

Fees Policy

RATIONALE

KAZ Early Learning Centre prides itself on the quality service it provides, including above regulation staffing in both number and qualifications. Fees are charged equally to all families and are based on the hours the Service is open.

Families with a child enrolling at KAZ Early Learning Centre are eligible to apply for Child Care Benefit fees subsidy. Child Care Benefit is paid by the Family Assistance Office to assist families with the cost of care. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to apply for Child Care Benefit. Families who qualify for Child Care Benefit (CCB) may also qualify for Childcare Tax Rebate (CCR) through the Family Assistance Office.

AIMS

To ensure families and staff understand the procedures to be followed in regard to the payment of fees.

To ensure the financial requirements of all families is met enabling the service to meet its budget requirements and to continue to provide a high quality service.

PROCEDURE

Deposit/Enrolment Fee

Prior to commencement of care a deposit comprising of two (2) weeks full fees is to be paid to the service. Children will not be permitted to commence at the service until the appropriate deposit has been paid.

The deposit is held as a bond until the child ceases to attend and will be refunded at this time after being offset against any outstanding or final fees owing. Two weeks written notice is required when a child ceases at the service. If notice is not given the deposit will be retained by the service to cover the fees incurred during this period.

The amount held as bond will need to be increased whenever the fee rate increase or child's attendance days increase.

Payment of Fees

Fees are to be paid by the first day of care for the current week's booked care; failure to pay by this time will be regarded as an outstanding fee account. If families are unable to meet this requirement and pay fees by this time, they are required to telephone the Manager and discuss satisfactory alternative arrangements.

Where families are entitled to Child Care Benefit Subsidy full fees will need to be paid on enrolment until the service receives notification from the Family Assistance Office about a families Child Care Benefit entitlement.

Fees are payable when children are absent due to illness and or holidays taken during the services opening hours. Fees are not payable during Christmas shut down. Fees will be paid for public holidays as staff still need to be paid. If children are absent due to family leave/holidays, fees are to be paid before the absence commences or the position will be considered vacant.

Methods of Payment

Payment of fees may be made at the Service with cash, cheque, or direct deposit. Cheques should be made payable to *KAZ Early Learning Centre*.

All cash and cheque payments are to be made in separate envelopes giving details of child's name, amount enclosed and reason for payment (e.g. fees, excursion, hat etc).

Cash payments for fees must be handed to a staff member who will count the cash and record the amount in a payment log, which will be signed by both the staff member and the parent/guardian. The money will be placed immediately into the envelope (labelled with the child's name and the amount enclosed) which will be sealed and placed in the fees box. Once the payment has been entered into the Services' Child Care Management System program, an official receipt will be issued in the usual manner.

Outstanding Fee Accounts

Fee accounts that are 1 week in arrears will result in the issue of a *Notice of First Warning* being sent to families requesting the immediate payment of outstanding fees. After the issuing of the *Notice of First Warning*, if fees are still unpaid and become 2 weeks in arrears; a *Notice of Final Warning* will be issued requesting immediate payment. Failure to pay this account within the date specified will result in the child's position being forfeited.

Dishonoured Cheques

If a cheque for fees is dishonoured the outstanding fee account must be paid immediately as well as the dishonour fee. If two cheques are dishonoured within a two-month period, KAZ ELC will no longer accept this method of payment for that account and the family will be required to pay future accounts by direct debit or cash.

Fee Relief

Child Care Benefit

Parents/Guardians of children who attend *KAZ Early Learning Centre* may be eligible to receive Child Care Benefit Subsidy through the Family Assistance Office (FAO). To claim this benefit, families must register at the Family Assistance Office located in Centrelink, Medicare or the Australian Tax Office. It is the family's responsibility to register with the FAO and provide all required information, prior to enrolment.

Once registered, an electronic notification will be sent from the FAO to *KAZ Early Learning Centre* informing of your CCB percentage and eligible hours. Families are also asked to bring a copy of the letter they receive to the service as confirmation. We will adjust your fees accordingly informing

you of your weekly fees. The Family Assistance Office will pay the subsidy to KAZ Early Learning Centre directly and parents/guardians are required to pay the 'gap' fee.

Families may also elect for Childcare Tax Rebates to be paid direct to the service. Please note however, that weekly statements only calculate 'estimate fees' based on current information. Once attendances have been forwarded to Department of Social Services, Centrelink will send back rebate information and the 'actual amount' will be shown on the statement.

Families can choose to pay full fees throughout the financial year and receive Child Care Benefit as a lump sum after the end of that year from the Family Assistance Office. Full fee paying families are still required to supply child and family CRN numbers.

The 'Gap' Fee - The Commonwealth Government sets an hourly 'ceiling' on fees for which they will pay Child Care Benefit. The fee ceiling changes annually. KAZ Early Learning Centre's hourly fee is higher than the fee ceiling set by the Commonwealth government so this means that you will pay what is referred to as the 'gap' fee.

Allowable Absences - Families claiming Child Care Benefit are only entitled to 42 days absence from the service per year where CCB is payable (other than *Approved Absence Days* such as absence due to illness where a medical certificate is provided to the service). After the 42 days has been reached families are no longer entitled to claim CCB for additional absent days and will be charged full fees. Each child receives a new set of 42 allowable absence days at the beginning of the financial year. Allowable absence days can be taken for any reason but cannot be claimed before a child has commenced care or after a child has left care.

Extended Absences -As the true purposes of CCB is to ease the burden of child care fees, not to reserve positions for children on extended leave from care, it is deemed not good business practice to claim for long periods of non-attendance. Therefore, any child absent from care for more than a four week period continuous (ie. family go overseas) will only be able to claim CCB for that four week period and not beyond. Families will be required to pay full fees to hold the position for any absences taken beyond the two weeks or withdraw from care. Absences may be backdated and CCB claimed on return to the service and any money owed will be applied to future fees. Fees must be paid in advance for the total for the total time absent prior to the start of the absence.

As a condition for families to receive Child Care Benefit (CCB), families must carry out specific responsibilities in order for payments to be claimed from the Government.

CCB Parent Requirements - Australian Government regulations in relation to Child Care Benefit compliance, states that it is a condition that families must:

- Sign or initial attendance records daily to show when your child starts care (time in) and finishes care (time out).
- Sign or initial attendance records each time your child is absent from care.
- Advise the Family Assistance Office when changes happen that may affect your CCB. These include when your:
 - Child starts with a new child care service

- Child leaves a child care service
- Child stops using child care
- Child starts school
- Your income changes
- You change partnering arrangements (for example, if you get married or divorced)
- Your address or bank account details change

Failure to sign as per the above will incur full fees being charged as the service is unable to claim CCB unless the signatures are obtained.

Commencing Care /New Enrolment - As a requirement of CCB payments, a fee reduction can only be claimed for care if the child attends the service from the initial booked date. If a child does not attend on their first booked day of care full fees will be payable for absences leading up to actual attendance.

CCB and Withdrawal of Care- Withdrawal from care requires two weeks written notice or four weeks during the December January period, (*refer to Withdrawal of Care*). As a requirement of CCB payments, a fee reduction can only be claimed for care if the child attends these days. If a child does not attend on their final agreed booked day, full fees will be charged.

For families claiming CCB payments, to ensure correct payment of accounts, KAZ Early Learning Centre will withhold the 2 week deposit until the child's last day of care. Any deposit reimbursements will be sent by cheque or direct credit to the parent/guardians nominated address or bank account.

Child Care Rebate (CCR) The Child Care Rebate entitlement is calculated as 50 per cent of the out-of-pocket child care expenses for approved child care up to an annual cap.

To be eligible for the Child Care Rebate (CCR) families must:

- have used approved care and
- have been eligible for CCB* (entitled at the zero rate or more) and
- have met the work, training, study test—for the purposes of the CCR.

Foster, shared care, kinship and grandparent families who meet the eligibility criteria are also able to receive CCR.

Families who elect to have their CCR paid weekly/ fortnightly as opposed to quarterly/annually will be subject to Centrelink withholding a 15% buffer, to be adjusted after the end of year tax reconciliation.

Special Child Care Benefit - This may be available to families who have particular financial difficulties. Please speak to the Manager for more information regarding eligibility.

Late Collection Fee

Parents/Guardians must adhere to the closing times of KAZ Early Learning Centre.

A late fee will be charged when a child is picked up after centre closing time. A *Late Collection* fee will be charged at a rate of \$20.00 for the first 10 minutes and \$1.00 per minute after that. This amount will be charged separately from child care fees. **Late fees do not attract the CCB rebate.**

Parents/guardians are asked to contact the service if unforeseen circumstances or emergencies have occurred that prevent them from picking up their child by the service's closing time. If for any circumstance they are unable to collect their child from the service by the closing time, and fail to contact the service; educators/staff will follow the *Late Collection of Children* policy, implementing the following policies:

- Educators/Staff will verbally advise the parent/guardian that the child must be collected by the stated closing time due to licensing regulations and insurance conditions;
- Educators/Staff will register late arrival in *Late Collection Register*.
- Educators/Staff will advise the Manager;
- Parents/Guardians will be required to sign *Notice of Late Collection* form and give reason for lateness;
- Parents/Guardians will be required to pay a late fee as set out above

Withdrawal of Care

KAZ Early Learning Centre requires two weeks written notice (that being 10 operational days inclusive of the day notice is given), from parents/guardians for the withdrawal of care from a service. If a child is absent from a service for one week without written notice the Manager will contact the parents/guardians and if notified that the child is not returning the deposit will be forfeited to cover fees in lieu of notice.

KAZ Early Learning Centre Related Policies and Procedures:

Enrolment and Orientation Policy
Child Protection Policy
Late Collection of Children Policy

Appendices:

Notice of First Warning
Notice of Final Warning
Notice of Late Collection
Late Collection Register

Sources:

Department of Social Services

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programmes-services/early-childhood-child-care/information-for-existing-child-care-services>

Australian Government, my child.gov.au www.mychild.gov.au
Child Care Management System (CCMS) Reference Manual