

Ballina River Street Children’s Centre

Payment of Fees Policy

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defines, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

National Education and Care Regulations

Quality Area 7: Leadership and service management

168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
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PURPOSE

For parents to gain a clear understanding of the service fee structure, ensuring children’s fees are paid on time.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, teachers, educators, staff, management and visitors of the service(BRSCC).

Policy Statement

Our service, Ballina River Street Children’s Centre Inc., has a commitment to ensuring our fees are as affordable as possible. The setting and payment of fees takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Department of Education- the guidelines within the Start Strong program and the Privacy Act. All records held at the Service (BRSCC0 will be maintained in accordance with BRSCC Confidentiality and Privacy Policies.

Families will be provided with a fees invoice at the beginning of each term (preschool) and clear information regarding the fee payment processes.

Aim

To enable BRSCC to provide a high quality early childhood education and care service for children, we need to ensure we are financially viable at all times. To achieve this BRSCC needs to:

- ensure that BRSCC operates within the annual budget.
- ensure that BRSCC provides an accessible, affordable, quality education/care service for families and their children within available resources (including financial resources).
- adhere to guidelines and regulations as set by the funding and licensing body, under the Start Strong Guidelines as set by the Department Of Education.

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 Department of Education funding agreement, guidelines and contribution, will be used as the basis for setting fees.

Child Eligibility Criteria: 4 years of age on or before the 31st July, 3 years of age (on or before 31st July) – low income Health Care or Pension card held in the family name, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Enrolled in a preschool program for 600 hours per year (7.5hrs x 2/15 hours per week) 2 days per week minimum, further information www.dec.nsw.gov.au Click on children icon & preschools Start Strong guidelines, or ask at the office.

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

Payment of Fees

Fees may be paid by Cash or Direct Deposit.

Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid weekly, fortnightly or by the Term.

Enrolment(Administration) Fee & Fundraising Levy

An annual enrolment(administration) fee (per child) is payable on enrolment into the Service(BRSCC), for either Preschool or Occasional Child Care. Children are enrolled into the Ballina River Street Children's Centre Inc. and may use either or both services (Preschool or Occasional Child Care). This fee covers annual membership, personal accident insurance for children, and contributes toward administrative costs.

The full enrolment 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. This fee will be an annual, non-refundable fee.

The fundraising levy is charged at \$10.00 per term, per family, for children enrolled in Preschool only, and is added to your term fee invoice.

Payment of Occasional Child Care Fees.

Fees for Occasional Care are charged on an hourly basis or for a full day. No pro-rata rate will apply i.e. part hours will be charged at the full hourly rate.

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 Thursday & Friday may pay both days together on Friday. Occasional Child Care Permanent Educators 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.

The total amount charged will be calculated from the time of arrival (sign in) to the time of departure (sign out). Bookings over the term break with need a deposit of \$10 (to be paid in advanced and is non-refundable) to secure your child's place over the holiday break, this deposit will be deducted from your fees on the day of attendance.

Payment of Preschool Fees

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 the term.

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.

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

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 - Late Payment of Preschool Fees for details).

Payment will need to be made at the Office to the Office Administrator or Centre Director for a 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.

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

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

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 at the end of the year.

Fees are payable for all Public holidays during term time 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 for any other reason due to exceptional circumstances e.g. closure because of extreme weather (flood, storms, cyclones, etc).

When enrolled children are absent from Preschool, please notify the Centre on the day via email or phone (leave a message if phone is unattended).

Late Payment of Preschool Fees

It is essential that all fees are paid on time and kept up to date to ensure that Ballina River Street Children's Centre Inc. is able to continue to operate.

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 of fees will incur a 'late fee penalty' currently \$50 for all term fee payments paid after week 6, or for fees not paid by the end of term.

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.

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 Centre 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.

Notice of Departure from Preschool

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

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 (4) fees 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.

Child Care Benefit- Child Care Rebate

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**.

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.

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'.

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

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.

Setting of Fees

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

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

As the Centre runs as a not-for-profit service, fees supplement the NSW State Government Funding received through NSW Department of Education Funding Start Strong agreement, to meet annual expenditure.

This needs to be reviewed regularly, and the Fee schedule confirmed prior to the enrolment for the following year. The census is completed in August each year for funding allocation the following year.

The Centre has a commitment to NSW Department of Education 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

Overdue Fees

Parents/guardians with overdue fees will be encouraged by the Centre Director to discuss any difficulties they may have in meeting payments and make suitable arrangements to pay, including the option of a payment plan. If this is not done, or the agreed arrangements are not kept, the matter may be referred to a debt collector and/or cancellation of the child's booking may occur.

Late Collection of Children Charge

BRSCC reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians have not collected their child/ren from Ballina River Street Children's Centre before closing time 3.30pm. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Parent Management Committee and based on BRSCC's need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages.

Roles	Authority/responsibility for
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Ensure BRSCC operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011.❖ Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements.❖ Develop a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardians 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 BRSCC and removing those barriers wherever possible.❖ Providing parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges at the beginning of each term.❖ Notifying parents/guardians with 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.
Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Providing parents/guardians with a statement/invoice of the fees and charges at the beginning of each term.❖ Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.❖ Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.
Early Childhood Educators Certified Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Referring parent's/guardians questions in relation to this policy to the Approved provider, Nominated Supervisor or Administration Officer.

Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reading this policy and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor or the Administration Officer. ❖ Provide all information, paperwork and documentation to the office, in regards of low income concession on enrolment or as updates are required. ❖ Record the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending Preschool or Occasional Child Care. ❖ Ensure fees are kept up to date at all times. ❖ Provide 2 weeks' notice of withdrawal for Preschool. If the child does not attend during this 2 week notice period full fees will be charged. ❖ Notifying the Approved Provider or the Nominated Supervisor (Centre Director) if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.
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Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of changes to our Start Strong guidelines, will be reviewed in 2018.

Families and educators/staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R.172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, BRSCC will ensure that families of children enrolled at BRSCC in the Preschool or Occasional Child Care services are notified at least 14 days before making any changes to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Centre; a family's ability to utilize the Centre; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Source

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) www.acecqa.gov.au
- NSW Department of Education –Start Strong Guidelines 2016
- Community Child Care Cooperative –www.ccccnsw.org.au
- The Business of Child Care, Karen Kearns
- National Quality Standards
- Revised National Quality Standards
- Childcare Centre Desktop Policies – www.childcarecentredesktop.com.au

Review

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
January 2018	Changes to policy format and updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard	August 2018