

FEES POLICY



*Play, laugh...
...learn, grow!*

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

Goulburn Region Preschool Association (GRPSA) is committed to keeping fees affordable for all families. Fees will be set at an amount that balances:

- The capacity of parents to pay
- The provision of a high-quality service
- The financial viability of the service

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- The setting, payment, and collection of fees
- 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:

- 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

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at a Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc. Service.

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 parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisors and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE's *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*.
- Ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy*
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Services 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

- Will endeavour to establish a suitable arrangement for the payment of fees (appendix 1) particularly in relation to outstanding accounts
- 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
- Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges for each child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- Providing all parents/guardians with a link to the Fees Policy upon offer of enrolment
- 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
- Ensuring that all accounts not paid by the due date will be deemed outstanding and the fee collection process will be implemented
- Ensuring that if care is ceased due to non-payment of fees, that the service is under no obligation to resume care unless a vacancy exists and monitoring that all long daycare fees are paid in full by the end of each year. If not, care will not be available in the following year if not paid in full, and the vacancy will be offered to the next family on the waiting list
- The Service will keep families informed of any changes in regulations regarding fee subsidy and have information on services available that may be of assistance to them
- 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. Services.

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*
- Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DE *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria* or the requirements of childcare funding
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Services 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
- Ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service **and online**
- Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- Assisting a family and applying for ACCS Child (CCS services) at risk on their behalf should it be deemed necessary, 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
- Ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Goulburn Region Preschool Assoc. Inc. Services.
- Informing the Approved Provider/Service Leader 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/Service Leader
- Assisting the Approved Provider/Service Leader, 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/Service Leader if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- Contacting Services Australia and applying for assistance under the Financial Hardship provision (CCS families)
- Parents/Guardians are liable for all childcare usage charges regardless of CCS eligibility
- It is the responsibility of families to apply for CCS assistance, please see <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/centrelink> or contact your nearest Services Australia Office – 136150
- It is the responsibility of the families to ensure their records with Services Australia are up to date

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider/Service Leader 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))

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Funded Kindergarten Programs, Service based Care - CCS Approved Service - fee information for families and Service based care – Non-CCS Approved service – fee information for families.

AUTHORISATION

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

Reviewed and Approved; 30th June 2017

Reviewed and approved; 11th July 2019

Reviewed: August 2021

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Reviewed: May 2023

Reviewed: October 2023

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Reviewed: July 2025

Reviewed: August 2026

REVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2028

ATTACHMENT 1

All children are enrolled through XPLOr.

Children enrolled in a long day care program, occasional care, school holiday program or before/aftercare program are required to sign up for XPAY in XPLOr.

Failure to sign up for XPAY can result in the cease of care for the child.

FUNDED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

NO PROGRAM FEES ARE CHARGED FOR 3- AND 4-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN (Late Pickup Fees are still applicable).

<https://www.vic.gov.au/free-kinder>

LATE PICKUP FEES

- Our services are not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. This is a breach in the Education and Care Regulations.
- A late pick-up fee of \$15.00 for the first 15-minute block is incurred when a child, for any reason, is collected after hours or session. After the initial 15 minutes, \$15 will be charged for each 5-minute block. For example, close time is 5:30. Child is collected at 5:50pm. The family will be charged \$30. Please refer to the Delivery and Collection of Children policy (available at www.grpsa.com.au or at your service).
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are late more than 2 times picking up their children. GRPSA will determine if their care is to be ceased.
- There is no CCS applicable on late pickup fees.

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.

SERVICE BASED CARE – CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Fees are set out in the Fee Schedule available at your service and provided to you upon enrolment.
- Fees are payable on a child's enrolment, not on attendance. This includes sessions that a child is absent for reasons including illness or injury, family choice, family holidays, public holidays. No fees will be charged when the Service is closed over the Christmas period. See ABSENCES and ANNUAL CLOSURE for further information.

CCS PROGRAMS:

- Upon enrolment a CWA (Complying Written Agreement) will be created between the parent/guardian registered for CCS and the service. The CWA must be signed by the parent/guardian via XPLOr. If a parent/guardian has requested and been approved for a change of enrolment (days or program), a new CWA will be sent through XPLOr for the parents to sign.

- Services Australia pays CCS to approved providers to pass on to families as a fee reduction. In limited circumstances, Services Australia may pay CCS directly to a family.
- Services Australia set a maximum hourly rate of subsidy for each care type.
- Services Australia withholds 5% of a family's CCS. If a family receives too much CCS, the withholdings that have been set aside will reduce what they owe at the end of the financial year.
- Families who get CCS must make a co-contribution to their child care fees. This is a requirement under Family Assistance Law. They do this by paying the difference between the provider's fee and the CCS amount. This is known as the gap fee.
- The approved provider must provide access to a statement of entitlement to families who get CCS every fortnight. The statement of entitlement is available to access through XPLOR.
- Families must regularly check their details are correct and report a change in circumstance to Services Australia (family income, activity levels, relationship changes or any other changes to their circumstances)
- Any disputes with CCS are the responsibility of the family. The family will be referred to contact Services Australia directly for any enquiries regarding CCS.

DISCOUNT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

CCS PROGRAMS:

- Our services offer a discounted fee to all staff we employ whose children are enrolled at one of our services. The discount will not affect the employee's CCS entitlements.
- The discount will only be applied after the employee returns the completed and signed AUTHORISATION TO DEDUCT OUTSTANDING FEES FROM WAGES form.
- The discount is 25% of full fees after CCS has been applied. (Department of Education – Childcare discount for early childhood workforce). Fees need to be up to date in order to receive the discount.

ABSENCES

CCS PROGRAMS:

- Families are requested to contact the Service if their child is unable to attend a particular session.
- Under CCS families are allowed 42 absence days per child, per financial year. Once the child has reached 42 absence days, CCS will no longer apply on the days the child is absent from the service, and the full fee is payable. Please also note CCS does not apply to a child's first or last day of care if they are absent; if this is the case families are responsible for paying the full fee for those days. Families can view their absence count through their Services Australia online account via MyGov. CCS is not applied for any of the first permanent booked days up until the first day that they do attend, and not on the final day or any days prior that they are absent.
- Additional absences can be claimed for the specified reasons as defined by the Family Assistance Law where suitable evidence is provided. Evidence will be kept by the service for each additional absence, where required. Families are also required to upload the evidence as a form via their Centrelink online account. This is now an additional requirement.
- In a period of local emergency, such as bushfire, flooding or pandemic, and our service is temporarily shut down as a direct result of an emergency, families *may* be provided with additional absence days as per Family Assistance Law legislation. Full fees will still be charged for these days including when the Service deems staff and/or children are at risk.

- If a period of emergency is declared in the Local Government Area of the service location or the service is forced to close as a result of a public health directive, we *may* be able to waive gap fees in line with Family Assistance Law legislation.

SCHOOL HOLIDAY AND AFTER/BEFORE CARE BOOKINGS

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Bookings for school holiday programs will be charged even if your child does not attend, unless you provide 14 days written notice of a cancellation.
- Permanent after and before care bookings will be charged even if your child does not attend during term. After and before care bookings will not be charged during school holidays.

LATE PICKUP FEES

- Our services are not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. This is a breach in the Education and Care Regulations.
- A late pick-up fee of \$15.00 for the first 15-minute block is incurred when a child, for any reason, is collected after hours or session. After the initial 15 minutes, \$15 will be charged for each 5-minute block. For example, close time is 5:30. Child is collected at 5:50pm. The family will be charged \$30. Please refer to the Delivery and Collection of Children policy (available at www.grpsa.com.au or at your service).
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are late more than 2 times picking up their children. GRPSA will determine if their care is to be ceased.
- There is no CCS applicable on late pickup fees.

CHILD EXITING THE SERVICE

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Parents are to provide 14 days written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the service. This needs to be done in writing by completing a cancellation of care form and emailing to the service or to admin@grpsa.com.au
- If termination from the Service is required without notification, CCS (if applicable) may not be payable, therefore full fees will be payable.
- If there is a waiting list at the service, the service can reduce the amount of notice required with approval from the Service Leader or CEO.
- A final account for childcare fees will be issued upon receiving a 14 day written notice of cancelling childcare and must be paid in full prior to the child terminating the service.
- Full fees will be charged if the child is absent on their last booked day of care, and any absence directly prior.

CHANGING OF ENROLMENT (change to days/program)

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Parents are to provide 14 days written notice of their request to change their child's enrolment. This needs to be done in writing by completing a Request to Change form and emailing to the service or to admin@grpsa.com.au
- Any changes in a child's booked days are subject to availability.

CHANGE OF FEES

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of 14 days written notice is given to all families.
- CCS and fortnightly hours (if applicable) are governed by Services Australia and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software.

- Services Australia can at their discretion and with no notification to the service or families, remove previously paid CCS or pay CCS direct to the parent.

CASUAL BOOKINGS

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Casual bookings will be accepted if there are vacancies. Families utilising casual places will be required to use XPAY and charged at the normal fee.
- Non-payment of fees will result in care not being available.
- If you request casual bookings weeks/days in advance and then when the week of the booking/s comes around, and you no longer require the booking you will still be charged for that booking. We require 24-hour notice of any cancellations of casual bookings.

NON-ATTENDANCE

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

Regular non-attendance at the Service without notification will result in your child being unenrolled. You will also be liable for the following two weeks, of your regular bookings, as your notice period.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

- Normal fees will be charged for all statutory public holidays excluding Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. These days add toward your child's allowable absences of 42 days per financial year (for CCS Programs only).
- If a public holiday falls on a permanent booked day, this booking cannot be moved to another day within the week, however, an additional casual booking can be requested if a spot is available.

ANNUAL CLOSURE

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

No fees will be charged when the Service is closed for approximately a fortnight over the Christmas period. The dates for the closure are determined annually by Goulburn Regional Preschool Association Inc.

Goulburn Regional Preschool Association Inc., as the approved provider may review and change the closure date if the financial viability of the service is at risk. Parents will be given 28 days' notice of any change.

CATASTROPHIC DAY CLOSURES

CCS PROGRAMS & NON-CCS PROGRAMS

On Catastrophic days where a service closes, there will be no refund or discount on fees.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

- All fees are due on the date of invoice (this date is the Statement Generated date on XPLOR statements). All fees not paid by due dates will be deemed outstanding.
- Fees are due on the Thursday following the statement being generated on XPLOR, unless otherwise arranged by emailing admin@grpsa.com.au
- Statements and invoices are available via XPLOR.
- Fees payable on direct debit payments as per the Fee Payment Agreement.
- Any fees or charges incurred due to insufficient funds being available for direct debit payments will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Families will incur the rejected payment fee as per noted in the Fee Payment Agreement.

- Should a direct debit payment be unsuccessful, 1 further payment attempt will be made. If the second payment attempt is unsuccessful, the account will be deemed to be outstanding and the Fee Collection Process – Outstanding Accounts will apply. *See FEE COLLECTION PROCESS - OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTS below.*

FEE COLLECTION PROCESS - OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTS

- All fees not paid by due dates will be deemed outstanding.
- Parents/guardians with outstanding fees (meaning a payment has been rejected more than two times), will be sent a rejection letter, providing you with one week to pay the outstanding balance or to email us to arrange a payment plan prior to the due date. This is sent as a pdf, along with the statement, via XPLOr and email and an SMS sent alerting you to the letter.
- If we do not receive payment or hear from families regarding their unpaid balances, an Overdue Account Letter will be emailed, sent via XPLOr and an SMS sent to the person(s) responsible for the payment of fees, requesting that fees be brought up to date within 14 days, or care will be ceased.
- Debts that remain outstanding will be referred to a Debt Collection Agency/law firm for further action.
- In the event where the outstanding account is referred to a collection agency and/or law firm, the parents/guardians responsible for the account will be liable for all costs which would be incurred as if the debt is collected in full, including legal demand costs.
- If a family fails to pay outstanding debt and debt is still outstanding after the above processes have been followed, they will not be allowed to enrol in any other GRPSA services including kinder programs. Children could be unenrolled from current kinder programs if outstanding debts are not paid.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with the Approved Provider. Please email admin@grpsa.com.au as soon as possible.

CCS PROGRAMS

- Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance if they are experiencing temporary financial hardship
- 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. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support who are at risk of harm
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment