



Date Adopted March 2014

Review Date March 2017

#### Relevant Legislation & Standards

Education and Care Services National Regulations: 168 (n) 172

National Quality Standard: Quality Area 7 Standard 7.3

Child Care Cash Rebate Scheme

#### Aim / Policy Statement

To enable Goulburn Pre-School to provide high quality care and education for the children, we need to ensure we remain financially viable. Effective management and collection of fees is a very important part of our financial planning to ensure operational cost are covered. Goulburn Pre-School has a strong commitment to ensuring our fees remain as affordable as possible for all families and to ensure all families eligible for subsidies are able to access reduced fee levels. We have an ongoing commitment to continue to advocate for the right of all children to access an early childhood education regardless of the financial circumstance of their family.

#### Goals

Effective financial management and access to Goulburn Pre-School will be maximised by:

- Effective financial planning in budget preparations to monitor and plan for known expenses.
- Clear communication of fee levels and fee payment requirements will be provided upon enrolment to families.
- Following the priority of access requirements to ensure fair and equal access to Goulburn Pre-School.
- Following all requirements under the funding agreements and current legislation.
- Effective management of fees to support families and minimise bad debts.
- Notifying families of any changes to fee levels or to collection of fees as far ahead as possible or in no less than 14 days.
- Issuing fee statements at the commencement of each term.

#### Procedures and Strategies

The Approved Provider (Management Committee) will:

- Ensure enrolled positions are offered to reflect the Priority of Access Guidelines as defined by the NSW State Government funding agreements as following:
  - Children who are at risk of harm
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - Children from low income families (Low income Health Care Card)
  - Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - Children with disabilities
  - Children in the year before school (highest priority given to those closest to school entry)

Please note these groups are listed in no particular order of priority.

- Ensure adequate records of attendance are kept for each child as required.
- Ensure concise records are maintained in relation to the fee payments and subsidies.
- Comply with the NSW State Government funding agreements as required including SCAN and ISP.
- Ensure Goulburn Pre-School remains financially viable and can meet its debts and other financial obligations as they fall due.
- Review fees on a term by term basis in line with the monthly profit and loss statements

***The Nominated Supervisor will:***

- Ensure all families are made aware of current fees and current subsidies available upon enrolment.
- Ensure all families are notified of any changes to fee levels or collection of fees as far ahead as possible or in no less than 14 days.
- Ensure fee statements are issued each term (quarterly) or as requested by families.
- Work in collaboration with the Clerical Officer and Management Committee to support families in maintaining fee payments.
- Support and join advocacy actions targeting reduced cost of Pre-School education in NSW wherever possible.

## Implementation

### **Types of Fees**

#### ***Association Membership Fee***

The Association Membership Fee is a family membership and covers all children from one family on the waiting list and those enrolled at Goulburn Pre-School. The fee is valid from January to December each year and is billed on Term 1 fees or upon placement of a child upon the waiting list.

#### ***Daily Fee (9am to 3pm attendance)***

Fees for Goulburn Pre-School are set in October each year for the following year based on the DRAFT budget prepared with the known funding, anticipated enrolment numbers and operating costs. We strive to maintain fees at the most affordable level possible whilst meeting our financial obligations. Fee increases are maintained to a minimum where possible.

Changes to fee levels are considered each term based on the Profit and Loss statement or where notification to changes in funding occur.

Please note in accordance with the funding agreement with the NSW State Government, children in the year before school (turning 4 prior to 31 July that year) will pay a reduced daily fee.

### ***Extended Hours (8.15am to 4.30pm)***

Extended hours fees are set at a flat rate in addition to the daily fee. Extended hours fees can be charged as a permanent booked placement OR casual basis where the places are available. Families who consistently arrive before 9am or collect after 3pm will be billed the extended hours fee in each instance.

### ***Start Fee***

The Start Fee is charged **per child** upon accepting a position at Goulburn Pre-School. Payment of the Start Fee confirms the enrolment and assists in covering administration costs and insurances. The Start Fee is also reviewed annually and is based on the current daily fee.

### ***Late Collection Fee***

Parents and carers who are consistently late in the collection of their child after 4.30pm may be charged a Late Collection Fee at the discretion of the Director. This will be charged at a rate of \$1 per minute. This is based on respecting the staff at Goulburn Pre-School and acknowledging their own commitments outside of work hours.

### ***Subsidy***

Goulburn Pre-School administers and provides subsidised fee levels to support and increase access for identified families. This includes:

- Children from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family.
- Children with a Low Income Health Care Card (must provide proof)
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse background.

The allocation of fee subsidy is budgeted based on the funding levels and information provided by families upon enrolment. If there is an increase in the demand for fee subsidy, a maximum of 2 days subsidy shall be provided.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to provide updated information relating to changed circumstances and provide a CURRENT Low Income Health Care Card. Subsidy is reviewed regularly to ensure we can meet the needs of all eligible families.

### ***Absences***

Fees are payable for any absence during the Pre-School term. This includes absences for illness and family holidays. Fees are also payable where unimmunised or partly unimmunised children are excluded from Goulburn Pre-School in the event of an outbreak or a vaccine preventable illness. Extraordinary circumstances can be discussed with the Director who will then approach the Management Committee in regard to individual circumstances.

### ***Withdrawal From Pre-School***

A minimum of 2 weeks notice in writing is requested if a family chose to withdraw their children from Goulburn Pre-School. Fees are payable for the 2 weeks' notice period. This may be waived in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Director.

### ***Exceptional Circumstances***

In the event of a family experiencing exceptional circumstances that results in financial hardship, application can be made to the Management Committee for short term subsidy to assist the child maintain their place at Goulburn Pre-School. Exceptional circumstances may include (but not limited to);

- Sudden loss of employment.
- Significant illness of a parent/ carer or family member.
- Accident to parent or carer.

All correspondence is confidential and shall be considered on a case by case situation. This is deemed a short term support to allow families to access a Health Care Card for longer term support.

## **Fee Collection**

A fee account is issued in the first two weeks of each term based on the child's attendance, fee levels and any subsidies applied. Fees are required to be kept in advance at all times.

Fees can be paid weekly, fortnightly or in a lump sum payment (due by week 3 of each term).

Payment methods include cash, cheque, EFTPOS (debit card ONLY) or by direct payment. A fee box is provided outside the office if unattended however we do not encourage large cash payments to be left here.

Banking details are clearly provided on the bottom of the fee account for direct deposit payments. Families are asked to use their surname as a payment reference. A receipt will be provided for any payment paid in person at the office. Direct deposit payments will be recorded on fee statements.

## **Fees in Arrears**

As part of the effective financial management of Goulburn Pre-School, fees in arrears have a clear procedure. In the case of non-payment of fees, Goulburn Pre-School has a strong policy to actively pursue the recovery of outstanding fees.

The following steps will be followed:

1. The invoice will be re-issued with the outstanding amount and due date by the Clerical Officer when an instalment has been missed.
2. If no payment or arrangements are made, a personalised letter requesting payment of the outstanding fees will be sent to the parent/carer outlining the payment schedule required.
3. If there is no response to the letter, a personal phone call or conversation shall be initiated by the Clerical Officer or Director of the Pre-School to make arrangements for payment.
4. If payment is not forthcoming, the child's attendance at Goulburn Pre-School is temporarily terminated until payment is made.
5. If the child is withdrawn from Goulburn Pre-School, the matter is referred to the Management Committee to pursue the outstanding fees.

At each stage of the process, the family will be advised that the Director is available to discuss the outstanding fees.

Families with fees outstanding at the end of term, MAY NOT return for the following term until the outstanding amount is paid.

Families who have previously carried a debt over from term, or received regular second reminders, may be asked to adhere to a strict fee schedule to assist in managing regular fee payments. A fee payment schedule will be developed and they will be asked to sign and agree to adhere to this schedule.

The Director has the authority to negotiate an acceptable fee payment schedule for families in consultation with the Clerical Officer. Any special arrangements will be documented and confirmed in writing. If the arrangement is not adhered, the child's position may be terminated and outstanding fees pursued.

If a child's position has been terminated due to unpaid fees, application for re-enrolment can be made to the Management Committee once all outstanding debts have been paid.

No family shall be offered a placement at Goulburn Pre-School if there are outstanding fees from a previous sibling as recorded in the Bad Debtors Record. If the FULL outstanding amount is finalised, application for enrolment will be considered with an agreed payment schedule that will be adhered to.

## Child Care Cash Rebate Scheme

We have an Educator registered under the Child Care Cash Rebate Scheme to allow eligible families to lodge applications. Child Care Cash Rebate receipts are provided to each family each term where fees have been paid in full. It is up to families to check their eligibility for these payments through Centrelink.

## Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be measured with the ongoing financial health and viability of Goulburn Pre-School, with affordable fee levels and effective fee collection.

Resources  
and  
Attachments

Community Child Care Co-Operative (Member's Resources)

Goulburn Pre-School Philosophy (2013 Review)

NSW Fair Trading Requirements

NQS Quality Area 7 Standard 7.3 Elements 7.3.1,7.3.2, 7.3.5

Required  
Application  
Forms