POLICY STATEMENT – The Deniliquin Children’s Centre is committed to providing responsible financial management of the organisation, which includes setting fees that will result in a financially viable and quality service on a not-for-profit basis.

RATIONALE- To provide a clear set of guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees which ensure the viability of the Deniliquin Children’s Centre as a not for profit centre.

PROCEDURE

Fee Setting

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to ensure fees are reviewed twice a year (end of financial year and calendar year) and set to ensure the running costs of the Centre are covered. The Committee may review and change the fees during the year if the financial viability of the Centre is at risk.

Parents of children enrolled at the service will be notified at least 14 days before making any change that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Schedule of Fees

Childcare Centre- fees are charged according to the groups e.g., Possums, Joey or Wombats. If a child is enrolled across two of the groups they will be charged the fee where they spend the majority of their time.

- Preschool - fees are charged according to
  - Age groups
  - Presentation and copy of current government issued pension, health care card for low income earners with the parent name and the child name on it
  - Indicating Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background on the child’s enrolment form.
  - The number of days they attend with a discount being provided for 2 or more days enrolment

Mobile Children’s’ Service- fees are charged according to
  - Age groups.
  - 0-3 year old children- Childcare fee with Child Care Subsidy applying
  - 4 & 5 year olds- Preschool fee with no further subsidy applying. Preschool fee is based on
    - Presentation and copy of current government issued pension, health care card with the parent name and the child name on it for low income earners
    - Indicating Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background on the child’s enrolment form.

Fee Subsidy Entitlements

Child Care Subsidy

To be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy the following requirements must be met:

- the child must
be a ‘Family Tax Benefit child’ or ‘regular care child’ and
- be 13 or under and not attending secondary school and
- meet immunisation requirements
- the person claiming the Child Care Subsidy, or their partner, must
- meet residency requirements and
- meet the Child Care Subsidy activity test (or be eligible for an exemption) and
- be liable to pay for care provided under a Complying Written Arrangement (their written agreement) with their child care provider
- child care must be provided by an approved provider in Australia and not be part of a compulsory education program, for example school.

There are exemptions for individuals who genuinely cannot meet some eligibility requirements.

The level of subsidy a family receives will depend on three factors:
- Income – a family’s (both partners) combined income
- Activity test – what activities the individual and their partner undertake or exemptions that might apply and
- Service type – the type of approved child care service used, for example Centre Based Day Care.

Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to child care providers to pass on to families as a fee reduction so that their fees are reduced at the time they use child care. Families will pay their provider the difference between their subsidy and the fees charged. Families will not be able to elect to receive their subsidy as a lump sum at the end of the financial year. Families will need to make a claim for Child Care Subsidy when (or before) each child starts attending care.

Any Child Care Subsidy owed to families following the end of year reconciliation process will be paid directly to families as a lump sum. If a family has been overpaid Child Care Subsidy during the year the family may have to repay some Child Care Subsidy (a debt).

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). Parents can request their percentage of withholding be adjusted up or down through Centrelink. However, withholding is important as it helps protect families from possible debts. After reconciliation any outstanding subsidy is returned to the family.

Five per cent of all families’ Child Care Subsidy will be withheld by the Government, however, withholding will not apply to Additional Child Care Subsidy payments.

The Additional Child Care Subsidy is a top up payment in addition to the Child Care Subsidy which will provide targeted additional fee assistance to families and children who need extra support.

The Additional Child Care Subsidy has four elements:
- child wellbeing
- grandparents
- temporary financial hardship
- transition to work.

For more information on Child Care Subsidy (CCS)
Visit the Department of Education and Training Child Care Package website at education.gov.au/eccc
Visit the Department of Human Services Child Care Subsidy website humanservices.gov.au/childcaresubsidy

**Fee Payments**
Families are billed on a fortnightly basis, so fees are expected to be paid two weeks in advance. There are several payment options for families, including cash, debit card and credit card. The service offers and encourages families to use ‘Centrepay’ to pay their fees directly through Centrelink.

When families are offered a place at the Centre, they will also be provided an invoice for the first two weeks of care, which must be paid to secure the booking. Should the family not use the
booking, an administration fee of $30 will be charged, and the remainder will be refunded to the family. Should the enrolment change, any access fees paid will be credited to the family account.

**Late payment of fees**
Families will be notified when their fee payments are due. If fees are late the fees officer will notify the family and may suggest a family start a payment plan (see below).
If fees remain unpaid the General Manager, at their discretion, charge an additional late fee of $20 per week or in exceptional circumstances refuse care of the child(ren) until payments are made.

**Payment of overdue fee procedures**
If no previous arrangements have been made regarding overdue fees the centre will:

| Fees More than 7 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place | Reminder email by Fees Officer |
| Fees more than 14 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place | Request for payment and/ or payment plan arrangement from General Manager sent by Fees Officer |
| Fees more than 21 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place | Final request for payment or payment plan arrangement notice from General Manager-giving 5 days for payment of fees or cancellation of care & debt recovery commencing sent via email & in hard copy by Fees Officer |
| Fees more than 30 days overdue with no payment plan arrangement in place | General Manager to cancel child’s enrolment and refer account to Debt Collection Agency |

Any additional expense incurred from debt recovery will be paid for by the family/ as per the signed agreement on their enrolment form.

The Management Committee will be informed at the monthly committee meeting of aged debt amounts, and when debt collection has been commenced.

**Payment plans**
Families who are having genuine difficulty paying their fees are encouraged to commence a payment plan with the fees officer. The payment plan should be designed to clear debts while maintaining regular payments, and it should be sustainable for both parties. The recommended payment each fortnight is 25%-50% (this % may change depending on families ability to pay) of the family’s regular fees in addition to any new fees accruing. The fees officer will write the payment plan and terms of agreement, and the family and General Manager will sign a copy for each to keep.

**Absenteeism**
Fees are payable for permanent places whenever the service is fully operational, irrespective of whether the child attends. This includes illness, holiday leave
Families (who use the Childcare centre and Mobile service) will also pay for permanent places which fall on a public holiday.
If a child is to be absent, families must phone and inform the service as soon as possible.
For Child Care Subsidy services (Childcare and Mobile) allowable absence days per child cannot exceed 42 days except in exceptional circumstances such as illness where a medical certificate is provided.
All accounts must be paid in full prior to the end of year. This includes families returning for the next year.

**Method of payments**
Preferred method of payment is by direct deposit, with the Parent name to be used as reference.
*Eftpos facilities are available at the administration office where we also accept cash, cheque or credit card. Credit card payments are to be made in person.*
Cash payments may be made at the service. Families must fill in a fee envelope and place it into the fee box. Centrepay is available for families wishing to have fees taken directly from their Centrelink payments. See [https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/how-set-centrepay-deductions](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/how-set-centrepay-deductions) Administration staff is to be contacted for further details on making payments.

**Cancellation**
Families must provide two weeks written notice if they want to cancel their booking. Fees will continue to accrue until a written cancellation is received. If the child does not attend during this 2 week notice period, without a medical certificate, full fees will still be charged. The child must attend on the final day of care for Child Care Subsidy to apply.

**Fee for late collection of children fees**
The daily fees are based on the licensed opening hours of the service. In the event the family is late collecting their child from the service, additional costs are incurred.

- any parent user who collects their child after the booked operating hours will be charged a late fee of 0-15 minutes: charge of $20.00.
- 16-30 minutes: charge of $40.00
- Over 30 minutes: police will be called

Every endeavour will be made to contact parents and emergency contacts.

Wherever possible parents should advise the Centre when they will be late to collect their child. Special circumstances i.e. traffic accident, vehicle breakdown, will be given consideration when applying the fee.

This charge will be added to the fortnightly account.

If a family continues to collect their child after operating hours, the Nominated Supervisor will need to discuss other options with them, and suitable arrangements made or the child’s place in the Centre may be cancelled.

**LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011- Regulation 168, 172
Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010

National Quality Standard
Quality Area 7-7.3.5

**Sources**
PWC Fee Policy Considerations Fact sheet 2018
What is the Child Care Subsidy? Fact Sheet 2018 (Australian Government Department Education & Training)

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<th>Attachment Name</th>
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Fee Collection Procedure for Deniliquin Mobile Children’s Service

The Responsible person is the ONLY staff members to handle money and hold the fees box keys.

A receipt book is to be taken to venue each day.

Parents must place fees into the supplied envelope noting the child’s name, date, venue, what the payment is for (fees/fundraising) and amount.

The Responsible Person will then write out a receipt immediately for the parent, noting the venue, parent/child’s name, amount and how payment was made (cash or cheque).

At no time are educators to handle the payment, they are to direct the parent to place payment in the fee’s box themselves.

The fees box is to remain locked at all times and only opened upon arrival at base by the Responsible person when they remove the envelopes from the portable fees box and places them in the fees box located at base. The venue receipt book is to be left on top of this fees box for collection.
Hi ______________________

This is a friendly reminder that you have $____ fees outstanding for the ______________ service.

If you could please pay the account as soon as possible, or contact the administration office if you are experiencing difficulties paying these fees.

Fees may be paid at the administration office by cash, cheque, credit card or eftpos or in services using cash or cheque. Payments can also be made using internet banking direct deposit, using the parents name and service the child attends as reference. Centre pay is also now available, if you wish to have fees deducted from Centrelink payments. Forms can be obtained from the administration office.

Payment plans which are suitable to the family and the Centre can be organised. Please see the administration staff to make arrangements.

Thank you

Reminder email template 1 - Fees 1 week overdue
Dear _______________

This is a reminder that your account for fees at the ____________ service for $________ is overdue.

The Deniliquin Childrens Centre Fee Policy states that fees are due 14 days in advance.

If you could please pay the account as soon as possible, or contact the administration office if you are experiencing difficulties paying these fees to make a payment plan.

Fees may be paid at the administration office by cash, cheque, credit card or eftpos or in services using cash or cheque. Payments can also be made using internet banking direct deposit, using the parents name and service the child attends as reference. Centre pay is also available, if you wish to have fees deducted from Centrelink payments. You can apply using your myGov account.

Payment plans which are suitable to the family and the Centre can be organised. Please see the administration staff to make arrangements.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, or you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact General Manager Felicity Michael on 0358812394.

Reminder email template 2- Fees 2 weeks overdue
Dear

Our records show that fees payable for ________________ (child’s name) at ________________ service are now owing.

The Deniliquin Childrens Centre fee policy states that fees are payable 14 days in advance.

Failure to pay these fees or make a payment plan may result in the cancellation of your child’s enrolment.

Fees may be paid at the administration office by cash, cheque, credit card or eftpos or in services using cash or cheque. Payments can also be made using internet banking direct deposit, using the parents name and service the child attends as reference. Centre pay is also available, if you wish to have fees deducted from Centrelink payments. You can apply through your myGov account.

Payment plans which are suitable to the family and the Centre can be organised. Please see the administration staff to make arrangements.

If you would like to discuss this issue in further detail, please contact the General Manager, Felicity Michael on 58812394.

Yours Sincerely

Felicity Michael
General Manager
Deniliquin Childrens Centre

Request for Payment letter template 3, Fees 3 weeks overdue.
Dear ________________

Our records show that you have $___________ fees outstanding for the _____________ service.

The Deniliquin Childrens Centre fee policy states that fees are payable 14 days in advance. Failure to pay these fees may result in the cancellation of your child’s enrolment.

You are requested to please pay these fees within five days. Should this account still be outstanding after five days and arrangements not been made, a Debt Collection Agency will be engaged to recover these amounts, and your child’s position at the Centre will be cancelled.

Fees may be paid at the administration office by cash, cheque, credit card or eftpos or in services using cash or cheque. Payments can also be made using internet banking direct deposit, using the parents name and service the child attends as reference. Centre pay is also now available, if you wish to have fees deducted from Centrelink payments. Forms can be obtained from the administration office.

Payment plans which are suitable to the family and the Centre can be organised. Please contact the General Manager on 58812394 to make arrangements or to discuss this issue in further detail.

Yours Sincerely

Felicity Michael
General Manager
Deniliquin Childrens Centre

Final letter template 4- Fees 4 weeks overdue
Dear ________________

Our records show that you have $___________ fees outstanding for the _______________ service.

The Deniliquin Childrens Centre fee policy states that fees are payable 14 days in advance.

You have received 4 notices for overdue fees, and no payment has been received or payment plan negotiated. As a result your child enrolment has been cancelled. Their final day at the Centre will be ______________.

A Debt Collection Agency will now be engaged to recover these amounts, at your expense.

Please contact the General Manager on 58812394 should you wish to discuss this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Felicity Michael
General Manager
Deniliquin Childrens Centre

Cancellation notice for Failure to pay fees.