

Fee Policy

Hierarchy	Management – Policy Document		
Version	Approved by	Effective Date	Next review date
7	CEO	January 2026	January 2028

1 PURPOSE

To ensure our services are able to provide high quality early education and care for children we need to ensure we are financially viable at all times. Our services' financial health and access to our service will be maximised by ensuring families are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolment.

2 SCOPE

The policy applies to all SCECS staff, volunteers and families, guardians and account holders.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services (SCECS) has a commitment to ensuring our fees are as affordable as possible and that all families have access to any subsidies that are available to reduce these fees. The setting and payment of fees takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the Child Care Provider Handbook. All records held at services are maintained in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

Families will be provided with accurate fees statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes.

4 POLICY IN ACTION

4.1 FEE INFORMATION

- The fee schedule and fee payment obligations will be explained to families during the enrolment process and are contained in the Family Handbook.
- Fees charged are based on daily session fees.
- Families will be given a minimum of 14 days' notice of any fee increase.
- The same fee will be charged to all families for equivalent care arrangements.
- Invoices are generated fortnightly in advance and statements are available at all times via the on-line parent portal.
- Families are required to pay fees in advance. A dated receipt, in accordance with Australian Government Guidelines, will be provided for each payment.
- Families are required to pay session fees on public holidays if the holiday falls on their regular booked day.

- SCECS determines the session fees to meet the service budget for the year taking into consideration escalation in costs such as employee wages increases, recruitment, rent reviews, and increases in food or consumable costs.
- Fee payment will be recorded according to Australian Government guidelines. Families may also view details about their child care usage and total fees charged and the fee reductions calculated by Services Australia (Centrelink).
- Families should contact the service to advise of their child's inability to attend as soon as this is known. Fees will still be required on days the child would normally attend.

4.1.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE BOND

- A bond is required to secure an enrolment at one of our early childhood services offering preschool and long day care. This bond must be paid prior to commencement at the Service.
- The bond is non-refundable when the child does not start at the service or less than two weeks' notice is given of the cessation of bookings.
- The bond will be refunded or applied to family account when two weeks' notice in writing is given of withdrawal or cessation of bookings, the fees are fully paid in advance and no amount is expected to be outstanding when the child leaves the service.
- At any other time, the bond, any refunds or account credits may be refunded to the family upon written request and paid within 4 - 8 weeks of the request or last attendance at the service. This is to allow for any CCS reconciliation on the account.

4.1.2 LATE COLLECTION CHARGE

- SCECS reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents or guardians have not collected their child/ren from the service before closing time.
- This charge will be set at a level determined by Management and based on the service's need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages.

4.1.3 SEARCH FEE

- SCECS reserves the right to apply a search fee per child and is applied when families do not notify the service in advance of their child's absence.

4.1.4 OVERDUE FEES

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

4.1.5 FEE RELIEF

- Families not eligible for CCS who do not have the capacity to pay full fees may be eligible to apply for fee relief through the Service, Centre Director or Customer Service team.
- Fee relief may be offered to asylum seekers, refugee families, or account holders (not eligible for CCS – e.g. Visa Holders) experiencing significant changes in financial circumstance (e.g. illness, death, loss of work).
- Eligibility and the value of the fee relief is assessed by the CFO before the commencement of each term.
- SCECS offers staff a discount on the session gap fees for their children.

4.2 CHILD CARE SUBSIDY SYSTEM (CCSS)

- Our service will comply with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved education and care service for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy (CCS), reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS will be maintained by the service.
- It is the enrolling parent/guardian's responsibility to register for CCS through their myGOV account, provide their projected annual income, activity levels and the name of our service.
- All fees are charged at the full rate. Each family's eligibility for CCS is then calculated and the service is then forwarded these funds. Deductions may then be made to each individual family's accounts.
- Any changes in a family's financial circumstances may result in changes or cancellation of CCS. It is the family's responsibility to keep their details on myGov current and contact the Centrelink office if they wish to dispute assessments or discuss it further.
- Families will only be eligible for CCS if child care attendance records are accurately completed and signed by the parent/guardian or other responsible adult, and other eligibility requirements are met.
- Families are entitled to 42 absence days for each registered child in each financial year. CCS is paid for these days provided that the child would normally have attended on that day, and fees have been charged.
- Additional absences can be claimed when the first 42 days have been used. Supporting documentation may be required for approval of additional absences.
- All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request.

4.3 ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (ACCS)

If you are eligible for CCS, you may get extra help with the cost of approved child care. To get ACCS you must be eligible for CCS, and you need to be 1 of the following:

- an eligible grandparent getting an income support payment
- transitioning from certain income support payments to work
- experiencing temporary financial hardship
- caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

4.4 PAYMENT OF FEES

- Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid two weeks in advance.
- Fees are to be paid by electronic funds transfer using direct debit. By special arrangements fees in advance may be paid electronically at the early childhood service or by direct deposit (internet banking).

4.5 ACCOUNTS IN ARREARS

- Account holders have 15 days from the date of the invoice to settle the invoiced amount or the account is suspended, and no new bookings can be accepted.
- Declined payments are notified by email immediately and settlement is retried at least weekly until the invoice is paid, the account is fully settled or a payment plan is agreed.

- Escalation of accountholder disputes are discussed with the CFO to adjudicate and identify opportunities for settlement or commence recovery procedures. Debt recovery procedures include and are not limited to
 - Email notification of failed payments and overdue accounts balances
 - Email, phone and face to face discussions to understand the cause of the arrears
 - Notification in writing of the arrears and potential cancellation of future bookings
 - Agreement in writing of payment plans and consequences of failed payments
 - Email requests for settlement and/or letters of final demand are issued to account holders refusing to discuss overdue accounts and all future bookings are cancelled to avoid escalation of the debt.
 - Referral for debt collection or commencement of small claims action
- The CEO and CFO may approve a write of debt in the event that recovery becomes too costly to pursue and where all reasonable steps have been taken and evidenced in the efforts to collect the outstanding fees.

5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 APPROVED PROVIDER

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Family Assistance Law and Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
- 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.
- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible.
- Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges.
- Ensuring that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service.
- 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 the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service.
- Enter into a Complying Written Agreement (CWA) with a parent or guardian, to provide education and care services in exchange for fees. A CWA is an agreement between the education and care service and a parent or guardian. It will include:
 - The provider and parents contact names and details
 - The date the arrangement is effective from
 - The child or children's full name and date of birth
 - Session days and start/end times
 - Details of the fees to be charged
- Update any changes to the CWA as required.

5.2 NOMINATED SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBLE PERSON

- Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges.
- Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.
- Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.

- Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service. relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.

5.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

- Referring parents/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisors.

5.4 FAMILIES, GUARDIANS AND ACCOUNT HOLDERS

- Reading this policy and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the nominated supervisor.
- Obtain a Customer Reference Number from Services Australia (Centrelink) as soon as practical before enrolment at the service.
- Record the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending care.
- Pay for any booked day of education and care which falls on a public holiday.
- Ensure all fees are kept two weeks in advance at all times.
- Provide documentation for additional absence days as required.
- Provide two weeks' notice of withdrawal from service. If child does not attend during this two week notice period full fees will be chargeable.
- Notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.

6 Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, will be reviewed every 3 years.

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

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

7 Related documents

RELATED GUIDELINES, STANDARDS, FRAMEWORKS

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership Standard
 - 7.1 Governance supports the operation of a quality service
 - 7.1.2 Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
 - 7.1.3 Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service

RELATED LEGISLATION

- Family Law Act 1975 (Cth), as amended 2011

- Family Assistance Law 2017: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/provider-obligations/family-assistance-law#toc-legislation>
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 111, 168, 170,171, 172

SOURCES

- Child Care Subsidy System reporting requirements
CCS www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy
- Family Assistance Law – Incorporating related legislation in Appendix G
- Child Care Provider Handbook
<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook>
- NSW Early Learning Commission- <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/regulation-and-compliance>
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – www.acecqa.gov.au

Version	Approved by	Date approved	Modifications
6	CFO	March 2022	Merging of Fee Policy and Fee Collection Policy
7	Operations Manager, CFO	April 2025	Details of bond, search fee and overdue fee recovery processes added
8	COO	January 2026	Revision to Regulatory Authority, NSW Early Learning Commission