

## DEPARTMENTAL POLICY



<b>TITLE:</b>	CHILDREN'S SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES
<b>ID NUMBER:</b>	DPO-COM-CHI-044 DocSetID: 2641606
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Community Services
<b>UNIT:</b>	Children's Services
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Children's Services Manager

<b>ADOPTED DATE AND BY WHOM:</b>	13 July 2022 Director Community Services
<b>EXPIRY DATE:</b>	Not applicable
<b>REVIEW DATE:</b>	July 2026 <i>This policy will be reviewed every four years or as required by any legislative or council changes.</i>

<b>AVAILABILITY:</b>	Staff - Unit                      Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Staff - Department              Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>ADVISE AVAILABILITY:</b>	Email designated Groups & Staff (Responsible Officer to prepare)

## 1. References (if applicable)

- Glenelg Shire Council Annual Fees and Charges Schedule (DocSetID: 2862426)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities  
[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/54D73763EF9DCA36CA2571B6002428B0/\\$FILE/06-043a.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/54D73763EF9DCA36CA2571B6002428B0/$FILE/06-043a.pdf)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)  
[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/LTObject\\_Store/LTObjSt10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/AEC2C69107CDD517CA25814D007E870B/\\$FILE/05-83aa021%20authorised.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/AEC2C69107CDD517CA25814D007E870B/$FILE/05-83aa021%20authorised.pdf)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)  
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00763>
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010  
[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/51dea49770555ea6ca256da4001b90cd/B73164FE5DA2112DCA2577BA0014D9ED/\\$FILE/10-069a.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/51dea49770555ea6ca256da4001b90cd/B73164FE5DA2112DCA2577BA0014D9ED/$FILE/10-069a.pdf)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011  
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/national-regulations>
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)  
[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/LTObject\\_Store/LTObjSt2.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/B0C98922C32E73A2CA257761001FB804/\\$FILE/95-42a059.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt2.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/B0C98922C32E73A2CA257761001FB804/$FILE/95-42a059.pdf)
- DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2012 – 2013  
[https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/childcareservicehandbook201718\\_0.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/childcareservicehandbook201718_0.pdf)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management - Standard 7.3: Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service  
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/OccasionalPaper5-LeadershipManagementEducationCareServices.PDF>
- Accounts Receivable and Debt Collection Procedure (DocSet ID 2708622)
- Complaints Handling - Children's Services Policy DPR-COM-CHI-119 (DocSetID: 2564791)
- Children's Services Delivery and Collection of Children Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-012 (DocSetID: 1853730)

- Children's Services Enrolment and Orientation Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-016 (DocSetID: 2233668)
- Children's Services Excursions and Special Events Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-019 (DocSetID: 2439663)
- Children's Services Inclusion and Equity Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-024 (DocSetID: 2156161)
- Privacy Policy CPO-CORPS-GE-006 (DocSetID: 643084)
- Glenelg Shire Council, Records Management Policy OPO-CORPS-RECM-001 (DocSetID: 1933907)
- 2021-2022 Session Times and Fees for Child Care (DocSetID: 2317020)
- 2022 Fees and Charges for Kindergarten (DocSetID: 2443267)
- Fee Payment Plan (DocSetID: 2631206)
- Late Collection of Child notification form (DocSetID: 1522851)
- Self-Funded Kindergarten Fee Payment Agreement (DocSetID 2786319)

## 2. Definitions

### Approved care

Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) to receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments on behalf of eligible families.

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

### Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES)

CRES is recognised as a key opportunity to support kindergarten participation, particularly for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

Funding has been provided in the 2021-22 financial year to contribute towards the administration costs of Glenelg Shire Council's Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme.

Provided the recipient meets the criteria, this funding can be used to subsidise the Enrolment Administration Fee for eligible families.

### Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Families can apply to Services Australia via Centrelink to be assessed for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

CCS is a subsidy provided by the Commonwealth Government to assist families with their Child Care Fees. The subsidy is generally paid directly to service providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families make a co-contribution to their child care fees and pay the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount.

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

### Child Care Subsidy withholding

Child Care Subsidy withholding is designed to help families avoid or minimise debts at reconciliation, which could occur due to changes in circumstances throughout the year (for example, changes to family incomes or activities). Families are responsible for updating their information in relation to any change in their circumstances that will potentially affect their eligibility or entitlement.

### Early Start Kindergarten

A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours.

Details are available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/Pages/default.aspx>

### Early Childhood Education Foundation

Assistance can be sought from the Foundation to cover kindergarten fees charged to parents; where there is a demonstrated financial hardship for the family (5 criteria must be met). An application in the prescribed form must be made on behalf of the family by the service where the child is enrolled to attend the funded kindergarten program. Funding is subject to availability of funds.

### Enrolment Administration Fee

A non-refundable charge to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for all education and care places at a Glenelg Shire Council children's service, which is in addition to education and care fees. The Enrolment Administration Fee is required to be paid prior to attending the service.

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.

Fees

A charge for a session of care/place within a program at a specific service.

Xap

Third party software implemented to comply with the Child Care Subsidy system and facilitate service use by Children's Services families.

Quickpay

Third party payment platform linked to Xap. Quickpay is responsible for administering the Direct Debit payments and BPAY payments in Xap.

Quickpay Fee Schedule:

Payment Account	Direct Debit Transaction Cost	BPAY Transaction Cost
Bank Account	\$1.00	\$1.40
Visa/Mastercard	\$1.00 + 1.8%	\$1.40 + 1.8%
Amex/Diners Card	\$1.00 + 3.6%	\$1.40 + 3.6%

Declined Transaction Fee - \$8.80 per instance (levied by Quickpay)

Health Care Card / Pensioner Concession Card / DVA Card (Gold or White)

A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people.

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)

A Government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program for up to 15 hours free of charge.

This funding enables eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation.

The Preschool Reform Funding Agreement outlines the Commonwealth Governments contribution to the Victorian Government towards Kindergarten funding.

Details are available in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide*.

### Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy

Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide*.

### Kindergarten Funding Guide

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

### Late Collection Charge

A charge by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program.

## **3. Purpose**

Fees and charges are set in order to balance affordability for families and ongoing service sustainability. Fees are set within the limits of the Glenelg Shire Council budget and funding authorities. Fees are reviewed annually and documented within the Council annual fees and charges document.

In developing fees and charges, Council balances the following considerations:

- The financial viability of the service;
- The level of government funding provided for the program;
- The availability of other income sources, such as grants; and
- The fees charged by similar services in the area.

This policy will provide clear guidelines:

- a) For setting, payment and collection of Children's Services fees;
- b) To ensure the viability of services offered by the Glenelg Shire Council, by setting appropriate fees and charges; and
- c) To ensure the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by the Glenelg Shire Council.

## **4. Scope**

This policy applies to all Children's Services staff and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at any of the services managed by Council.

## 5. Departmental Policy

### 5.1 Table of Responsibilities:

#### A. Glenelg Shire Council Officers are responsible for:

Procedures / Guidelines	Approved Provider	Nominated Supervisor	Educators/ staff	Finance	Administration Support
1. Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	✓			✓	
2. Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, while providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability	✓			✓	
3. Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff	✓				
4. Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Glenelg Shire Council children services and removing those barriers wherever possible	✓	✓		✓	
5. Reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	✓	✓		✓	
6. Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	✓	✓		✓	✓
7. Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible	✓	✓		✓	✓
8. Providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to DocSetID: 2317020 & 2443267)	✓	✓		✓	✓
9. Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to DocSetID: 2317020 and 2443267) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the <i>Fees and Charges Departmental Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)	✓				✓
10. Providing parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement, if requested (refer to DocSetID: 2786319)	✓	✓		✓	✓
11. Collecting and receipting all fees	✓			✓	
12. Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable	✓	✓		✓	✓
13. Complying with the service's <i>Privacy Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	✓	✓		✓	✓

Procedures / Guidelines	Approved Provider	Nominated Supervisor	Educators/ staff	Finance	Administration Support
14. Notifying parents/guardians electronically within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2))	✓	✓		✓	✓
15. Ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to each Glenelg Shire Council children's service	✓	✓			✓
16. Informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service		✓	✓	✓	✓
17. Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider		✓	✓	✓	✓
18. Assisting the Approved Provider, as required, in sighting and copying supporting documentation		✓	✓	✓	✓
19. Maintaining the Child Care Subsidy System (CCS) to ensure collection of all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to CCS etc, where applicable				✓	✓
20. Assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the standards outlined in the National Quality Frameworks		✓		✓	✓
21. Implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET requirements		✓		✓	✓
22. Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling and discuss the barriers with the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor				✓	✓

**B. Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- a) Reading the Glenelg Shire Council Fee information for families, the relevant fee payment arrangements/agreements and the Statement of Fees and Charges.
- b) Attending to payment of the Enrolment Administration Fee upon entering an enrolment agreement and prior to commencing at the service.
- c) If applicable, families are responsible for undertaking a Child Care Subsidy assessment and notifying Centrelink of any changes that may affect their assessment (this does not apply to Kindergarten families).



- d) All families are to decide on their fee payment preference:
- Fee payment options are Direct Debit payments via Bank account or Credit Card; or BPAY payments via Credit Card or Bank transfers from the families account. Please note that all of these options have associated administration fees.
  - Kindergarten families need to complete and return a payment agreement form that indicates their fee payment preference being either Annual, Term or fortnightly fees.
  - Long Day Care families need to complete and return a payment agreement form that indicates the Enrolment type they are wishing to enter into; their invoice/fee payment preference being either weekly or fortnightly fees; and their preferred payment method being either Direct Debit or BPAY.
  - The fee invoice preference of weekly or fortnightly also dictates how often the Direct Debit payments are incurred, if applicable.
  - Families can log on (through Xap) to their web portal to setup their own payment preferences, or they can complete a form and return it to the service.
  - If families subsequently log into their Xap account and make changes to their fee payment preferences, then this change overrides prior payment preference details.
- e) Notifying Finance if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.
- f) Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim subsidies for eligible families.
- g) Where applicable, signing a Late Collection Fee notice and payment of the Late Collection Fee.
- h) Families are responsible for all amounts outstanding on their account at cessation of their care. Your final account balance may change due to adjustments in Child Care Subsidy calculated by Centrelink after care has ceased.
- i) It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that their contact details are always up to date and that they regularly check their emails and messages.
- j) Families are responsible for monitoring their account balances and must not let the amount owing exceed \$500 (the exception is for Debtors on Direct Debit, and Kindergarten families invoiced their annual fee at the commencement of the Kindergarten year).

## 5.2 Process

- a) On enrolment families are to be advised that a copy of the Fees and Charges Departmental Policy is accessible from the Policy Folder at the foyer of each service. Upon enrolment families are required to sign their children's enrolment forms (incl Fee Payment Agreement Form) to acknowledge their understanding of and commitment to follow this Policy.

Administration staff also check our Bad Debt Register (Doc Set ID 2707973) to see if the new enrolment has any outstanding Childcare fees that need to be addressed before their child can commence care.

- b) Upon offer of a kindergarten or LDC placement each family is charged a non-refundable Enrolment Administration Fee. Payment is required to secure the kindergarten & LDC placement. Where a child may be enrolling in a second year of 4-year-old kindergarten, the administration fee is not payable until the enrolment is confirmed. Non-payment of the fee by the allocated due date will result in forfeiture of the allocated placement. This fee is over and above the annual kindergarten fees or LDC fees and is required to be paid prior to commencement at the service.

The following exemptions apply to the Enrolment Administration Fee:

- Children eligible for Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) and vulnerable children and families eligible for Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) under the Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES);
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people;
- Children known to Child Protection or ChildFirst (identified by Maternal and Child Health service, using the Child Development Information System (CDIS)); and
- The Director Community Services or Children's Services Manager may authorise appropriate modifications to this procedure to suit individual circumstances, on the proviso that the underlying intent of the procedure is adhered to.

- c) Families are responsible for the payment of full fees until the family is assessed by Services Australia via (Centrelink) and Child Care Subsidy is received by the service on behalf of the family.
- d) Under normal circumstances, Child Care Subsidy will not be paid for absences where a provider charges a family to reserve a place for a child who has not yet physically started care. If a child is booked in to start at a service on a particular date, and does not start on that day, no Child Care Subsidy will be paid until the child physically attends a session of care (excludes kindergarten and Occasional Care). Child Care Subsidy can be paid for up to 7 days before a child starts attending care provided they are absent for specific reasons as outlined by DESE guidelines.

- e) Similarly, a child care service is taken to have permanently ceased providing care for a child on the day the child last physically attends a session of care. This means that Child Care Subsidy will not be paid for absences submitted after a child last physically attends a session of care, unless they are absent for reasons outlined by DESE guidelines which allow for an additional seven days after the child's last physical attendance.
- f) From time to time, Centrelink may adjust the amount of Child Care Subsidy that was applied to a previous session/s of care. This could be due to a change in circumstances, absences, immunisation status, residency status, balancing your Child Care Subsidy etc. This may result in either an increase or decrease in the amount of fees payable by a family. Families are responsible for updating their information with Centrelink as any change in circumstances may potentially affect your current and/or prior eligibility or entitlement to Child Care Subsidy.

This fee recovery may occur weeks after the child's session of booked care.

### Absences

When a child is absent from care, parents are required to notify the service as soon as possible, and by 8:30am on the day of care.

### **Long Day Care**

All absences will be charged at full fee less any entitled CCS to maintain the child's booking CCS can only be claimed for the first 42 days absence (for any reason). For additional absences, supporting documentation may be required to claim CCS (excludes Occasional Care).

### **Occasional Care**

#### Casual bookings

If a Parent/Guardian is on a Payment Plan, the Parent/Guardian is unable to access any additional sessions of care outside of their booking until the account outstanding is fully paid.

#### Casual booking cancellations

Families with a casual booking must notify service administration on 5522 2211 before 8:30 am on the day of the requested care or the fee for the session will be charged.

If a child is signed into their casual booking session but subsequently had to sign out of the session, then the family will still be charged at full fee less any entitled CCS (if applicable).

### **Kindergarten**

All absences will be charged at full fee to maintain the child's booking.

### Late Fees

\$1 per minute will be charged for children picked up after the program operating times or agreed booking time.

Prior to the end of the booked session, families are required to ring the service to inform of alternative arrangements for the collection of their child.

A Late Collection Fee form will be completed by staff and signed by the parent/guardian to verify the collection time and reason for delay. This form will be forwarded to the finance officer and applied to the debtors account.

### Withdrawal of Care

Families wishing to withdraw their child/children from care are required to provide notification in writing to the service two weeks prior to ceasing enrolment.

If a family withdraws their child/children without appropriate notification full fees will be charged in lieu of the two weeks' notice period.

Please note that as per the Family Law legislation, if a provider submits absences after a child's last physical attendance without sufficient evidence to support the additional absences, no Child Care Subsidy and/or Additional Child Care Subsidy can be claimed for those sessions. If Child Care Subsidy and/or Additional Child Care Subsidy is paid for those sessions, it will be recovered by the Child Care Subsidy System and parents will be liable for the full fees. This fee recovery may occur weeks after the child's session of booked care.

### Payment of fees

Council will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Invoices will be sent directly by the Xap program and be issued weekly to parents/guardians depending on the frequency selected. Long Day Care fees must be paid within 14 days from the Sunday in your booked week of care (The booked week of care runs from Monday to Sunday) and Kindergarten fees must be paid within 14 days from the transaction date.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact Finance Unit Representative on 03 5522 2515 to arrange a suitable payment plan. The *Privacy Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

Until the outstanding fees have been paid, no education and care services will be provided by any Glenelg Shire Council Children's Service (Note: exception for Kindergarten Fee Subsidy paid by DET).

Kindergarten families experiencing financial hardship are also able to apply for assistance from the Early Childhood Education Foundation. To be eligible to access support from the Early Childhood Education Fund, the child must have a place in a

funded kindergarten program ; the family must be experiencing genuine financial hardship; there must be clear evidence of physical, emotional, cognitive and social risks for the child if they do not attend the program; the family must demonstrate a commitment to ensure the child will regularly attend the program; and the service provider must demonstrate that financial and/or practical support that is being provided to ensure the child attends the program. Grants will be made subject to availability of funds, and will be based on an assessment of individual applications. Funding will not be provided retrospectively for Terms that have already been completed, or to cover outstanding fee debts established

### **5.3 Invoicing of Fees**

#### Kindergarten

Fees for funded kindergarten places are calculated according to the Children's Services 'Fees and Charges for Kindergarten' Fact Sheet.

Parents/Guardians nominate their preferred Fee Payment option (Annual, Term or fortnightly) and fees will be invoiced accordingly.

Invoices will be issued to parents/guardians directly electronically and must be paid within 14 days from the transaction date on the invoice.

Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

#### Self-Funded Kindergarten

Fees for Self-funded kindergarten places will be determined on a case by case basis and will include the equivalent of the Per Capita Fee and Kindergarten Fees as set out by the DET. Other fees may be charged including Ratio supplement and Early Childhood Teacher supplement.

Children who are eligible for a funded Kindergarten place will be prioritised, children not eligible for a funded kindergarten place will be assessed on a case by case basis and enrolment will be at the discretion of the Glenelg Shire Council. Unfunded Kindergarten places will only be confirmed at the end of December to ensure all funded Kindergarten children can access a Kindergarten place.

Fees for Self-funded kindergarten places will be calculated as per the template Doc Set ID 2786319 and utilising the funding applicable to the relevant service for the relevant year.

#### Occasional Care

Fees for Occasional Care are calculated according to the Council's Fees and Charges schedule and will be charged weekly as per the Fee Payment Agreement.

Invoices will be issued to parents/guardians directly electronically and must be paid within 14 days from the Sunday in your booked week of care

### Long Day Care

Fees are charged in arrears. Invoices will be issued to parents/guardians directly electronically and must be paid within 14 days from the Sunday in your booked week of care.

For families that are registered with Centrelink and eligible for the Childcare Subsidy, Centrelink will advise both parents/guardians and the service of the percentage and number of hours of Childcare Subsidy that they are entitled to. This is a tiered system of relief based on family income; and the assessment may be affected by an activity test. **Full fees are payable until the Child Care Subsidy is received by the service. Centrelink will back pay families directly for fees already incurred.**

Child Care Subsidy payments will be credited against the account once fees have been processed by CCSS and notification has been received from the Family Assistance Office. Please note that these amounts are subject to change.

### **5.4 Collection of Fees**

All fees must be promptly paid to avoid the Debt Management Process.

Direct Debit payments or BPAY payments administered through Xap is mandatory for all families at all services.

### **5.5 Account Balance – Debtor threshold of \$500**

Families are responsible for monitoring their account balances and must not let the amount owing for Services (after CCS has been applied) exceed \$500. The only exception is for Debtors on Direct Debit, and Kindergarten families invoiced their annual fee at the commencement of the Kindergarten year.

#### Debtor Balance exceeding \$500 notice

Debtor Balances will be reviewed weekly, after invoices have been generated for the previous week of care. For any Debtor balance exceeding \$500, a notice will be issued advising them of the situation and requiring them to make a payment by Friday in that same week to reduce their account balance below \$500.

#### Suspension of Care Notice

If payment of the specified amount is not received by the Friday in that same week, a Suspension of Care Notice will be issued. Parents/guardians will be contacted by the Finance Officer to advise them that their care will be suspended in the following week if their balance owing is above \$500.

Parents/Guardians will be advised that their place may be cancelled if the account balance remains over \$500 at the end of the suspension week.

Parents/Guardians will be advised that they are eligible to enter a Fee Payment Plan. If families choose to enter a Fee Payment Plan, they are able to resume their care. (Please see section 5.8 for further information).

Parents/Guardians will also be sent an electronic message confirming the above arrangements.

Care can resume as normal when the outstanding payment is received and the family has been contacted by the Finance Officer to confirm that the suspension has been lifted.

#### Past Due Notice

If fees are still unpaid 2 weeks after the Suspension of Care notice is issued, and if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, a Past Due Notice will be issued. An electronic message will be issued advising that all fees outstanding are Past Due. The correspondence will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the Finance Unit representative.

#### 42 Days – Final Notice – Letter of Demand

If fees are unpaid 4 weeks after the Suspension of Care notice is issued, and if no Payment Arrangements have been made or kept, a Letter of Demand will be issued

Council's Debt collection process will commence at this time.

### **5.6 Debt Management - Unpaid Accounts Process**

All Debt Management communication will be delivered by electronic means.

Where accounts are not paid within the required 14 days, the following process will occur:

#### ***For Debtors currently using our services***

##### 14 Days – Friendly Reminder Notice

For Long Day Care Families, if fees are unpaid 14 days after the Sunday in the respective week of care, a Friendly Reminder message will be forwarded to the Parent/Guardian advising them of the amount of overdue fees and the date the overdue payment is due.

For Kindergarten Families, if fees are unpaid 14 days from the transaction date on the invoice, a Friendly Reminder message will be forwarded to the Parent/Guardian advising them of the amount of overdue fees and the date the overdue payment is due.

### 21 Days – Suspension of Care until payment is made Notice

If fees are unpaid 1 week after the due date, parents/guardians will be contacted by the Finance Officer to advise them that they cannot continue to access care until all outstanding fees are paid, or until a Payment Plan is entered into and signed off. Parents/Guardians will also be advised that their place may be cancelled if the account becomes two weeks overdue.

Parents/Guardians will also be sent an electronic message confirming the above arrangements.

Care can resume when the outstanding payment is received and the family has been contacted by the Finance Officer to confirm that the suspension has been lifted.

### 28 Days – Cancellation of Care (until payment is made) Notice

If fees are still unpaid after 2 weeks after the due date, and if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, the child's place will be cancelled by the Finance Officer. Parents/Guardians will be contacted by email and also by phone to advise them that their child's place at the service has been cancelled.

The correspondence will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the Finance Unit representative.

Please note that care will not automatically resume when the outstanding payment amounts are received under a 'Cancelled Booking'. If all outstanding amounts are fully paid, the family will need to contact the service to negotiate a booking/place as the previous places may no longer be available.

### 35 Days – Past Due Notice

If fees are still unpaid 3 weeks after the due date, and if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, a Past Due Notice will be issued. An electronic message advising that the fees are Past Due will be issued. The correspondence will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the Finance Unit representative.

### 42 Days – Final Notice – Letter of Demand

If fees are unpaid 4 weeks after the due date, and no Payment Arrangements have been made or kept, a Letter of Demand will be issued

Council's Debt collection process will commence at this time.



### ***For Debtors no longer using our services***

#### **14 Days – Friendly Reminder Notice**

For Long Day Care Families, if fees are unpaid 14 days after the Sunday in the respective week of care, a Friendly Reminder message will be forwarded to the Parent/Guardian advising them of the amount of overdue fees and the date the overdue payment is due.

For Kindergarten Families, if fees are unpaid 14 days from the transaction date on the invoice, a Friendly Reminder message will be forwarded to the Parent/Guardian advising them of the amount of overdue fees and the date the overdue payment is due.

#### **28 Days – Past Due Notice**

If fees are still unpaid 2 weeks after the due date, and if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, a Past Due Notice will be issued. An electronic message advising that the fees are Past Due will be issued. The correspondence will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the Finance Unit representative.

#### **42 Days – Final Notice – Letter of Demand**

If fees are unpaid 4 weeks after the due date, and no Payment Arrangements have been made or kept, a Letter of Demand will be issued

Council's Debt collection process will commence at this time.

### **5.7 Fee Payment Plans**

A Fee Payment Plan includes the current balance of fees owing, and future fees likely to be incurred.

When setting the Payment Plan amount consideration should include:

- Parent/Guardian's ability to meet Plan payments; and
- Temporarily cancelling care until costs can be met (financial viability) and current debt is paid

Parent/Guardians are required to make an upfront payment towards their outstanding fees upon entering into a Payment Agreement.

When a Parent/Guardian has entered into a Payment Plan, the family is unable to access any additional sessions of care outside of their current booking until the account outstanding is fully paid.

If a Payment Plan is entered into and the Payment Plan amount is unpaid, this is recorded as a default. The Parent/Guardian will be contacted and the following will apply:

#### First Default and Final Default on the Payment Plan

If the Parent/Guardian defaults on the Payment Plan it will be suspended requiring immediate payment of all amounts outstanding. If immediate payment of the balance outstanding is not received, care will be cancelled immediately and the account placed in the hands of a debt collection agency with any associated costs on-charged to the Parent/Guardian.

### **5.8 Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship may require access to family support services. A list of services available can be viewed by going to the following website:

[https://www.thelookout.org.au/lookout-services/field\\_location/barwon-534](https://www.thelookout.org.au/lookout-services/field_location/barwon-534)

Information on these services is available from the Child Development Officer 5522 2165 and a list can be supplied to those families who request it.

### **5.9 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 14 days prior to any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

## **6. Records Management**

All Council records created and managed as a result of implementing this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Records Management Policy.

The Records Management Policy assigns responsibilities for records management to employees, supervisors, volunteers and other specific positions.

No Council records are to be destroyed without consideration of the requirements of the Act(s) that govern the functions relevant to this policy. Prior to destruction, advice must be sought from the Records Management Unit, with consideration to the requirements of the appropriate Retention and Disposal Authority (RDA).