed discounts. Our Service will record all documentation regarding any third-party payments and submit reports to the Department as part of session reports. (effective 7 July 2025)

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 Service as an educator, early childhood teacher or cook. The approved provider will report any prescribed provider-funded discount when submitting and updating session reports.

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 30% to 95% of full-service fees after CCS has been applied and does not affect CCS eligibility. (Department of Education – Discounted care 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@dese.gov.au

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Child Care Subsidy
Centrelink Customer Reference Number
Absences from childcare- Australian Government
Reporting requirements for prescribed discounts

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service Policy and procedure guidelines*
Australian Government Department of Education Child care discount for early childhood workforce
Australian Government Department of Education. (2026). Child Care Provider Handbook
Australian Government Department of Education *Early Childhood and Care*
Australian Government Department of Education (2024). *Help in an emergency*
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Western Australian Legislation Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012 (WA Services only)
Western Australia Legislation Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 (WA Services only)

REVIEW

LAST REVIEW	MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW
March 2017	• Minor changes made to ensure compliance with regulations and government requirements.	March 2018
October 2017	• Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard	March 2018
March 2019	• Inserted page breaks for appendices. • Grammar, punctuation and spelling edited. • Sources/references alphabetised. • Minor formatting for consistency throughout policy. • 'Related policies' alphabetised.	March 2020
August 2019	• Sources checked for currency • Additional information added to points • Changes to the layout of the document	August 2020
June 2020	• Policy statement added • Implementation information added • CCS section included • Absences section added • Responsibility for Management expanded • Resources and information section added	June 2021
June 2021	• Additional information added to points	June 2022
June 2022	• Policy revised to align with recommendations with ACECQA's policy guide (August 2021) • Holiday Discount tab added • Check of links used within policy • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required	June 2023

	• Update of Related Legislation • Updated Related Policies	
Jan 2023	• booking session updated.	June 2023
June 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)	June 2024
June 2024	• annual policy maintenance • added content to responsibility of approved provider/management • sources checked for currency and hyperlinks updated	June 2025
Jan 2025	• updated Holiday discount section • updated general fee section	June 2025
June 2025	• annual policy maintenance • added reporting requirements for prescribed discounts (7 July 2025) • Holiday, Public holidays and Casual days sections amended • sources checked for currency and hyperlinks updated	June 2026
June 2026	• annual policy review • Added Refer a Friend section • updated changes to CCS effective January 2026 • sources updated as required • reworded the section Casual Bookings and Cancellation • Reworded the section Additional Casual Bookings and Daily Fee Rates • Section added Temporary Reductions to Permanent Bookings • Referral Incentive Program	June 2027
Sept 2026	• Removal of Referral Incentive Program • Added Promotions & Discounts	June 2027