

## Fees Policy

### Purpose

This policy provides clear guidelines for families and centres, ensuring a transparent process for collecting fees for children attending ECMS Early Learning Centres and Kindergartens.

This policy details ECMS's commitment to:

- collecting fees
- equitable and efficient payment processes
- unpaid fees
- supporting families in hardship.

### Policy Principles

ECMS is a not-for-profit organisation supporting families' access to early childhood education and care. ECMS aims for affordable programs, which offer quality and value for money, today and for future children and families.

### Fees Review

ECMS reviews fees yearly and gives parents two weeks' notice about any changes.

## Billing and Payment

### Billing

Fees are:

- Calculated on a Tuesday covering that week and the following week, and listed in the statement send to families
- Paid Thursday every fortnight through Numero Pro direct debit or credit card on Kidsoft. There are no EFT facilities at any services
- Centrelink requires fees are paid on time to receive the Child Care Subsidy

### Late Payment

If a family falls behind with fees, they must discuss their situation with the centre. Continued late payment over a reasonable period or more than \$1000 in debt means they may lose their child's place until fees are current.

Centres may also forward the overdue account to debt collection.

### Payment Plans

Families having difficulty paying their fees must agree to and sign a payment plan from their Centre.

A suitable payment plan will:

- clear debts, maintain regular payments for any ongoing services and stop late payment fees
- include a recommended additional amount of 25%-50% of normal fees paid by the family each fortnight.

## Dishonour Fee

If a family's bank declines a direct debit or credit card payment, they may charge a dishonour fee.

## Cancelled Bookings

Families cancelling a booking must provide two weeks' written notice. Fees will continue to apply until it is received even if the child stops attending.

If the child is absent during those two weeks without a medical certificate, the family will also not receive the Child Care Subsidy.

The balance of any forward or fully paid unfunded kindergarten fees will be refunded minus days attended.

## Kindergarten

### Free Kinder

Free three and four-year-old kindergarten programs are available in both our long day care and standalone kindergarten settings.

Three-year-old children get between 5 and 15 hours per week of kindergarten, and four-year-old children get 15 hours per week.

### Attending Unfunded

Free Kinder only allows each child one Free Kinder program at a time. Families can attend an ECMS centre 'unfunded' if they choose to give their Free Kinder funding to another provider or receive the Free Kinder subsidy in Long Day Care.

Under Department guidelines, we must prioritise any Free Kinder funded children. So, it's possible a child may lose their place if there are no open spots and a funded child joins the Council waitlist.

Fees for unfunded places are based on age group and hours.

All billing and payment of fees for unfunded children in Kindergarten follow the process outlined above in the Billing and Payment section above.

## Early Learning Centres

### Fee Subsidy

A Free Kinder subsidy (paid directly to ECMS as the program provider) of up to \$2,000 offsets fees for children attending a funded kindergarten program in a long day care setting.

However, most families will still pay some fees, depending on how many days a child attends and any commonwealth Child Care Subsidy, which many families are also entitled to receive.

The Child Care Subsidy varies according to:

1. Combined family income
2. Activity level of both parents
3. Type of childcare service

To get more information or apply for the Child Care Subsidy, families must visit [Services Australia](#), call or visit Centrelink.

ECMS is an approved Child Care Subsidy Provider and will report the hours of care provided so families receive the correct subsidy. However, we don't control a family's eligibility or subsidy amount.

## Flexible Booking

All Early Learning Centres offer 9-hour, 10-hour, and 11-hour (full-day) bookings to help families maximise their Child Care Subsidy.

Sessions times commence when the family signs the child into the service.

## Casual Bookings

Families must call or email the Centre Director and ask if a place is available. The Centre Director will create the booking in Kidsoft.

## Holidays and Illness

Centres charge regular fees:

- on public holidays
- if a child is absent for the day, for example, when ill\* or on holiday.\*\*

\* Families are also asked to tell staff any symptoms and diagnoses to help the centre contain any spread.

\*\* Families who take longer holidays must pay regular fees to retain their place.

## ECMS Annual Conference

All ECMS Kindergartens and Early Learning Centres close on one day each year so staff can all attend the Annual Conference. Fees not charged for conference day.

Kindergartens are also closed for set-up day and a professional development day.

Families will receive advance notice about all dates so they can arrange other care.

### **Fees Policy for Early Learning Centres**

Owner: Finance

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