

# FEES POLICY

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## Mandatory – Quality Area 7

### PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- The setting, payment and collection of fees.
- Ensuring the viability of Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. by setting appropriate fees and charges.
- The equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### 1. VALUES

Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. 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.

#### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management 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 Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc.

#### 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

##### Background

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the costs of the four-year-old kindergarten program. 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 families to attend the four-year-old kindergarten program at minimal or no cost.

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

Regulation 168 (2) (n) of Educational and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy in place, 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 – Fees Policy* (refer

to *Definitions*) and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*) outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

### Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006* (Vic).
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic).
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*.
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulation 168(2) (n).
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic).
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

## 4. 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.

**Absences:** Parents are required to pay for any booked place during an absence, including absence due to illness, vacation, and all gazetted public holidays.

The exceptions to the above are the Christmas break (which includes staff set-up day), and staff professional training days.

Parents should notify the service as early as possible in the morning if a child will not be attending, to allow the place to be available for occasional care and to determine staff rostering. All absences will be followed up by 10am if the service is not previously notified.

Parents should notify the Service in advance if absences are planned.

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

**Annual Maintenance and Equipment/ Incursion Levy** – A nominated fee is charged per family at the beginning of each year or upon commencement throughout the year, which is approved by the Approved Provider.

**Changing Days in the Centre:** Each of the rooms, and the children within these rooms, have permanent set days of care. These days cannot be changed/ swapped for an alternative day. If a child would like an additional day's care, then the diary is used for casual requirements. If different days are required on a more long-term basis, then these changes must be discussed with the Nominated Supervisor and at least 2 weeks' notice is to be given.

**Child Care Subsidy (CCS):** A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of childcare. Payments are made directly to approved providers. Further information can be found at: <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

**Contribution Levy:** A nominated fee is charged per family which is approved by the Approved Provider. If a family contributes to the service in any number of ways including joining the committee of management, room participation etc a credit point value will be refunded.

**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. hours. Details available at: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

### **Enrolment:**

On enrolment for the following year, in order to secure the place, a \$200.00 holding deposit is payable. This is deducted from the first month fees. If the place is not taken up the following applies to the policy for obtaining a refund:

- If offers have not yet been distributed at the time of written notice being received by the Service, a full refund will be processed within 4 weeks (20 working days) and a refund will only be processed if all other outstanding fees have been paid).
- If cancelling days after offers have been distributed, but before acceptances have closed, families will only be reimbursed 75% of the deposit amount, upon the place being accepted by another family
- If offers have been distributed and places accepted, any cancellation of accepted days will result in families being charged 50% of the total deposit, upon the place being accepted by another family.
- If offers have been made and places have been accepted, any cancellation requests in which the place cannot be filled by another family, the holding deposit will be forfeited, and no refund shall be processed.

Upon acceptance of an offer from the Service, an enrolment bond consisting of 4 weeks fees is payable per child. The enrolment bond is refundable subject to the Service receiving 4 weeks (20 working days) written notice of withdrawal of care and the account is up to date.

If cancelling days over the Christmas period or January, then the normal cancellation policy will apply.

Please refer to the section below on "Notice of Cancellation".

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

**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](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

**Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS):** A state government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation. Details, eligibility requirements and a calculator, are available in *The Kindergarten Guide (refer to Sources)*.

**Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS):** A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capital grants to subsidise the costs of parents' fees and enable children to attend a funded kindergarten for 15 hours free of charge (*The Kindergarten Guide (refer to Sources)*).

### **Late collection charge:**

It is essential that children be collected by 5.55pm, to allow staff to complete their shift on time. If children are not collected on time, a late fee will apply to compensate staff for the extra time worked. The late fine will apply from 6:00 pm per family and will be calculated at the rate of \$5.00 for every minute for the first 10 minutes, and then \$10.00 per minute after 10 minutes by the Centre's clock.

The Nominated Supervisor will calculate the fine payable, and this fine will be added to the next monthly statement.

When a parent anticipates a late pick up, a phone call to staff would be greatly appreciated, however, this does not exempt the parent from the late fine.

When a child is collected late, the parent must sign the Late Pick-up book. Recurrent late collection (eg: 3 times in a month) will be followed up by notification to the Approved Provider and a letter.

Further late collection may result in the cancellation of a child's place.

(Refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).

**Notice of Cancellation:** The service requires 4 weeks (20 working days) written notice during the operational period. To withdraw from the child's accepted place for the following year 4 weeks' notice

will be calculated on the service's operational days. (Service's xmas closure days are considered as non- operational period)

## 5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### Sources

- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training) [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)
- The constitution of Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc.

### Service policies

- *Complaints and Grievances Policy.*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy.*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy.*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy.*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy.*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.*

## PROCEDURES

### **The Approved Provider and Person 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, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*).
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc and removing those barriers wherever possible.
- Reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered.
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families.
- Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible.
- Providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1).
- Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.
- 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 within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)).
- Ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc.

### **The Nominated Supervisor and Person in Day to Day Charge is responsible for:**

- Assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Funding Guide* (refer to *Definitions*).

- Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's *The Kindergarten Guide* (refer to *Sources*).
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. and removing those barriers wherever possible.
- 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.
- Invoices are sent via emails and receipts will not be issued unless specially requested.
- Providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1.)
- Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.
- 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 within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.
- Ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc.
- Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.

**All other staff are responsible for:**

- Informing the Approved Provider 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 Approved Provider.

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Reading the Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. Fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1).
- Notifying the Approved Provider 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 (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).
- Ensuring their details are up to date and correct within the mygov system to ensure entitlement to the Government Child Care Subsidy

## **EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider 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)).

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Fee information for families

## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. on **10/08/2019**

**REVIEW DATE:** 10/08/2021

# ATTACHMENT 1

## Fee information for families

Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. **2019**

### 1. Why fees are necessary

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution toward the costs of providing a four-year-old kindergarten program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge, or at a minimal cost.

DET also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

### 2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, the Committee of Management / Approved Provider sets fees each year for the programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- The financial viability of the service.
- The level of government funding provided for the program.
- The availability of other income sources, such as grants.
- The fees charged by similar services in the area.
- The capacity of parents/guardians to pay fees.
- Reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards.
- Requirements of the *Kindergarten Funding Guide*: (Department of Education and Training) available website: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point.

### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Enrolment Bond** – Prior to the child commencing their care at CKCC, families will be asked to pay an enrolment bond of 4 weeks x the number of days attended by their child per week. This will be held as a bond for the duration of the child's care and will be refunded upon ceasing of care at CKCC subject to the provision of 4 weeks' notice and the account being current. The notice period and amount being current will also apply to families ceasing care at the end of the year and not returning the following year. The enrolment bond amount will be adjusted following a decrease or increase in the number of days care / fees is required. A refund resulting in a decrease of days will be subject to the 4 weeks written notice and the amount being current.
- **Non-refundable levy**: This levy is non-refundable and is retained by the service and is included in the total fees charged by the service e.g. equipment / maintenance.
- **Contribution Levy**: A nominated fee is charged per family which is approved by the Approved Provider. If a family contributes to the service in any number of ways including joining the committee of management, room participation etc a credit point value will be refunded.
- **Late collection charge**: The Committee of Management/ Approved Provider reserves the right to impose a late collection fee when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the

service. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management/Approved Provider.

## **4. Subsidies**

### **4.1 Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only)**

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 15 hours of stand - alone kindergarten free of charge. Eligibility conditions change from time-to-time – and must be checked in the most recent edition of the Kindergarten Funding Guide (refer to Sources) contact the service for further information.

Families who may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy in the year before school if their child:

- Is Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander; or
- Holds, or has a parent / guardian who holds a Humanitarian or refugee Visa; or
- Is a multiple birth child (triplets or more); or
- Holds, or has a parent who holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veteran's Affairs Card

Exclusions and expectations: Not available for approved childcare services in receipt of Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy.

Where a child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander, no verification is required.

In all other instances, supporting documentation should be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program, however where there are delays, such as in obtaining health care cards for children in out of home care, the delay should not provide a barrier to the child accessing the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid. Contact the service for further information.

### **4.2 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.

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

Child Care Benefit (CCS) is an Australian Government payment that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved child care provider. Camberwell Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Inc. is an approved/registered care provider with the Family Assistance Office (FAO).

Approved care is childcare that meets certain standards and requirements and is approved by the Australian Government. Approved care providers must;

- Hold the required approvals or licences to provide childcare in the state or territory that the service operates in.
- Ensure the provider 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.

The amount payable is determined by the circumstances of the applicants 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>

## **5. Payment of fees**

The Committee of Management/Approved Provider will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Fees will be invoiced fortnightly in arrears to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Nominated Supervisor to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

## **6. Unpaid fees**

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

- If fees are four weeks overdue (i.e. when the next fortnightly invoices are prepared the nominated supervisor or bookkeeper will include a reminder note in the second invoice.
- If fees are still overdue when the following fortnightly invoices are prepared, contact will be made by the nominated supervisor or bookkeeper.
- With habitually late invoices and escalating debt, the Committee / Approved Provider reserves the right to discuss and instigate a payment plan that must be adhered to so as to ensure an ongoing place at the centre. Contact will be made by the Nominated Supervisor or the Treasurer.
- Should the debt persist despite a payment plan, the parent/ guardian will be given 7 days to pay the outstanding account in full before the childcare place is forfeited and a professional debt collector is engaged.
- Once a professional debt collector is engaged, the service reserves the right to claim interest on the outstanding amount together with the fees of the debt collector, or the service's legal representative, and any other reasonable out of pocket expenses.
- 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.

## **7. Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the Family Assistance Office to those families who require it. If your service does not already have this information a good place to start is with your local council.

## **8. Notification of fee changes during the year**

Fees set for the year is reviewed every financial year by the Committee of Management / Approved provider and parents/guardians will be notified of any change 4 weeks in advance prior to the next invoice date.