

Fee Policy



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Warning - Ensure you are using the latest version of this policy.			
DCC Network/All Organisation Information/DCC Policies\Quality Area 7- Leadership & service management			

1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education is committed to providing responsible financial management of the organisation, which includes setting fees that will result in a financially viable and quality service on a not-for-profit basis.

2. Rationale

To provide a clear set of guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees which ensure the viability of River Region Early Education as a not-for-profit organisation.

3. Procedure

a) Fee Setting

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure fees are reviewed twice a year (end of financial year and calendar year) and set to ensure the running costs of River Region Early Education are covered. The Board may review and change the fees during the year if the financial viability of River Region Early Education is at risk.

Parents of children enrolled at the service will be notified at least 14 days before making any change that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

b) Schedule of Fees

Fees are outlined in our fee schedule which is available from our administration office and are also displayed on our website.

Childcare Services - fees are charged according to the room and/or age groups e.g., Puggles, Possums, Joey or Wombats. During transition to another room, they will be charged according to the room they are enrolled in.

Preschools - fees are charged according to:

- Age group
- Presentation and copy of **current** government issued pension, health care card for low income earners with the parent name and the child name on it
- Indication of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background on the child's enrolment form.
- The number of days they attend (in accordance with NSW Start Strong Preschool funding guidelines)

Mobile Children's' Service- fees are charged according by age group.

Childcare Service - 0-2 year old children - Childcare fee with Child Care Subsidy applying

Preschool service - 3-5 year olds - Preschool fee with no further subsidy applying. Preschool fee is based on:

Fee Policy

- Presentation and copy of current government issued pension, health care card with the parent name and the child name on it for low income earners
- Indicating Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background on the child's enrolment form.

c) Fee Subsidy Entitlements

Child Care Subsidy

Child Care Subsidy is available to all families who are Australian Residents if the child meets immunisation requirements and parents meet eligibility requirements. Entitlement is determined by an activity test which determines the number of hours of subsidised care to which families are entitled. Combined family income is used to determine the subsidy percentage. Income thresholds change each financial year. Current thresholds are available from the Department of Human Services website. See servicesaustralia.gov.au/. See 'Activity Level and Subsidised Care.'

Hours of activity per fortnight	Maximum number of hours of subsidy per fortnight
8 hours to 16 hours	36 hours
More than 16 hours to 48 hours	72 hours
More than 48 hours	100 hours

A broad range of activities meet the activity test requirements, including paid work, self-employment, unpaid work in a family business, active job hunting, volunteering or studying. You can also include reasonable travel time to and from a place of activity to the service. In two parent families, both parents must meet the activity test, and subsidy hours are calculated on the lower number where parents have different levels of activity.

There are exemptions for parents who legitimately cannot meet the activity test requirements. See Centrelink for more information.

The **Additional Child Care Subsidy** may be available to help support:

- families needing help to support their children's safety and wellbeing
- grandparents on income support who are primary child-carers
- families in temporary financial hardship
- families moving to work from income support

Families can claim Child Care Subsidy or Additional Child Care Subsidy online by signing into their myGov and completing a Child Care Subsidy claim. If eligible, the Subsidy will be paid directly to the service on families' behalf and we will reduce the fees owed. This can occur after our service enters families' enrolment information online, families confirm their enrolment information through their myGov account and complete a Complying Written Agreement (CWA through the XPLOR home app.

Until Child Care Subsidy details are available, families will need to pay full fees.

d) Statements of Entitlement

We will issue fortnightly Statements which include child/children's full name/s, date of care, date of payment, daily and weekly hours of care, absences, hourly fees and hourly and daily fee totals and the number of hours fees were reduced (eg by Child Care Subsidy) and total reduction amount. (Parents' My Gov accounts will also have how much care families have received and how much Child Care Subsidy has been paid.)

Fee Policy

e) Invoices

Invoices for the amount of fees payable in a period will be issued every two weeks. If families pay more than the fee amount required at the time, change will not be given but will be credited to the family's account.

f) Fee Payments

Families are billed on a fortnightly basis through specially designed software. Families are able to log in to their account and see a live balance at any time.

When families are offered a place at the service, they will also be provided with an invoice for the first two weeks of care, which must be paid to secure the booking. Should the family not use the booking, an administration fee of \$30 will be charged, and the remainder will be refunded to the family. Should the enrolment change, any excess fees paid will be credited to the family account.

Fees must be paid on time for every day a child is enrolled at the service.

All accounts must be paid in full prior to the end of year. This includes families returning for the next year.

- Payment Options
- Direct Deposit,
- Cash,
- EFTPOS
- Direct Debit- a fee of 80c per transaction or 2.14% of the fee if a credit card which is paid by families
- 'Centrepay' where families can pay their fees directly through Centrelink. See <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/how-set-centrepay-deductions>

Administration staff may be contacted for further details on making payments.

g) Fees for absence

As a courtesy we request that if a child is to be absent the family inform the service in the Xplor home app or by phone or text as soon as possible.

A discounted childcare fee is available for children whose families notify the service via XPLOR **more than 24 hours in advance** that their child will be absent. This includes sick days and family holidays.

To receive the discounted fee notice must be provided at least 24 hours in advance (**by 8am the day before the child is to be absent**) in the Xplor Home app. This will allow the service to adjust their staffing and/ or fill the place with a casual booking. CCS is applicable to this absence fee.

At least 48 hours notice in writing (via email) is required if the family DOES require the permanent place and the absence fee will no longer apply (see DCC 6.40 Enrolment and Orientation Policy)

For Child Care Subsidy services families are entitled to receive Child Care Subsidy for up to 42 days where their child is absent, for example due to illness, public holidays and parental leave. Evidence to support these absences is not required. Additional absence days may be available if they meet the situations (such as exceptional circumstances or illness where a medical certificate is provided) outlined in the New Tax Systems (Family Assistance) Act 1999 and there is evidence to support these. See DESE for more information.

Public Holidays - fees are charged for Public Holidays which do not occur during the Christmas Closure period.

Fee Policy

Christmas Closure - No fees are charged in periods when the service is closed including over the Christmas and New Year break period.

Organisation training day- no fees are charged for the organisation training day.

h) Late payment of fees

A Fee Reminder letter is sent to any family who is one week late paying their fees. If families are having difficulty making fee payments they should immediately speak with the administration officers or Business Services Manager to discuss fee payment arrangements. Information provided by families will be treated as strictly private and confidential.

In cases of non-payment of fees, where the service is unable to contact families about the debt, or families do not meet agreed arrangements for repayment of the debt and ongoing payment of fees the Business Services Manager may immediately suspend or terminate the child's place at the service. Families will be advised of this action in writing.

Where families do not meet agreed payment plans, and an outstanding debt remains, the Business Services Manager may use their discretion to engage a third-party agency to recover the outstanding amount. The cost of this action will be added to the debt owed as per agreement in the child enrolment form.

Fees of **\$20 a week** may apply to any overdue fees where reasonable efforts are not made to address overdue fees.

Payment of overdue fee procedures

If no previous arrangements have been made regarding overdue fees River Region Early Education will:

Fees More than 7 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place	Reminder email by Accounts Officer
Fees more than 14 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place	Request for payment and/ or payment plan arrangement from Business Services Manager sent by Accounts Officer Reminder message on Kiosk by Accounts Officer
Fees more than 21 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place	Final request for payment or payment plan arrangement notice from Business Services Manager - giving 5 days for payment of fees or cancellation of care and debt recovery commencing sent via email and in hard copy by Accounts Officer Final request reminder placed on Kiosk by Accounts Officer
Fees more than 30 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place	Business Services Manager to cancel child's enrolment and refer account to Debt Collection Agency

Any additional expense incurred from debt recovery will be paid for by the family/ as per the signed agreement on their enrolment form.

The Board will be informed at the monthly Board meeting of aged debt amounts, and when debt collection has been commenced.

i) Payment plans

Families who are having genuine difficulty paying their fees are encouraged to commence a payment plan with the Accounts Officer. The payment plan should be designed to clear debts

Fee Policy

while maintaining regular payments, and it should be sustainable for both parties. The recommended payment each fortnight is 25%-50% (this % may change depending on families' ability to pay) of the family's regular fees in addition to any new fees accruing. The Accounts Officer will write the payment plan and terms of agreement, and the family and Business Services Manager will sign a copy for each to keep.

j) Cancellation

Should families wish to end their child's place at the service or should management make the decision to terminate the child's place, 2 weeks written notice is required from the ending/terminating party. If the family do not provide this notice, they will be charged 2 weeks fees. Children must also be signed in and out by parents/guardians on the last scheduled day of their attendance for the Child Care Subsidy to apply. If this does not occur families are required to pay full fees.

k) Fee for late collection of children

The daily fees are based on the licensed opening hours of the service. In the event the family is late collecting their child from the service, additional costs are incurred.

Families who do not collect their child before we normally close for the day will be charged a late fee of \$20 for every 15 minutes or part thereof. Every endeavour will be made to contact parents and emergency contacts prior to closing time. This charge will be added to the fortnightly account.

Wherever possible parents should advise River Region Early Education when they will be late to collect their child. Special circumstances i.e. traffic accident, vehicle breakdown, will be given consideration when applying the fee.

If families are over 30 minutes late to collect their child, and no contact with the service made, the police will be called.

If a family continues to collect their child after operating hours, the Nominated Supervisor will need to discuss other options with them, and suitable arrangements made or the child's place in the service may be cancelled.

l) Employee Fee discount

River Region Early Education offers a discount to employees who have a child enrolled in early childhood education and care at a service where they work. This is designed to attract and retain our early childhood workforce.

The discount will apply to the **gap fee** for educators, that is those that are employed, contracted or engaged:

- as an educator or early childhood teacher;
- are working at a Centre Based Day Care service
- as the Nominated Supervisor of the service if they have an early childhood education and care qualification and they are working at the service.

This will not impact the employee's CCS entitlement.

The discount will apply to the **whole fee** for non-educators, that is support staff or those who do not have an early childhood qualification.

4. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Legislation	
Education and Care Services National Regulation	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
172	Notification of policies & procedures
National Quality Standards	
7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.

5. Sources

Centre Support Fee Policy

Bryant, L. (2009). Managing a Child Care Service : A Hands-On Guide for Service Providers. Sydney: Community Child Care Co-Operative.

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations

A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999

PWC Fee Policy Considerations Fact sheet 2018

Child Care Subsidy- DESE <https://www.dese.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

6. Related Documents

Doc #	Document Title
NQS7.53 A1	Fee Reminder Messages

7. Document Control

Doc #	Doc Title	Version	Approved	Next Review
NQS7.53	Fee Policy	6	March 2022	March 2025
NQS7.53	Fee Policy (deletion of billing in advance)	7	July 2023	March 2025
NQS7.53	Fee Policy (minor change due to name change)	7a	Jan 2024	March 2025