

Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership

Fees



Introduction

To enable Kootingal & District Preschool to provide high quality Early Education and Care for children we need to ensure we are financially viable at all times. Our service's financial health and access to our service will be maximised by ensuring families are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolment. Families will be provided with accurate fees statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes. Our service will advocate with governments for all children's right to access Early Education and Care regardless of their family's financial situation.

Goals – What are we going to do?

Kootingal & District Preschool receives funding from the Department of Education including Start Strong funding and the Higher Learning Support Needs funding. The *Fees* Policy outlines the fee payment terms and conditions for families accessing the Preschool. All funding received, and monies collected as fees or fundraising are used directly to operate and resource the Preschool.

To enable our service to provide high quality early education and care for children we need to ensure we are always financially viable.

Kootingal and District Preschool financial health and access to our service will be maximised by:

- Ensuring families are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolment
- Keeping fee increases to a minimum
- Ensuring the cost of administering fee collection is minimised
- Following the appropriate priority of access requirements
- Following all legal requirements required by our access to government funding
- Managing fee collection to avoid bad debts
- Families are notified as far ahead as possible and no less than 14 days of any changes to fees or the ways fees will be collected
- Ensuring we issue invoices of fees on a regular basis

Strategies – To achieve our goals

Priority of Access criteria for enrolment

Kootingal & District Preschool follows priority of access for enrolment of children as outlined in the NSW Government Start Strong Funding guidelines.

- Children who are at least 4 years old on or before the 31 July in that preschool year.
- Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July and from low income or from Aboriginal families.
- Children with English Language needs.
- Children with disabilities who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year.
- Children who are at risk of significant harm.

Please note: There is no order of priority assigned to the list of points above.

Start Strong Funding

Families are able to opt in to claiming Fee Relief funds at Kootingal & District Preschool or another Early Education and Care Service. When funds are allocated to Kootingal Preschool this allows families to access 2 days free preschool per week.

Fee Relief funds not allocated to Kootingal Preschool requires families to pay full daily fee.

Daily Attendance Fees

These are based on children's age and eligibility criteria for equity funding as below:

- Children who are at least 3 years old on or before 31 July and have a low-income healthcare care card in their name and/or a diagnosed disability/additional need and/or a NDIS plan and/or from an Aboriginal or First Nations family.
- Children who are at least 4 years old on or before the 31 July in that preschool year.
- Children who are 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year.

All fees are calculated based on child's enrolment and does not include any absences.

Enrolment Fee

An initial enrolment fee of \$100 is payable. This includes a hat, preschool t-shirt, jumper, portfolio folder, Mother's & Father's Day gifts, excursions and regular programs, association membership fee and insurance for the child.

For subsequent years, a fee of \$50 for association membership and insurance, Mother's & Father's Day gifts, excursions and regular programs, association membership fee and insurance for the child will be invoiced in by term 1.

Late Collection Fee

This is applied when a child has not been collected by 4pm. A late collection charge of \$20 will apply for the first 15 minutes after 4pm. Each 15 minutes thereafter will receive another \$20 charge.

Parents wishing to discuss their child with the Director or an Educator, needs to do so within Preschool licenced hours ie., 8.30am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday term time.

Absence, Sick days, and Family Holidays

- No refund will be given for any absences.
- Placement will be terminated where a child is absent for over two weeks and no notification given. Families will be charged attendance fees for these weeks.
- Where a child is absent (notified or not) for a period of 4 weeks (consecutive days or not) their position may be relinquished at the discretion of Director/Nominated Supervisor.

Families requiring positions for when their child turns three:

The Nominated Supervisor and Administrative Assistant will:

- Inform families that a position cannot be held for a child who has not turned three years of age, ie. is currently two and will be turning three throughout the year.
- Will notify families of the Waitlist form on our website, and upon their child turning three, if there are vacancies/positions currently available within the service, the child will be able to start their position immediately.
- Inform families that if they can be placed on the waiting list for when their child does turn 3.

- Send families the online enrolment form to be completed prior to their child beginning

Fee Payable/Accounts

- The Approved Provider will determine the required fee level to meet budget prediction for the year.
- The fee schedule and fees payment policy will be fully explained to families during the enrolment process.
- Fees payable will be based on either daily or weekly amounts.
- Families will be given a minimum of 14 days' notice of any fee increase.
- The service will implement two separate fee structures: one for families eligible for equity funding and one for families who are not equity eligible.
- Families are required to pay fees in advance. A dated receipt, in accordance with Australian Government Guidelines, will be made available if requested.
- Families are not required to pay fees on public holidays if the holiday falls on their regular booked day.
- 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.
- In circumstances where a third-day position is available and offered, this additional day may incur a fee payable by the family.

Payment of Fees

The required fee payment method for preschool fees is direct debit with weekly or fortnightly payments. The Administrative Assistant provides parents/guardians with an invoice each term prior to commencement. Fees are payable from the agreed commencement date and must be paid two weeks in advance.

- Fee payment system in the following sequence;
 - Week 1: invoice generated to commence from the beginning of term based on information provided
 - Week 3: a reminder email is sent if any fees remain outstanding
 - Week 4: a final reminder email is sent and child is unable to return and a debt collection service may be accessed if fees are not finalised

When applying for Disability Inclusion Program funding (DIP) parents must provide a signed consent form for any funding being applied for through Kootingal Preschool. Parents of children identified as being eligible for DIP funding must provide evidence for the Nominated Supervisor to submit an application for additional support funds to support their child's inclusion.

NDIS funding approved within a child's NDIS Plan can be used to pay for fees for NDIS therapy-based supports (speech therapy, occupational therapy and/or psychological therapy) delivered in the Preschool under the NDIS Early Childhood program. NDIS Plan funds cannot be used to pay preschool fees. Prior to enrolment in the Preschool, families/ guardians of children with a NDIS Plan are advised of the fees applicable. Families are required to provide a copy of their child's NDIS plan prior to their child accessing supports.

Procedure for withdrawing enrolment

- 2 weeks' notice is required in writing (to the Director or Office Admin) to advise the service that the child will be withdrawn. The letter/email must state the date of their last day.
- Fees will be charged up to the end of the two weeks from the date at which notice was received in writing, whether or not the child attends the service during those 2 weeks.
- The final account is to be issued immediately to the family advising if payment is due.
- Families must ensure the account is paid prior to final attendance.

- If no payment is received the debt recovery process is to start immediately.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility For
Approved Provider (in conjunction with the Nominated Supervisor and the Administrative Officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011. ➤ Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements. ➤ Developing a fee policy that balances that 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. ➤ Update any changes as required.
Nominated Supervisor (in collaboration with Admin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected. ➤ Ensure all families are made aware of service fees and available subsidies on enrolment. ➤ Ensure all families are aware that both parents are responsible for fee payments. ➤ Join in advocacy actions designed to reduce the cost of early education and care fees for families. ➤ Ensure new enrolments will comply with Start Strong guidelines.
Administrative Assistant (in collaboration with Nom. Sup.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Providing parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges. ➤ Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlements to concessions, where applicable. ➤ Submit records to Dept. on a regular basis and ensure subsequent fee reductions are passed on to families as soon as possible. ➤ Children referred by Early Intervention agencies or Foster Care agencies requiring enrolment for two days a week, the family will, regardless of eligibility; equity funding be granted. ➤ Ensure families are aware of fee payment options. ➤ Ensure statements of fees are issued when necessary or requested by a parent. ➤ Everyone will be charged full fees (non-equity) until a current Health Care Card, or Pension Card with the child listed on the card or the family identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and confirmation is received, or NDIS requirements are received.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement the following overdue fee process with any families whose fees are not up to date. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When fees are initially in arrears a friendly fee reminder will be sent advising that they have one week to pay account. The fee reminder will state that the child's position will be cancelled if the account is not paid. 2. If the outstanding amount is not paid the child's position will be cancelled and a final statement will be sent stating that they have two weeks to pay the account in full. 3. If there is an amount outstanding after this time the account will be sent to the debt collection agency. 4. In the case of a cancellation of a child's position and then subsequent payment of the outstanding amount in full, the child, child's siblings, or children of either parents may rejoin the waiting list but must pay any fees into the future at least 2 weeks in advance. ➤ In relation to Debt collection, any fees or charges occurred by the preschool in recovering the debt will be added to the outstanding amount and is to be paid by the family.
Early Childhood Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Director/Nominated Supervisor or Administrative Assistant.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reading this policy and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the Director/Nominated Supervisor or Administrative Assistant. ➤ Pay fees a fortnight in advance. ➤ Provide a copy of a Health Care/Concession card or NDIS plan to receive equity rates ➤ Sign the Start Strong Fee Relief Declaration form nominating which service the fee relief will be claimed at. ➤ Ensure that the child is signed in/out each day their child attends care. ➤ Ensure all fees are kept two weeks in advance at all times. ➤ Provide 2 weeks' notice of withdrawal from service. ➤ Notify the Director/Nominated Supervisor and/or Administrative Assistant if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Management and staff will monitor and review the effectiveness of the Fees policy regularly. Updated information will be incorporated as needed.

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this policy every 12 months.

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 Regulation 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.

Links to other policies:

Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy Collection Statement

Enrolment and Orientation

Complies with:

NQS

Quality Area 7	Governance and leadership
Standard 7.1	Governance

National Regulations

Reg	168 (2)(n)	Payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care services
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Sources:

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA] – www.acecqa.gov.au
- National Quality Standards
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Family Law Act 1975 [Cth], as amended 2011
- The Department of Education – www.education.gov.au/early-childhood

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