# FEES - FREE KINDER

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA VERSION 1.4

## PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- how services comply with the Free Kinder funding requirements.
- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's.

## POLICY STATEMENT

The safety, health, wellbeing, rights and best interests of every child are the paramount consideration and must guide all decisions, actions and practices of educators within the education and care service.

### VALUES

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kinder initiative
- increasing access to quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children
- 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.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, parents/guardians attending Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's.



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| RESPONSIBILITIES | Approved provider and persons with management or control | Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge | Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff | Parents/guardians | Contractors, volunteers and students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **R** indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted | | | | | |
| 1. Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative *(refer to Definitions)* | R | √ | √ | √ | |
| 2. Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees (if applicable) and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service *(Regulation 168)*, and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed *(Regulation 170)* | R | √ | | | |
| 3. Ensuring that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures. | R | √ | | | |
| 4. Ensuring families are informed of the total annual fee amount, including any applicable fees for e.g. excursions and any additional hours | R | √ | | | |
| 5. Reimbursing families in full for enrolment deposits that have already been paid upon acceptance of enrolment | R | √ | | | |
| 6. Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted) | R | √ | | | |
| *7.* Ensuring families are only charged for optional kindergarten programs hours that are over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 hours per year) and/or "wrap around" care *(refer to Definitions).* for children eligible for more hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder, there will be no charge for a program between 16 and 25 hours per week (2026-27). | R | √ | | | |
| 8. Ensuring that children enrolled in a kindergarten program are not charged higher fees in comparison to children that are not attracting kindergarten funding | R | √ | | | |
| 9. Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines *(refer to Sources)* | R | √ | | | |
| 10. Providing communication to families explaining their access to one year of three-year-old and one of four-year-old funded kindergarten program | R | √ | | | |



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| 11. Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service **nominate and document** at which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program | R | √ | | √ | |
| 12. Ensuring that any surplus funding is used in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding, including to promote increased participation and/or enhance program quality | R | √ | | | |
| 13. Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted | R | √ | | | |
| 14. Charging families only for an occasional special event/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum | R | √ | √ | | |
| 15. Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning is enrolled at the service and recorded on the Arrival system | R | √ | √ | | |
| 16. Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the Arrival system | R | √ | √ | | |
| 17. Ensuring that the *Fees - Free Kinder Policy* is readily accessible at the service *(Regulation 171)* | R | √ | | | |
| 18. Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kinder *(refer to Attachment 1)* | R | √ | | | |
| 19. Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges to families that have opted in to the additional hours/wrap around care *(refer to Attachments 2)* upon enrolment of their child, if applicable | R | √ | | | |
| 20. Providing all parents/guardians with an additional hours payment fee agreement *(refer to Attachments 3)*, if applicable | R | √ | | | |
| 21. Informing parents of any action that will be taken if additional hours fees are not paid *(refer to Attachments 3)* | R | √ | | | |
| 22. Reading the Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's Free Kinder information for families *(refer to Attachment 1)*, the Statement of Additional Hours Fees and Charges *(refer to Attachments 2)*, and the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement *(refer to Attachments 3)* if applicable | | | | √ | |
| 23. Signing and complying with the Additional Hours Fee Payment Agreement *(refer to Attachments 3),* if applicable | | | | √ | |
| 24. Ensuring any additional hours fees are collected and receipted | R | √ | | | |
| 25. Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of additional hours fees | | | | √ | |



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| 26. Providing agreement in writing if any additional payments are made to the Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's | | | | √ | |
| 27. Complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees | R | √ | √ | √ | |
| 28. Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the additional hours fees charged, or the way in which the fees are collected *(Regulation 172(2))*, ideally providing one term's notice. | R | √ | | | |
| 29. Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the approved provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative *(refer to Sources)* | R | √ | √ | √ | |
| 30. Informing the approved provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding additional hours fees at the service | | √ | √ | | |
| 31. Providing all parents/guardians with fee information *(refer to Attachment 1)* | | √ | √ | | |
| 32. Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child/ren | R | √ | | | |
| 33. Providing all parents/guardians with a Complying Written Arrangement *(refer to Definitions and Attachment 2).* All arrangements must be recorded, either on paper or electronically, and must be kept by the provider | R | √ | | | |
| 34. Ensuring that once the approved provider enters into a Complying Written Arrangement *(refer to Definitions)* with a family, they must submit an enrolment notice within seven days of the end of the week in which the arrangement started | R | √ | | | |
| 35. Informing families that children who haven't attended a session of care in 26 consecutive weeks will no longer be eligible for Child Care Subsidy *(refer to Definitions)* | R | √ | | | |
| 36. Informing families if they are receiving Child Care Subsidy *(refer to Definitions)*, the must update Centrelink on any changes to their income, activity and other circumstances via their Centrelink online account | R | √ | | | |
| 37. Ensuring fees are collected and receipted | R | √ | | | |
| 38. Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable | R | √ | | | |
| 39. 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 | R | √ | | √ | |



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| 40. Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days before any proposed changes that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. *(Regulation 172(2))* | R | √ | | | |
| 41. Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner | R | √ | | | |
| 42. Reading the Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's Fee information for families *(refer to Attachment 1)*, and complying with the Complying Written Arrangement *(*refer *to Definitions and Attachments 2)* | R | √ | | | |
| 43. Notifying the approved provider if they are experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees | | | | √ | |
| 44. Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service *(Regulation 168)*, and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed *(Regulation 170)* | R | √ | | | |
| 45. Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements | R | √ | | | |
| 46. Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability | R | √ | | | |
| 47. Communicating with families at enrolment about fees, including:<br>• the amounts charged<br>• payment periods and methods<br>• how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy will be applied<br>• notice periods<br>• how they can access copies of statements/receipts<br>• financial hardship considerations and payment plans | R | √ | | | |
| 48. Communicating with families what the daily fee covers | √ | √ | | | |
| 49. Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of the Commonwealth Governments Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy *(refer to Sources)* | R | √ | | | |
| 50. Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered | R | √ | | | |
| 51. Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families | R | √ | | | |
| 52. Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and where possible in the family's first language | R | √ | | | |
| 53. Ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service *(Regulation 171)* | R | √ | | | |



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## BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

### BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reforms are transforming early childhood education by expanding access to funded kindergarten programs and increasing funded hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the progressive rollout of More Hours for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

As part of these reforms, Free Kinder supports Victorian children to access funded kindergarten programs by reducing or removing parent fees associated with funded kindergarten hours. These initiatives aim to ensure all children can benefit from high-quality early childhood education and receive the best possible start to learning and development.

Regulation 168(2)(n) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires approved providers to maintain a comprehensive written fees policy and communicate the policy to families. Any voluntary parent contributions, donations or fundraising activities must align with current Victorian Government kindergarten funding requirements, including Free Kinder funding guidelines where applicable.

*Regulation 168(2) (n) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires that Early Childhood Education and Care services have a comprehensive written fees policy, 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 fees at the time of enrolment.

Australian families receive help with the cost of child care through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). The Victorian Government Department of Education (DE) and Services Australia, administers the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Providers must be approved by the department to receive CCS.

DE is responsible for the legislation that underpins CCS. This legislation is called Family Assistance Law (FAL). All providers that receive CCS must follow the rules under FAL. DE monitors providers' compliance with FAL.

The Australian Government subsidises the cost of child care. State and territory governments are responsible for the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.

The Australian Government considers that immunisation is an important health measure for children and their families, as it is the safest and most effective way of providing protection against harmful and often deadly diseases. To meet the Child Care Subsidy immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the standard vaccination schedule, be on an eligible catch-up vaccination schedule or have an approved exemption from being immunised.

CCS is paid directly to approved providers and passed on to families as a fee reduction.

Additional Child Care Subsidy provides additional fee assistance to support vulnerable or disadvantaged families and children. This support recognises the preventative and protective influence of quality child care on a child's health, wellbeing and development; and the importance of continuity of care.

There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:

- Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)—to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work.

The Inclusion Support Program is designed to assist early childhood education and care services to include children with additional needs by providing support, in the form of practical and tailored



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advice and strategies on effective inclusive practice, from contracted Inclusion Agencies as well as funding to address more challenging inclusion barriers.

The Community Child Care Fund is designed to help eligible child care providers address barriers to child care participation, particularly in disadvantaged communities, including Indigenous communities.

### LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance and Related Measures) Act 2000
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017
- Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017
- Child Safe Standards
- 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 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

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

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

## DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Notifiable Complaints, Serious Incidents, Duty of Care, refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

**Additional Hours/Wrap around care:** care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program. Wrap around care fees are not funded by the Victorian Government but may be covered by CCS *(refer to Definitions).*

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

**Centrelink**: The agency that delivers payments and services to individuals and families on behalf of the Australian Government.

**Child Care Safety Net:** Targeted assistance to vulnerable and at-risk children and their families, as well as supporting child care services in disadvantaged communities to address barriers in accessing child care.

The Child Care Safety Net has three components:

- Additional Child Care Subsidy
- Community Child Care Fund



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- Inclusion Support Program

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

**Complying Written Arrangement:** A written arrangement between a child care provider and an individual to provide child care in return for fees. The arrangement includes certain required information:

the names and contact details of the provider and the individual(s)
the date the arrangement starts
the name and date of birth of the child (or children)
if care will be provided on a routine basis and if so
- details about the days on which sessions of care will usually occur
- the usual start and end times for these sessions of care
- whether care will be on a casual or flexible basis (in addition to, or instead of, a routine basis)

details of fees charged under the arrangement (providers can reference a fee schedule or information available on their website), which the parties understand may vary from time to time.

Additional information can be included to support the individual's understanding of their payment obligations

**Early Start Kindergarten (ESK):** A funding program that provides eligible children 15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten program each week for two years before starting school. To be eligible a child must by 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with child protection. Details are available at: www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten If a child is eligible for ESK, they should be enrolled in ESK, even where Free Kinder and/or 15 hours per week of funded three-year old kindergarten is offered. This ensures eligible children have priority access to 15 hours of funded kindergarten provided by an early childhood teacher and that service providers receive additional funding and support. ESK enrolments contribute to School Readiness Funding (SRF) calculations for service providers. It also allows the Department to continue to monitor efforts to engage the most vulnerable children in kindergarten across Victoria and provide additional targeted support where required through SRF or Early Childhood LOOKOUT.

**Waitlist fee:** A fee for when families register their child directly with a service (not part the councils central registration and enrolment scheme). This fee will not be refunded as it is not part of the Free Kinder subsidy, and not related to the fee charged for delivery of the kindergarten program. A service may charge for one-off excursions/incursions, and registration fees (sometimes called waitlist fees). Waitlist fees are returned to families once they have accepted a kindergarten place.

**Excursion/service event charge:** An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge *(refer to Excursions Regular Outings and Service Events)*

**Excursion/service event charge:** An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge *(refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy).*

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

**Free Kinder:** A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing a free 15-hour program to 4-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5 to 15-hour program to 3-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)



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- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service

**Funded Kindergarten:** For service's that have not opted for Free Kinder, the Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high-quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Funded kindergartens charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual kindergartens and depend on things like how many hours children attend and whether there are extra costs such as excursions.

**Enrolment deposit:** A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This should not act as a barrier to enrolling for any families. Services must ensure that families understand that the enrolment deposits will only be refunded if the child commences in the service.

**More hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder:** Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will gradually transition to increase 4-year-old kindergarten hours over the next decade from 2025. Funded kindergarten hours will double from 15 to up to 30 hours a week. More hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long-day-care centres. By 2036, children across Victoria will have access to 1,800 hours of funded kindergarten before school, comprising 600 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and 1,200 hours of More hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder.

**Priority cohort for more hours of 4-year-old kindergarten:** From 2026, between 16 and 25 hours of more hours of 4-Year-Old Kinder (Pre-Prep) will be available to:

- First Nations children
- children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- children who have had contact with Child Protection
- children who were supported by Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) or Access to Early Learning (AEL) in their 3-Year-Old Kindergarten year.

4-Year-Old Kinder hours for this group of priority cohort children increase to up to 30 hours from **2028.Voluntary parent/guardian payment/donation**: A voluntary payment/donation for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program. Explicit and written agreement from a parent is required for any voluntary payments. Attendance at the service is not conditional on this payment.

**Late collection fee:** A charge that may be imposed by the approved provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program *(refer to Attachment XXXXXXXXXXXX1)*

## SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Department of Education: Child Care Subsidy (CCS): www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/child-care-subsidy
- The Child Care Provider Handbook: www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook
- Best Start Best Life: https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education): www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: https://www.vic.gov.au/resources-funded-kindergartens
- The constitution of Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's

RELATED POLICIES

- Compliments and Complaints



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- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions Regular Outings and Service Events
- Governance and Management of the Service
- Inclusion and Equity
- Privacy and Confidentiality

## 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
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation and government policy, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*.
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*

## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Free Kinder information for families
- Attachment 2: Fee Information for Families

## AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's on OCTOBER 26.

**REVIEW DATE:** OCTOBER 27



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## ATTACHMENT 1. FREE KINDER INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's 2027

### 1. General information

Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

Free Kinder provides families with a free program in sessional services and a fee offset in long day care services.

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

| **Term dates 2027** | **Kindergarten sessions: 8am – 3:30pm** |
|---|---|
| **Term 1** | 29th January 2027 – 25th March 2027 |
| **Term 2** | 12th April 2027 – 25th June 2027 |
| **Term 3** | 12th July 2027 – 17th September 2027 |
| **Term 4** | 4th October 2027 – 16th December 2027 |
| **Planned Closures** | Public holidays |

| **Green**<br>3-year-old | **Orange**<br>3-year-old | **Yellow**<br>3-year-old | **Red**<br>4-year-old | **Blue**<br>4-year-old | **Pink**<br>4-year-old |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tues & Thurs<br>8am – 3:30pm | Mon & Fri<br>8am – 3:30pm | Wed & Fr<br>8am – 3:30pm | Tues & Thurs<br>8am – 3:30pm | Mon & Wed<br>8am – 3:30pm | Tues & Thurs<br>8am – 3:30pm |

**AFTER KINDER CARE**

4-year-old - After Kinder Care 3:30pm-6.00pm (Monday – Thursday)

3-year-old - After Kinder Care 3:30pm-6.00pm (Monday – Friday)

**SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM**

Kindergarten sessions do not run during school holidays. We do have limited availability for long daycare/holiday program during the school holidays for families who still require their children to attend. These are charged at the same rate as long daycare.

**LONG DAYCARE / Pink CCS Funded Program**

Full Days 8.00am - 6.00pm Monday to Friday

The long daycare program runs through the school holidays.

### 2. What Free Kinder means at our service

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's has opted in to the Free Kinder initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:



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Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children (up to 15 hours per week) – no parent fee
Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (15 hours per week) - no parent fee

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's will reimburse families in full for any kindergarten fee deposit *(refer to Definitions)* payments that have already been made upon acceptance of enrolment, excluding any voluntary parent donations/payments that you agree to in writing.

### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges, displayed at the service.

These include:

**Excursion/service event charge**: At times throughout the year an excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. A $10 - $15 charge for each event, depending on the cost of the excursion or event. The charge will be relayed to the families and added to their fee statement.(refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy).

**Late Collection Charge**: The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge 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.

**After Kinder Care fees**: (available to children enrolled in the 3 and 4-year-old sessional kindergarten programs) Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare offers an After Kinder Care program outside of the 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) in the sessional kindergarten programs. Numbers are capped and availability is not guaranteed. After Kinder Care is available to all families that have a place in one of the sessional kindergarten programs and must be prebooked on a permanent basis. Fees will be applied even when the child is absent for any reason.

**Daily Fees**: Children enrolled in the sessional kindergarten programs have access to additional days in the long daycare program (space permitting) outside of their 15 hours per week (600 hour per year) of funded kindergarten. The additional days will be charged according to the daily fee rate as outlined in the statement of fees and charges and fees will be applied even when the child is absent for any reason.

**Fundraising and voluntary parent payment/donations**

While **participation in fundraising/donation is voluntary**, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

### 4. Subsidies

### 4.1 Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

**Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is an Australian Government subsidy that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved child care provider. Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's is an approved/registered care provider.**

Approved child care are providers that meet certain standards and requirements, and are approved by the Australian Government. Approved child care providers must:

- hold the required approvals or licences to provide child care in the state or territory that the service/s operate 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 and Family Day Care Educators



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The amount of subsidy received is determined by the circumstances of the applicant's 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.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy

Long day care providers that offer funded kindergarten as part of the long day care program are required to directly offset the full payment of the Free Kinder initiative from parents' out of pocket fees (after CCS is applied). Fee reductions will be made proportionally across the year to families' bills, i.e. fortnightly or monthly. Only children receiving a funded kindergarten place at Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's], led by a qualified teacher, are eligible under this initiative.

Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for providers that primarily provide an early educational program to children in the year that is two years before grade one of school (preschool or kindergarten).

**5. Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.



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## ATTACHMENT 2. FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's 2027

**1. General information**

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare abides by the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017 (refer to Legislation and standards).* The Child Care Subsidy helps by assisting families with their child care fees and provides greater assistance to low and middle-income families. The Child Care Safety Net provides families and services extra support if they are vulnerable and disadvantaged or located in a regional or remote community.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hours of operation** | 8am – 6pm |
| **Planned Closures** | Public holidays and three weeks over the end of year / New Years break |

**2. How fees are set**

As part of the budget development process, Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's 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
- 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 Child Care Subsidy: www.education.gov.au

Once fees are set for the year, they will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if enrolments drop and the service is at risk of not being able to meet its expenses.

3. **Other charges**

Other charges levied by Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's include:

**Excursion/service event charge:** At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. A $10 - $15 charge may apply for each event, depending on the cost of the excursion or event. ***(refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy)***.

**Late collection fee**: Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This charge will be set at a level determined by Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's.

**4. Statement of fees and charges**

A statement of fees and charges will be provided to families on enrolment *(refer to Attachment 3)*.

**5. Payment of fees**

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare's Committee of Management will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations. A Direct Debit Authorisation Request form must be completed when submitting the online enrolment form. All fees will be processed via your chosen method ie; direct debit from your nominated bank account or credit card on a weekly basis.

The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.



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**For children who commence in the long daycare program later than the scheduled start date:**

Children are not able to commence before their 3rd birthday. Where families wish to hold a place at the service, full daily fees are required for all days booked prior to the child's 3rd birthday/start date.

**Note: CCS cannot be applied for the days prior to the child's start date.**

If the child is already 3 years of age they are able to commence the program immediately

Payment is required for all permanent bookings even if the child is absent from the centre for illness, holiday, or for any other reason.

Payment is NOT required when the centre is closed for public holidays for those children whose permanent bookings fall on these days.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Centre Coordinator 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. Cancellation of booking**

Families are asked to provide 2 weeks' notice of the cancellation of a booking. Fees will continue to apply for the 2 weeks' notice period unless cancellation of booking is due to an illness and a medical certificate is provided.

**7. Unpaid fees**

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

- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- 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.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

**8. Refund of fees**

Fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the approved provider/nominated supervisor. There will be no refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled. Credits or adjustments may be applied at provider discretion.

**9. Fundraising**

Fundraising is undertaken to meet the balance and/or pay for additional items for the service. While participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

**10. Support services**



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Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from management or alternatively families may contact the local council.

**11. Notification of fee changes during the year**

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents/guardians will be notified one term in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.



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