

## **Childcare Policy No: 3 FEES**

### **Mandatory - Quality Area 7**

#### **PURPOSE**

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Pines Learning Childcare, by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Pines Learning Childcare

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

##### **VALUES**

Pines Learning Childcare 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 government funding and fees to be paid by parents/guardians

##### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge and, parents/guardians attending Pines Learning Childcare

The service provider is Pines Learning and the Approved Provider is Pines Learning Inc. The Approved Provider delegates its responsibility for the day to day operation of the service to the Nominated Supervisor.

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					
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 ( <i>Regulation 168</i> ), and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed ( <i>Regulation 170</i> )	R	√			
Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	R	√			
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	√			
<p>Communicating with families at enrolment about fees, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the amounts charged</li> <li>• payment periods and methods</li> <li>• how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy will be applied</li> <li>• notice periods</li> <li>• how they can access copies of statements/receipts</li> <li>• financial hardship considerations and payment plans</li> </ul>	R	√			
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 ( <i>refer to Sources</i> )	R	√			
Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	R	√			
Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	R	√			
Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally sensitive way, and where possible in the family's first language	R	√			

<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	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
Ensuring that the <i>Fees Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service ( <i>Regulation 171</i> )	R	√			
Taking reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, ECT/educators, staff and volunteers follow this policy and procedure ( <i>Regulation 170</i> )	R	√	√		√
Providing all parents/guardians with fee information ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> )	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child/ren	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a Complying Written Arrangement ( <i>refer to Definitions and Attachment 2</i> ). All arrangements must be recorded, either on paper or electronically, and must be kept by the provider	R	√			
Ensuring that once the approved provider enters into a Complying Written Arrangement ( <i>refer to Definitions</i> ) with a family, they must submit an enrolment notice within seven days of the end of the week in which the arrangement started	R	√			
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 ( <i>refer to Definitions</i> )	R	√			
Informing families if they are receiving Child Care Subsidy ( <i>refer to Definitions</i> ), the must update Centrelink on any changes to their income, activity and other circumstances via their Centrelink online account	R	√			
Ensuring fees are collected and receipted	R	√			
Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable	R	√		√	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	R	√			

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
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. ( <i>Regulation 172(2)</i> )	R	√			
Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner	R	√			
Reading the Pines Learning Childcare Fee information for families ( <i>refer to Attachment 1</i> ), and complying with the Complying Written Arrangement ( <i>refer to Definitions and Attachments 2</i> )				√	
Notifying the approved provider if they are experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees				√	

## **BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION**

### **BACKGROUND**

*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 Australian Government 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 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 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 1995 (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](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://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, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

**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
- Inclusion Support Program

**Child Care Subsidy (CCS):** A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible parents/guardians with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers.

**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

**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.

**Enrolment fee deposit:** A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the Pines Learning Childcare

**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 1*)

## **SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES**

### **SOURCES**

- Department of Education: Child Care Subsidy (CCS): [www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/child-care-subsidy](http://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](http://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook)

### **RELATED POLICIES**

- Compliments and Complaints
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions and Service Events
- 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
- 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
- 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: Fee information for families
- Attachment 2: Complying Written Arrangement

### **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Pines Learning Childcare on 22/10/2024.

**REVIEW DATE:** 22/10/2025

## ATTACHMENT 1. FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Pines Learning Childcare [year]

The below information is a guide and must be adapted to suit each individual service's requirements.

### 1. General information

[Service Name] 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	"[Insert days and times]"
Planned Closures	"[insert dates]"

### 2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, Pines Learning Childcare 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](http://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 Pines Learning Childcare include: [add or delete as required]

- **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. At this time any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made (refer to *Excursions and Service Events Policy*).
- **Late collection fee:** [Service Name] 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 Pines Learning Childcare.

### 4. Statement of fees and charges

A statement of fees and charges will be provided to families on enrolment (refer to *Attachment 2*).

### 5. Payment of fees

Pines Learning Childcare 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 on a [insert timeframe] basis. Invoices will show any childcare subsidy payments made by the Commonwealth Government and the remaining gap fee is to be paid by parents/carers within [insert number] days of the date of the invoice. Families are expected to pay the gap fee shown on the invoice each [insert timeframe] and not allow fees to fall more than [enter number] weeks into arrears.

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the [responsible person] 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 [insert number] weeks' notice of the cancellation of a booking. Fees will continue to apply for the [insert number] 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.
- [Service Name] 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.

## 7. Refund of fees

Fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the approved provide/nominated supervisor [delete whichever is not applicable]). 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 [delete if not applicable]
- 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.

## 8. 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.

## 9. Support services

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

## 10. 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.

**ATTACHMENT 2. COMPLYING WRITTEN ARRANGEMENT.**

[Service Letterhead]

Please complete this form and return to **Pines Learning Childcare** by [Date]

Parent Name			
Parent CRN			
Address			
Mobile		Email	

Child's Name:			Start Date		
Date of Birth			Child CRN		
Care Arrangements Type:					
Routine Sessions Only <input type="checkbox"/>			Casual Sessions Only <input type="checkbox"/>		
Times	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Please include the Start &amp; Finish Times for all booked days</b>					
Week 1					
Week 2 (if Different)					

- I/we acknowledge that the childcare service is funded by fees paid by parents/guardians. The service cannot operate without the fees paid by parents/guardians.
- I/we agree to pay "[enter amount]" fees in full in advance prior to commencing at Pines Learning Childcare and remain "[enter amount]" in advance at all times
- I/we acknowledge having received and read the attached summary of Pines Learning Childcare fees policy, which sets out the procedure for fee payment
- I/we understand that fees are non-refundable.
- I/we agree that if our activity and financial circumstances change, we will immediately notify Centrelink to ensure our Child Care Subsidy entitlements are up to date
- I/we acknowledge that if fees are not paid by the due date, Pines Learning Childcare will implement the late payment of fees procedures, as outlined in the Fee Information for Families, which could result in the withdrawal of my/our child's place at the service and no further enrolments until the outstanding fees are paid.
- I/we agree that if my/our financial circumstances change and I/we am/are unable to pay as agreed, I/we will immediately notify the [responsible position] to discuss alternative payment options.
- I/we acknowledge that I/we have received and read the service's Fee information for families, which outlines the procedure for payment of fees.
- I/we Agree to pay fees while the child is absent. Examples include annual leave, public holidays, illness, closure due to unforeseen circumstances etc.
- I/we acknowledge a late fee of [enter amount] will be charged to families for late payment of their account.
- I/we agree to collect my child/ren from Pines Learning Childcare prior to closing time.
- I/we agree to give [enter amount] written notice of when my child/children will be leaving Pines Learning Childcare.

Signature (parent/guardian): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** invoices, receipts and collection of fees will be in accordance with the Pines Learning Childcare *Fees Policy*