

	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Fees Policy and Procedure</h2>
<b>Version No.</b>	Version 3.0 12 April 2023 (approved)
<b>Authorisation</b>	Director City Life
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Policy to be reviewed by 1 December 2025
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Manager Families and Children
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Early Childhood Coordinator

### 1. Purpose

Melton City Council is committed to:

- the setting, payment and collection of Fees
- ensuring the viability of Melton City Council children's services by setting appropriate Fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of Fees across the programs provided by Melton City Council children's services.
- providing an environment of mutual respect and open communication, where the expression of opinions is encouraged
- complying with all legislative and statutory requirements
- dealing with disputes, complaints and complainants with fairness and equity
- establishing mechanisms to promote prompt, efficient and satisfactory resolution of complaints and grievances
- maintaining confidentiality at all times.

1.1. This policy has been adapted from *PolicyWorks* Manual - National Quality Framework released by the Early Learning Association Australia.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to services that charge a fee for service.

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, person in day to day charge, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Melton City Council children's services.

### 3. Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET) requires that funded services have a comprehensive written Fees policy in place, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families.

All families must be informed of applicable Fees at the time of enrolment.

### 4. Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and related procedures. For commonly used terms . Approved Provider, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *Glossary of Terms*.

Word/Term	Definition
<b>Child Care Subsidy (CCS)</b>	A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either Approved or Registered childcare services. All eligible families can receive some CCS. Details are available at the Department of Human Services website.
<b>Fees</b>	A charge for a place within a program at the service.

## 5. Responsibility/Accountability

5.1. The Approved Provider, according to Regulations is responsible for the implementation of this policy. This will be achieved through the Leadership Group and their service staff:

- 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
- considering any issues regarding Fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families
- collecting and receipting all Fees
- 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 (National Regulation 172)
- a notice outlining Fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service if required.

5.2. The Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, Person in Day to Day Charge is responsible for:

- assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy
- implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET
- considering any issues regarding Fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible
- discuss options with management for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families
- 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 Melton City Council children's services.

5.3. Educators and all other staff are responsible for:

- informing the Nominated Supervisor/, Responsible Person, Person in Day to Day Charge of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding Fees at the service
- referring parent's/guardian's questions in relation to this policy to the Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, Person in Day to Day Charge
- assisting the Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, Person in Day to Day Charge as required.
- collecting and receipting Fees as required and completing and keeping documentation to assist with auditing and compliance

5.4. Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with the Melton City Council children's service *Fees Policy and Procedure*
- notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of Fees.

## Procedure

In terms of all children's services programs:

### Payment of fees

- Parent or Guardians will pay the fees as per the agreements and enrolment conditions in place.
- Payment of fees must be done via electronic means only; no cash payments are allowed at any time. Options for electronic payment is to be discussed with the service.

### Late or non-payment – all services

- Late or non-payment will be followed up with the service admin and person in charge initially to support payment
- Escalation may be to the nominated supervisor and if no success then referred to Council's Finance department.
- Council's Finance department may refer the matter to an independent debt collection agency. If this occurs, Fees payable will then include legal costs associated with debt collection.
- Future access to all Council's children's services will be denied until full payment is received.
- Consistent late payments and unreliable fee payment behaviour may result in an enrolment being ceased.

### Review of Fees

- Fees are set annually by Melton City Council.
- The service fee considers Melton City Council's contribution, government grants and service user payments.

### Financial Hardship

- Any families experiencing difficulty in meeting fee payments should contact the Coordinator/Team Leader as soon as possible to discuss options available to them.
- A fee payment plan and agreements may be made to ensure families and children have continued access to the service and other children's services within the City of Melton.

### In terms of CCS for Programs

CCS is a payment made by the Australian Government to assist families with the cost of childcare. Parents/guardians are entitled to receive CCS if they are Australian residents.

The rate of CCS a parent/guardian is entitled to depends on their combined gross household family income, the hours of activity and the service type they attend. Assessment is subject to meeting the full requirements of the State Government immunisation and Australian citizenship/residency requirements.

To receive a reduction in Fees based on a family's CCS entitlement, families are required to link their child(ren) to the service. To do this the parent/guardian needs to contact the Department of Human Services (DHS) and advise DHS that their child(ren) will be using the service. Parent/Guardians are required to confirm their child's enrolment at the service through their MyGov account prior to care commencing to ensure a confirmed their CCS status.

DHS provides the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) with information on a family's entitlement to CCS, and the service uses this information to reduce Fees charged according to the percentage of CCS the family is entitled to. If the parent/guardian does not apply for CCS prior to care starting, full Fees will be charged until CCS is linked to the service.

The service has no control over what percentage of CCS a family receives, and the parent/guardian is responsible for advising DHS of any changes to their family income or eligibility for CCS. Further details regarding CCS can be found at the DHS website.

### Absences from care

Absences from care fall into two categories that relate to eligibility for the payment of CCS:

- **Absence days**  
Each child is eligible for CCS for the first 42 absences from care across all approved childcare services within each financial year. These absences can be taken for any reason and do not require supporting documentation, but they are only available on a day on which care would otherwise have been provided if the child was not absent, and the family was charged for the care.
- **Additional absence days**  
Once the first 42 absence days have been used, CCS is only payable for any additional absences where:
  - the absence relates to a day on which care would otherwise have been provided if the child was not absent, and
  - the absence is taken for an additional absence reason with supporting medical certificates/documentation, and
  - the additional absence refers to the illness of child, parent or sibling, with medical certificate, non-immunisation, periods of local emergency, pupil free days or requirements of court orders or parenting plans.

Documentation for additional absence days must be submitted within a fortnight of the absence date otherwise full Fees will be charged.

## In terms of the Vacation Care Program

### Fees, charges and CCS

- The Vacation Care Program charges a daily fee.
- Incursions and Excursions incur an additional cost. Current costs are advertised on the program flyer.
- Fees are payable for all booked days regardless of attendance.
- Fees are not payable on Public Holidays.
- At the end of the program all bookings are submitted to CCS.
- CCS then informs the service of the exact amount of CCS the family is entitled to and, if information on entitlements differs from the initial statement, adjustments are made.
- A final statement is sent to families and any adjustments to their account must be paid by the due date stated.

### Unpaid fees and final statements

Refer to Late Non-Payments section.

### Public Holidays

The program does not operate on Public Holidays. No Fees are payable. In terms of Family Day Care, this is subject to Educator availability.

### Cancellations

Cancellation of bookings can only be made up until the enrolment close date specified on the enrolment form. After that date, cancellations will only be accepted at the discretion of program management.

## In terms of Family Day Care

### Payment of Fees

- Parents are required to pay Fees for all care that has been utilised and booked, and any other charges that apply.
- Fees and any extra charges are documented, and rates provided to the parent prior to commencing care.
- Fees are calculated fortnightly by the Family Day Care Coordination Unit. The educator provides a copy of the timesheet to the parent and payment is due one week after the fortnightly timesheet period has finished.
- In the event there are outstanding Fees, any future care will be denied, and the child's place forfeited. Families experiencing financial difficulties should contact the team leader/coordinator to discuss payment of Fees.
- The educator, upon payment, will provide a receipt to the parent/guardian.

## 6. References, Sources, Links to Legislation and Other Documents

6.1. Please refer to Reference and Sources page.

6.2. Related service policies:

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

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- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and procedure.*