FEES POLICY - KINDERGARTEN
Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE
This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc., and it’s member services by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc..

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES
Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

2. SCOPE
This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Parent Advisory Group, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at Inc. Centre.

3. PROCEDURES
The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- 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
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with the Parent Advisory Group(PAG), parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DEECD’s Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria (refer to Sources)
- ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy (refer to Definitions)
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Centres and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family’s first language where possible
• providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1)
• providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges each child, and ensure that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
• providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (as attached to enrolment form)
• collecting and receipting all fees
• collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
• 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 (Regulation 172(2))
• ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Centres.

All Early Childhood Staff are responsible for:
• assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy (refer to Definitions)
• implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DEECD’s Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria (refer to Sources)
• considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Centres and informing the Approved Provider of those issues
• communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family’s first language where possible
• providing all parents/guardians with access to a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to Attachment 1)
• ensuring that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service
• providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement
• collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
• 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 Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Centres.
• informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service
• referring parents'/guardians’ questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider
• assisting the Approved Provider, as required, in sighting supporting documentation for access to the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:
• complying with the Fee Payment Agreement
• notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
• providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for eligible families (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).
**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
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’s policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Fee information for families

**AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. on 30\textsuperscript{th} July 2012

Reviewed and Approved; 30\textsuperscript{th} June 2017

**REVIEW DATE:** JULY 2019
ATTACHMENT 1

Fee information for families

Why fees are necessary:
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides per capita
funding as a contribution toward the costs of providing a four-year-old kindergarten program.
Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DEECD provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families
to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge, or at a minimal cost.

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

Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. provides a range of support options to parents/guardians
experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

1. How fees are set
As part of the budget development process, Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc Inc sets fees each year
for the Kindergarten programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee
  Subsidy
- 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 the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy (details in the Victorian
  kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria document available at

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances.

2. Other charges
Other charges levied by Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. are included on the Statement of
Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Excursion/service event charge:** This additional charge is required to cover the cost of
  excursions or special events that occur throughout the year in response to emerging
  children’s program needs and interests. Affordability and relevance to the children’s
  interests and the service program will be taken into consideration before a decision is made
  that will require families to pay this additional charge (refer to *Excursions and Service Events
  Policy*). Events that are planned ahead are included as an expenditure item in the service’s
  budget and do not incur this additional charge.

- **Late collection charge:** The Board 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 Board, and will reflect the costs involved in
  employing staff for additional time.
• **Overdue Fee:** The board reserves the right to charge a fee on accounts more than 60 days overdue.

3. **Statement of fees and charges**
   A statement of fees and charges for four-year-old or three-year-old kindergarten will be included with Enrolment forms

4. **Fundraising**
   Not all service costs are covered by DEECD per capita funding and the fees charged. 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.

5. **Subsidies**
   5.1 **Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (Funded Kindergarten programs only)**
   The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DEECD and enables eligible children to attend kindergarten free of charge or at minimal cost. Eligibility conditions change from time-to-time – contact the service for further information.
   Families who may be eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four-year-old programs only) include those who are:
   - Health Care Card holders
   - Pensioner Concession Card holders
   - Department of Veterans’ Affairs Gold Card holders
   - Temporary Protection/Humanitarian Visas 447, 451, 785 or 786
   - Asylum seekers on Bridging Visas A–F
   - Refugee and Special Humanitarian Visa 200–217
   - Resolution of Status (RoS) visa, Class CD, subclass 851
   - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
   - triplets or quadruplets attending a funded kindergarten program in the same year.
   
   Supporting documentation must be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid. Contact the GRPSA Office for further information.

5.2 **Early Start Kindergarten fee subsidy**
   Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection are eligible to attend a funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. The service receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the GRPSA office for further information.

5.3 **Child Care Benefit (CCB)**
   Child Care Benefit (CCB) is an Australian Government payment that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved or registered care provider. Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc.
Inc. is not an approved or registered care provider with the Family Assistance Office (FAO). However, some individual centres are registered care providers. Please check with your Centre.

Approved care is childcare that meets certain standards and requirements, and is approved by the Australian Government. Approved care providers must hold a licence to operate, have qualified and trained staff, be open certain hours and meet health, safety and other quality standards. Most long day care, family day care, before-and-after school care, vacation care, some occasional care and some in-home care childcare services are approved providers.

Registered care is childcare provided for work-related purposes, including training and studying, maternity leave, sick leave or voluntary work, and the work-related purpose must have occurred at some time during the week in which the registered care was used. Registered care is provided by individuals registered with the Family Assistance Office (FAO) and may include care given by kindergarten staff.

The amount payable is set by the Australian Government. Further details are available at www.familyassist.gov.au or telephone the FAO on 136 150.

6. Payment of fees
The Board will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families’ cultural and financial situations.

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the third week of each term. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child’s commencement at the service. Receipts will be issued on request.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the office of GRPSA on 5826 2780 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.

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, or phone call made 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 establish a payment plan.
- Failure to comply with an agreed payment plan will trigger a letter notifying parents/guardians that the child’s place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or the payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time, and that the debt may be referred to a collection agency.
- The Board 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.

8. Refund of fees
If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term fees will be provided. Fees may still apply for programs offering more than the required minimum hours per week.

In any other case, fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Board. 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 one or more days when a qualified educator is absent and a qualified reliever is not available
- 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.