

FEES POLICY

Policy Number	P-Q7-M002	Version Number	3.00
Drafted by	Director of Education	Approved Date: Review Date:	January 2024 January 2025
Responsibility	The Board of Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre Association (Inc.)		
Related Service Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complaints and Grievances Policy ▪ Delivery and Collection of Children Policy ▪ Enrolment and Orientation Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excursions and Centre Events Policy ▪ Inclusion and Equity Policy ▪ Privacy and Confidentiality Policy ▪ Hardship Policy 	
Legislation and Standards	Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006</i> (Vic) • <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic) • <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth) • <i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i> • <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i>: Regulation 168(2)(n) • <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1995</i> (Vic) • <i>National Quality Standard</i>, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership 		
Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Kindergarten Funding Guide</i> (Department of Education and Training): www.education.vic.gov.au • The constitution of Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre 		

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre Board of Governance on the 15th August 2016.

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre.

PRINCIPLES

Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Person with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day-to-Day Charge, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre.

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS): ACCS is part of the Child Care Safety Net, to give the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as well as those from regional and remote communities, a strong start through access to quality early childhood education and care. Further information can be found at: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/additional-child-care-subsidy>

Approved Child Care: Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (refer to Definitions) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in home care.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers. Further information can be found at: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

Dishonour Fee: This fee is applied if a direct debit is rejected by the bank.

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for up to 15 hours per week. Details are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au

Enrolment Administration Fee: A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment for a place in a program at the service. This is a once off charge.

Free Kindergarten: A Victorian Government initiative providing free kindergarten programs for eligible three year old and four year old children in funded services

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the service.

Hardship: A situation where a family is unable, reasonably, because of illness, unemployment or other reasonable cause, to pay all of the scheduled fee obligations and the family reasonably expects to be able to discharge those obligations if payment and/or Service arrangements were changed. Financial hardship involves an inability of the customer to pay bills, rather than an unwillingness to do so. Hardship can arise from a variety of situations. Hardship can be either of limited duration or long term. To illustrate, several of the common causes are listed below:

- Loss of employment of the customer or family member.
- Family breakdown
- Illness, including physical incapacity, hospitalisation, or mental illness of the customer or family member
- A death in the family
- Other factors resulting in unforeseen change in the family's capacity to meet their payment obligations, whether through a reduction in income or through an increase in non-discretionary expenditure.

Health Care Card: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. Details are available at: www.humanservices.gov.au

Kindergarten Funding: An allocation of funds to the service by the Victorian Department of Education for each registered child within a kindergarten program. Funding for sessional kindergarten is not allocated to families

directly. For integrated kindergarten, a \$2,000 Free Kinder subsidy will offset the kindergarten program component of families' out-of-pocket fees. Funding can only be allocated to one service per child.

Late Collection Fee: A charge that may be imposed by the Nominated Supervisor or Business Manager when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program in the year before school. Income from other sources, primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the service in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to *Definitions*) enables eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.

DoE also funds Early Start Kindergarten for three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*).

Regulation 168(2) (n) of *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable term and annual fees at the time of enrolment. Services must also advise eligible families of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy requirements (refer to *Definitions*), and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*) outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider (Board of Governance) is responsible for:

The Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre Board is the Approved Provider and has ultimate responsibility for the management and control of the service.

The Board delegates operational responsibility and day to day management of the service to the Nominated Supervisor and monitors the performance of the organisation, including responsibilities contained in this policy, through regular reporting and by ensuring appropriate resources are available to carry out the organisation's functions.

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons with Management and Control are responsible for:

- reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's *The Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Sources*)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- providing all parents/guardians with fee information
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child, and ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service in foyer and online (Regulation 171)

- ensuring fees are collected and receipted
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees
- notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)), and ideally providing one term's notice.
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre Family and Children's Centre.

Educators and all other staff are responsible for:

- informing the Nominated Supervisor of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service
- referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Nominated Supervisor.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading the Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre Fee information for families and the Statement of Fees and Charges
- notifying the Business Manager if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for eligible families
- ensuring they have completed the application process for Child Care Subsidy and have provided the service with the required information to activate their entitlements
- ensuring they have confirmed their child's enrolment with the service via their MyGov account.
- Payment of fees at the full daily rate at commencement and cessation of care if families are absent due to illness or family holiday, as outlined in Child Care Subsidy terms and conditions - [CCS Allowable Absences](#)

FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Statement of fees and charges

Early Years Program

Orientation – Maximum three (3) free orientation sessions are provided for each child attending the Early Years Program– typically no longer than two (2) hours. During this time parents/guardians will have the opportunity to meet educators, discuss their child and familiarise themselves with the centre.

Fees are payable for **50** weeks of the year. Swapping days of care is not permitted.

Fees **will be** charged:

- when children are absent due to illness, holidays or other parental choice for non-attendance
- for gazetted Victorian Public Holidays including Australia Day, Labour Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day, Queen's Birthday, Grand Final Day and Melbourne Cup Day.

Fees **will not be** charged for:

- centre closure over Christmas break

Upon enrolment all families will receive a direct debit form that must be completed and returned to the service prior to commencement. This is the only method of payment

All families will receive a direct debit schedule that outlines the exact dates direct debits will occur for each calendar year. Any alterations to this schedule will be advised via email and centre noticeboards.

Accounts are charged on a fortnightly basis and are charged in arrears. Families must have a zero balance each fortnight.

It is the responsibility of families to ensure that adequate funds are available in their accounts for retrieval each fortnight otherwise a dishonour fee will be charged.

All fees are to be paid up to date by each family at the end of each calendar year to ensure a childcare place for the following year.

Parents/guardians who are late to collect their child/children from the program will be charged a late collection fee. The late collection fee is \$25 for the first 15 minutes and \$5 per minute thereafter.

Families must provide four weeks' (28 days) written notice of their intention to withdraw their child/ren from the service. If written notice is not provided an amount equal to four weeks' (28 days) of the usual fees will be charged.

Families must provide two weeks' (14 days) written notice of their intention to reduce the number of days of care required. If written notice is not provided an amount equal to two weeks' (14 days) of the usual fees will be charged.

Sessional and Integrated Kindergarten

Free Three- and Four-Year-Old Kinder will be available across Victoria at participating services in 2024 at both integrated and sessional services.

Free Kindergarten 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 (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service

Integrated kindergarten families must provide four weeks' (28 days) written notice of their intention to withdraw their child/ren from the service. If written notice is not provided an amount equal to four weeks' (28 days) of the usual fees will be charged.

Integrated kindergarten families must provide two weeks' (14 days) written notice of their intention to reduce the number of days of care required. If written notice is not provided an amount equal to two weeks' (14 days) of the usual fees will be charged.

Subsidies

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is an Australian Government subsidy that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved child care provider. Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre is an approved/registered care provider.

Approved child care providers are providers that meet certain standards and requirements, and are approved by the Australian Government. Approved child care providers must:

- hold the required approvals or licences to provide child care in the state or territory that the service/s operate in
- ensure the Nominated Supervisor and any individual who is or will be a *Person with Management or Control of the Provider* is fit and a proper person to administer the CCS (requirements set out in Section 194E of *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*).
- be financially viable and is likely to remain so
- ensure that required fit and proper checks are carried out for each *Person with Management or Control of the Provider*, *Persons with Responsibility for Day-to-Day Operation of the Service* and *In-Home Care and Family Day Care Educators*

The amount payable is determined by the circumstances of the applicant's including the family income, the hourly rate cap and the hours of activity undertaken by the parents. Further information for parents can be found here: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>.

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. Contact the service for further information.

Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken.

- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date, and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan – refer to *Hardship Policy* .
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- The Nominated Supervisor will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

Refund of fees

If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term fees (and fee deposit, where appropriate) will be provided. Fees may still apply for programs offering more than the required minimum hours per week.

In any other case, fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Nominated Supervisor. There will be no refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

Notification of fee changes during the year

Parents/guardians will be notified 14 days in advance of any program fee increase.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Nominated Supervisor will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to affordability, flexibility of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’s policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)) unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

Relevant Forms/Documents

Fee Information for Families
Hardship Provision – Application Form
Debit Success Request Form
Direct Debit Schedule of Payments

Version History

Date	Version	Author/s	Details
January 2014	1.00	Director of Education	New policy
June 2014	1.01	Executive Officer	Revision for new name
December 2014	2.00	Systems Manager	Revision for updated format, document ID, related policies and relevant legislation and standards. Consolidated all fee related policies into single document. New policy name.
January 2020	3.00	Executive Officer Director of Education	Policy reviewed and updated.
January 2021	3.00	Executive Officer	Policy reviewed and no changes made.
February 2022	3.00	Director of Education	Policy reviewed and billing clarification added as well as minor editorial changes made.
February 2023	3.00	Director of Education	Policy reviewed and updated
January 2024	3.00	Director of Education	Policy reviewed and minor editorial changes made.