

# Ballina River Street Children’s Centre Payment of Fees Policy

POLICY CREATED DATE:	POLICY REVIEW DATE:
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## AIM

- To ensure that the Centre operates within the annual budget.
- To ensure the Centre provides an accessible, affordable, quality education/care service for families and their children within available resources (including financial resources).
- To adhere to guidelines and regulations as set by the funding and licencing body, NSW Family & Community Services.

## RATIONALE

- Ballina River Street Children’s Centre Inc. is a community based children’s service operating on a not-for-profit basis.
- A budget based on the overall number of children expected to attend the Centre and the NSW Family & Community Services funding contribution will be used as the basis for setting fees.
- The Centre’s income will ensure the provision of an appropriate and quality service for all children so that all aspects of their development can be maximised.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Enrolment Fee

1.1 An enrolment fee per child is payable on enrolment into the Centre for either Preschool or Occasional Child Care. This fee is payable only once each year even if using both services. Children are enrolled into the Centre and may

use either or both services. This fee covers annual membership, personal accident insurance for children, and contributes toward administrative costs.

1.2 The full fee will be charged for the first child of a family enrolling in either Preschool or Occasional Child Care, with fees reduced for second and subsequent children enrolling, and for enrolment in Terms 3 or 4.

National Quality Regulation 168(2)(k)

National Quality Standard 7: Element 7.3

This fee will be an annual non-refundable fee.

## **2. Payment of Occasional Child Care Fees.**

2.1 Fees for Occasional Care are charged on an hourly basis. No pro-rata rate will apply.

2.2 If payment is made in cash it is to be made on the day of care and payment will be receipted directly. Families using both Monday and Thursday may pay both days together on Thursday. Occasional Child Care permanent staff will be responsible for accepting and receipting fees.

If you wish to pay via internet banking, fees must be received within 3 days of care being used. If 2 days per week are used, both days may be paid together. If payment for Occasional Care is not received within 2 weeks of use, further bookings will be refused until fees are paid.

2.3 The total amount charged will be calculated from the time of arrival (sign in) to the time of departure (sign out).

## **3. Payment of Preschool Fees**

3.1 A Term fee account will be issued to all families at the beginning of each term (there are 4 terms per year) or at the time of Enrolment for children who commence preschool during a term.

3.2 At the time of enrolment families must nominate their preferred system of payment e.g. weekly, fortnightly or per term; after which payment of fees must be kept up to date.

3.3 If weekly or fortnightly payments lapse it will be presumed that you are nominating to make a term payment.

3.4 If you nominate to pay fees by the term, the amount in full is due by the end of Week 6 of each term. If payment in full is not received, the late payment of fees penalty may be imposed.

*(See Section 5 - Late Payment of Preschool Fees for details).*

3.5 Payment will need to be made at the Office (during Office hours as signposted on noticeboard near the Office) for direct receipt. Payments received via internet banking will be receipted on the next office day and receipts placed in your folder in the basket in your child's preschool room.

## **4. Payment of Preschool Fees on Public Holidays/Staff Only Days/ Children's Absences on Preschool days.**

4.1 Payment of fees ensures the security of children's enrolled places within the Preschool groups.

4.2 Fees are payable for all enrolled days at all times, with the exception of Centre closure between terms (i.e. School holidays), and Staff only days.

4.3 Fees are payable for all Public holidays and absences due to children's illness, isolation days in relation to illness and/or possible illness, family holidays taken during the child's usual days of enrolment, or any other reason.

4.4 When enrolled children are absent from Preschool, the Centre must be notified to ensure a possible interruption of fee payment is not interpreted as late or non-payment of fees.

## **5. Late Payment of Preschool Fees**

5.1 It is essential that all fees are paid on time and kept up to date to ensure the Centre is able to continue to operate.

National Quality Regulation 168(2)(k)

National Quality Standard 7: Element 7.3

5.2 If payment of weekly or fortnightly fees lapse it will be presumed payment is to be made on a term basis. Term fees are due for payment in Week 6 of each term. Late payment will incur a 'late fee penalty' (a sum of money as decided by the Committee and revised each year). If payment is not made by the end of each term and no contact is made by the family with the Centre Office, the enrolled child's place in the Centre will be forfeited and enrolment will not be renewed for the following term. If payment is made after the due date the late fee penalty will be imposed and the child's enrolment will continue. Parents will be reminded of this when the account is issued.

5.3 Whilst it is expected that all parents meet the expectation of this policy, it is understood by the Management Committee that at times, families have genuine hardship. In such situations parents are asked to discuss their situation with the Director and/or the Administrative Assistant to decide on a repayment arrangement. This will also be discussed with the Management Committee to ensure they are informed of the situation and will be treated confidentially at that level.

The repayment arrangement must be agreed upon by both parties (Management and Parent). Outstanding fees must be finalised at the end of each Term and may not be carried over to a following term unless agreed to by the Committee and Director in special circumstances. If not adhered to, notice will be given to the family that details are being given to the Centre's nominated debt collecting company for retrieval of the fees owing, and the child's enrolled place will be forfeited.

## **6. Notice of Departure from Preschool**

6.1 Notice of the departure of children from an enrolled preschool position must be given to the Centre Director, Administrative Assistant or Management Committee, to enable the enrolment of another child to fill the pending vacancy.

6.2 Two weeks' notice must be given or two weeks fees paid in lieu of that notice – if notice is not given or not able to be given. The ability to give 2 weeks notice does not apply if leaving the Centre on or after December 1. The Term fee including December must be paid even if not attending unless extreme circumstances apply, in which each situation would be considered on a case by case basis once referred to the Centre's Director.

## **7. Early Start and Late Finish Preschool Fee**

7.1 An "early start" from 8.30am is available at the Centre for working parents, or for those parents in need of extra care e.g. to travel for appointments, early appointments or other situations requiring children to be at the Centre prior to 9.00am.

7.2 A "late finish" until 3.30pm is also available for emergency care or other situations requiring children to be at the Centre after 3.00pm.

7.3 A fee determined by the Committee, and reviewed from time to time, will be charged for the additional half an hour of care. There will be no pro-rata rates available for care less than half an hour.

7.4 An "early start – late finish form" must be completed with payment option nominated on the form.

7.5 Should children arrive early and no early start form is completed, the early start fee will be added to the child's Term account.

7.6 Please note the early start & late finish times are not available for Occasional Care.

National Quality Regulation 168(2)(k)

National Quality Standard 7: Element 7.3

## **8. Child Care Benefit**

8.1 Ballina River Street Children's Centre Inc. is registered with the Health Insurance Commission as a Child Care Provider under this scheme.

The Centre is registered with the Family Assistance Office and our Carer Reference Number is: **555 – 017 – 379C**.

8.2 A full explanation of the availability of Child Care Benefit to families using this Centre is issued upon enrolment and can be found in the Parent Information Booklet. Please establish your eligibility to claim a rebate on fees paid, with the Family Assistance Office at Centrelink.

8.3 Only minimum Child Care Benefit can be claimed when using state funded Preschool or Occasional Care services (maximum Child Care Benefit is available when using Long Day Centre services). Our service is known as 'registered care' NOT 'approved care'.

8.4 Please ask at the Office for a Child Care Benefit receipt if you intend claiming a fee rebate through the Family Assistance Office.

8.5 Centre Fees **MUST** be paid prior to claiming the CCB rebate and claims for rebate can only be made on fees that have been paid for care already received.

## **9. Setting of Fees**

9.1 Fees are determined in collaboration with the Centre's Management Committee and Centre Director.

9.2 The budget is formulated annually and consequently the Fees are assessed, confirmed and set on an annual basis.

9.3 As the Centre runs as a not-for-profit service, fees supplement the State Government funding received through NSW Family & Community Services, to meet annual expenditure. This needs to be reviewed regularly, and the Fee schedule confirmed prior to the enrolment process that commences in August each year for the following year.

9.4 The Centre has a commitment to NSW Family & Community Services via the Service Agreement. The Centre's Fee schedule and Reduced Fee Rates should reflect the funding received, aiming for affordability and accessibility, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, to participate in this early childhood educative program in the year before school.

9.5 Families requesting a reduced fee rate must complete the Centre's Children's Services Affordability Assistance Application Form and provide all appropriate documentation within 14 days of commencing Preschool.

9.6 The reduced fee rate cannot be given retrospectively. If a claim for reduced fees is made more than 14 days after enrolment, the reduced fee will only apply from the date the application was received.

9.7 A low-income Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card must be held in order to receive reduced fees. This card must be presented at the office for copying for our records each time it is re-issued. (This is a Departmental requirement for our funding) If a new card is not presented when required, full fees will be charged.

9.8 Reduced fees are only available for Preschool attendance, not for Occasional Care.

## **Bad Debt**

National Quality Regulation 168(2)(k)

National Quality Standard 7: Element 7.3

10. If the account remains unpaid, it will be referred to a collection agency and the cost of any action they take will be added to the account.

10.1 If the account remains unpaid following recovery action, the accountee will be listed with Veda Advantage Services & Solutions Limited (or similar) as a default. This action may stop the accountee from obtaining credit in the next five years.

Sources

Ballina River Street Children's Centre Inc.