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MELBOURNE CAMPUSES

Bundoora
 Collins Street CBD
 Franklin Street CBD

REGIONAL CAMPUSES

Bendigo
 Albury-Wodonga
 Mildura
 Shepparton

FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

Name of Policy	Fees Policy
Scope	Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, Administrative and Reception Staff, parents/guardians
Legislation	A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Act 2017 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7
Definitions	Child Care Subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare services. Approved Provider - Manager, Family & Children's Services LTU – La Trobe University Late Fee: A charge that may be imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the Centre.

POLICY STATEMENT

La Trobe University Community Children's Centre is an approved, long-day centre operating 10.75 hours per day, five days per week. Some families accessing this program are entitled to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), through the Commonwealth Department of Human Services (DHS). La Trobe University Community Children's Centre is committed to implementing a fair system for fee payment, including when responding to non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts, maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians and advising users of the service about relevant government supports.

RELATED POLICIES

Service policies

Complaints and Grievances Policy

Delivery and Collection of Children Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Enrolment and Orientation Policy

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- determining fee schedule, in consultation with the LTU Finance Department
- reviewing and implementing this policy and procedure
- ensuring system is in place for monitoring fees, including that fees are collected and receipted
- notifying parents/guardians within 28 days of any proposed changes to the fee schedule or the way in which the fees are collected
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring all parents/guardians are provided with information about fees when enrolling their child and ensuring that information about fees is readily accessible at the service
- ensuring all relevant information and relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions are collected where applicable
- ensuring that the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* is upheld by all staff, including in regard to financial and other information received
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to La Trobe University Community Children's Centre
- informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service
- referring parents/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider

Educators and Administrative Staff are responsible for:

- informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service
- referring parents/guardians' questions in relation to this fees/payment of fees to the Approved Provider or Administration staff

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- paying fees on time, including by making payment one week in advance
- reading and complying with the La Trobe University Community Children's Centre 'Information for Users and Conditions of Enrolment'
- notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees
- providing appropriate documentation to the Administration staff to access Child Care Subsidy

EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to flexibility and efficiency of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, and complaints in relation to this policy
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy, and best practice
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures

ATTACHMENTS

REVIEW DATE: REVIEWED JUNE 2023, August 2024, March 2025, June 2025 Feb 2026

Attachment 1: Fee and Enrolment Information

1. Fee Schedule

- 1.1 Approved Provider will provide a minimum of 28 days' notice before making any changes to fee schedule.
- 1.2 Fee schedule changes are made on an annual basis and will have a start date from January.

2. Enrolment

- 2.1 On acceptance of an enrolment, families will be offered a regular pattern of use (Complying Written Agreement -CWA). In All Day Care and Kindergarten (including Early Autism Supports), attendance patterns may be between one and five days and an early start (7.30 am) or 8.15 am start, or shorter day of 7.30am to 5.30pm. Beetle Room 5-hour session LTU student attendance patterns may be between one and five days 10.45am to 3.45pm. The Sessional Free Kindergarten attendance pattern must be for at least 2 days 8.30am to 4.00pm as agreed with the Centre.
- 2.2 It is the family's responsibility to determine if they are eligible for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and apply online. Full fees are payable until CCS is received by the Centre.
<https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy/how-claim>
- 2.3 Request to change an enrolment by increasing or swapping days is subject to the two-week notice period and can only be accommodated where a vacancy exists, and licensing requirements can be maintained. Families will be asked to give notice via writing or completion of the appropriate form. If the request is unable to be fulfilled, the request will be recorded on the internal waiting list and the request will be offered if it is available in the future.
- 2.4 Request to cease enrolment is subject to the two-week notice period. Families will be asked to give notice via writing or completion of the appropriate form.
- 2.5 The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) cannot be claimed after the child's last day of actual attendance. For example: if a family provides the Centre with 2 weeks' notice ceasing their child's place (as required) and consequently do not use this childcare, they will be charged full fee.
- 2.6 Casual/Additional days can be booked providing a vacancy exists and licensing requirements can be maintained. Additional days will be charged as per the current fee schedule.

3. Payment of fees

- 3.1 Fees are to be paid at least one week in advance.
- 3.2 Statements are forwarded to parents/guardians weekly. All accounts must be paid in advance regularly and a nil balance achieved
- 3.3 Payment is made utilising the preferred method of the family. Parents can choose from multiple methods, including: EFT & credit card at Centre, Online payments using LTU ePayments , LTU Salary sacrificing or After Tax deductions, or Centrepay
<https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/centrelink/how-use-it/set-deductions>
- 3.4 Families may be eligible for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) to support with payment of fees. For more information on CCS, please see <https://my.gov.au>

4. Absences

- 4.1 CCS defines an absence as "when a child is absent on a day on which care would otherwise have been provided if the child was not absent and the family was charged for that care"
<http://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/1/1/a/05>
- 4.2 Through the CCS, each child is allowed an initial 42 absence days from care across all approved childcare services each financial year, which can be used for any reason and without the need to produce supporting documentation. CCS is payable for any absence days up to 42 days regardless of the reason for the absence
- 4.3 CCS cannot be utilised for the following:

fees are charged to reserve a place for a child who has not yet commenced care, fees are charged for a period after a child has already ceased attending care, or the child has already attended their maximum number of CCS eligible hours in previous sessions in the same week. For further information on CCS and absences:

<http://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/1/1/a/05>

5. Short Term Absence procedure

- 5.1 The Short-Term Absence procedure can be utilised by LTU staff and students to secure their child/ren's place at the Centre during a short-term absence (up to 26 weeks), related to their LTU work or study experience.
- 5.2 For LTU staff or students who are anticipating that they will be absent as part of their work or study experience and who choose to access this procedure, fees are charged for the first 4 weeks of care (based on their regular booking) to reserve child/ren's place until their return to the Centre. Families must give notice in writing 4 weeks prior.
- 5.3 This procedure is subject to the Manager's discretion, and availability of places across the Centre.

6. Compassionate Circumstances

- 6.1 If a family experiences substantive difficulty, for example illness or injury, the Centre may waive fees after the initial 4-week period and/or only charge for days that the family utilised the Centre. This arrangement is made at the discretion of the Manager and Senior Management Team.

7. General Fee Information

- 7.1 **Childcare fees are charged for days booked, irrespective of whether the child attends the Centre**
- 7.2 Fees are not charged for days that the Centre is closed
- 7.3 **Summer Period bookings:**
 - 7.3.1 The Summer Period is between first week of December and the last week of February.
 - 7.3.2 During this period families can have a different booking arrangement to suit their leave/holiday plans, without impacting their permanent booking.
 - 7.3.3 Families can vary their booking arrangement as often as needed with a minimum of **2 weeks' Notice in writing.**
 - 7.3.4 Families will pay for all absences during this period.

8. Outstanding Debts

- 8.1 Non-payment of fees may result in the University taking further action to recover the debts.
- 8.2 LTU students may have sanctions placed on their student enrolment at La Trobe University until the debt is recovered.
- 8.3 If overdue fees are not paid within the agreed timeframe, or the family doesn't keep up with an agreed payment plan, the child's enrolment may be cancelled.

9. Late Fines

- 9.1 Parents/guardians in All Day Care and/or Kindergarten who are still in the Centre after 6.15 pm will incur a late fee of \$50.00 for the first 10 minutes, or part thereof, per child and \$50.00 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, per child thereafter. CCS is not claimable for this.
- 9.2 Parents/guardians using Beetle Room 5-hour session 10.45am to 3.45pm who collect their child after 3.45pm will incur a late fee of \$50.00 for the first 10 minutes, or part thereof, per child and \$50.00 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, per child thereafter. CCS is not claimable for this.
- 9.3 Parents/guardians in Possum Room Sessional Free Kindergarten who collect their child after 4.00pm will incur a late fee of \$50.00 for the first 10 minutes, or part thereof, per child and \$50.00 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, per child thereafter. CCS is not claimable for this.

Attachment 2: “Integrated Free Kindergarten” in All Day Care

Free Kinder is available for Three- and Four-Year-Old children at this service.

Families with children enrolled in integrated kindergarten programs will receive an annual fee offset of up to \$2,101. (\$52.53 per week during school terms)

The 2026 Free Kinder funding rates for integrated programs in long day care services can be found on the [kindergarten funding rates](#) page.

- We deduct the Free Kinder payment from the fees of parents with children in the funded kindergarten program. The cost of kindergarten hours does not need to be calculated separately for integrated programs.
- We apply this fee offset weekly and make it clear on parent invoices (labelled as "Victorian Government Free Kinder offset")
- We use any surplus funding to improve the funded kindergarten program. This may include improving quality and supporting family engagement. This is for situations where parents pay less than the Free Kinder payment in out-of-pocket fees throughout the kindergarten year.

Interactions with Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy

In Victoria, Free Kinder is an allowable third-party payment under Commonwealth funding rules. This means that Free Kinder does not impact a family's CCS entitlement. It also means long day care service providers must apply the Free Kinder offset to each families' fees after CCS has been applied.

Confirming a child's funded kindergarten program

Services must tell families that a child can only go to one funded kindergarten program at one service at a time. Services must make sure that all families have a signed form that confirms where their child will go for their funded program and keep a copy on record at the service.

All services must use our 'one funded place' form. This form can be included in an enrolment pack, either on paper or online and needs a parent or carer signature.

Long day care services must reconfirm a child's participation in their funded kindergarten program prior to Annual Confirmation to make sure funding is paid to the right service.

Services should also wait until [Term 1](#) begins (in line with school terms) before applying the offset, in case families decide to access a funded program at a sessional service.

If a child is enrolled at more than one service and funding is paid to a service where the family does not wish to claim their funded place, we will recoup the funding.

Communicating with parents

Long day care services must provide families with the following information:

- how the Free Kinder offset will be applied to families' fees (including regularity, which must be no less frequent than monthly)
- when payments will begin
- how the offset will be detailed on invoices (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset)
- that where families attend more than one service they must choose where the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program (and therefore receive the Free Kinder funding)
- that children eligible for ESK are enrolled and funded under the ESK program.

This information should be included in the service's kindergarten fee policy.

Free Kinder must be well-promoted and explained through the service's communication channels, including

websites. You can find a [communications resources pack](#) on our website, including a factsheet and letter for families, as well as website and social media content.

Services should also consider if translated materials and/or a translator would be of benefit to families.

Confirmation of participation in Free Kinder

Service providers will be required to confirm their participation in Free Kinder for 2024.

If a service is new or starts offering funded kindergarten during the year, they'll confirm their participation after applying for funding.

Monitoring and compliance with funding requirements

We will actively monitor compliance with the Free Kinder funding requirements. We, or an organisation engaged to monitor compliance on our behalf, may seek additional information and documents from service providers as part of an assurance process. This is to ensure the full benefits are being passed on to parents and that all Free Kinder funding is being used correctly and according to requirements.

Free Kinder payment to services

Free Kinder funding rates for 2026 are available on the [kindergarten funding rates](#) page.

Free Kinder funding is paid on top of other kindergarten funding streams available to long day care services (excluding Early Start Kindergarten (ESK)).

The Free Kinder payment will replace ESK Extension and is included in the ESK rate.

Funding for hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

We fund Three-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolments based on the number of hours a child spends in a funded program, which can range from 5 to 15 hours.

If a child is enrolled in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program for the full 15 hours per week, the service will be paid the full funding amount for that child.

If a child is enrolled for fewer than 15 hours, the funding will be adjusted proportionally. For example, if a 3-year-old child is enrolled in a kindergarten program for 7.5 hours per week, they'll receive half of the full 15-hour Free Kinder rate.

Payment of funding

Free Kinder payments will be made monthly via the Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS). Free Kinder funding is prorated from a service's funding start date.

Services should ensure their enrolment data in KIMS is up to date to ensure accurate payments each month.

Offsetting Free Kinder

Long day care services must apply the Free Kinder offset weekly, fortnightly or monthly. The offset should not be applied termly as this increases the risk of passing on the incorrect offset to families that move between services.

The [Free Kinder calculator](#) is available to support services to determine the correct amount to offset from fees.

Families with surplus Free Kinder funding

In circumstances where the fee offset is greater than the families' gap payment, services should set aside any fee offset not used throughout the year, in case the family's situation changes.

This may mean these families get a larger part of their fee offset later in the year if their CCS level decreases.

By the end of the kindergarten year, if possible, each family should receive their full Free Kinder entitlement.

At the end of the calendar year, any remaining fee offset may be used to improve the funded kindergarten program, like improving quality and engaging families in kindergarten for the following year.

Frequently asked questions

What happens if a child moves from one service to another in the kindergarten year?

Some children move from one service to another during the kindergarten year. In these cases, the Free Kinder funding will cease at the first service and payments will be paid to the new service (if that service is participating in Free Kinder).

Do I need to enrol children eligible for ESK?

It's important that you continue to enrol eligible children in Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) at your service. This helps service providers receive their full funding entitlement and ensures these children have access to 15 funded hours of kindergarten across Victoria.

ESK enrolment numbers play a role in calculating School Readiness Funding (SRF) for service providers. Enrolling children in ESK also allows the department to continue to monitor efforts to engage the most vulnerable children in kindergarten across Victoria and provide extra targeted support where needed through SRF or Early Childhood LOOKOUT.

Why are the Free Kinder subsidies different in sessional and long day cares?

Free Kinder funding works differently in the 2 settings. For integrated long day care programs, the service must pass the full Free Kinder savings on as a fee offset to families. This is because fees are charged for all hours of education and care, not just the kindergarten program hours, and fees can vary based on factors like the family's Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy entitlement.

Free Kinder in sessional programs functions as a fee replacement for the service. The sessional rate has been set higher to enable sessional services to offer a free 15-hour program without changing their current fee structure.

Can service providers opt in at a program level? (i.e., opt-in for the Four-Year-old Kindergarten program only and not the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program)?

Services that are participating in Free Kinder must offer a free program for all children enrolled in kindergarten at their service. Services cannot only offer Free Kinder to some groups of children (e.g., cannot offer Free Kinder for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and not Three-Year-Old Kindergarten).

Attachment 3

“Sessional Free Kindergarten”

Sessional Free Kindergarten – Possum Room only - offered from 01.06.25

Days: Mon to Thurs

Booking time 8.30am to 4.00pm ONLY- no fees

Choose 2 days for this booking and the 2 x 7.5 hours days will be FREE during term times.

You will need to provide lunch, snacks and nappies for your child on these days.

Q & A -Sessional Free Kindergarten in Possum Room

- Can I book 2 days Sessional Free Kindergarten of 7.5 hours (8.30am to 4.00pm)? Yes, ONLY in POSSUM Room. You will not pay childcare fees for these 2 days at all, but you must ensure your child is only in care from 8.30am until 4pm on these days.
- Can I change the hours of care? No, the timing of the days is not flexible - we are only allowed to offer 7.5 hours per day for 2 days Free Kindergarten.
- Can I choose which days of Kindergarten I want? Yes. You can decide which 2 days (M T W TH) to book and only use those days, or:
- Can I use 2 days of Sessional Free Kindergarten and book childcare days for other days? Yes, you can have Sessional Free Kindergarten or a longer kinder day with fees including CCS - but not both.
- What about school holidays? During school holidays the Sessional Free Kindergarten does not apply. If you need childcare during school holidays your booking would have to change for those weeks to a childcare arrangement.
- What else is different? If you have your child booked for Sessional Free Kindergarten you will need to supply food and nappies/pullups if required. We will explain in detail about sending snacks and lunch items.

Updated 15 July 2024, March 2025 Feb 2026

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