

FEES POLICY

RATIONALE

Nought to Five Early Childhood Centre (**Nought to Five ECC**) is a community-based education and care service which operates on a not-for-profit basis. Our objective is to make Nought to Five ECC as accessible as possible to everyone in the community by keeping our fees affordable, but always ensuring that the needs of the children and our staff are catered for within our annual budget.

POLICY STATEMENT

Nought to Five ECC will act in accordance with requirements of the Australian Government's Department of Education regarding administration of child care fees. In conjunction with these, the Management Committee and office staff will ensure:

- The fee structure covers the operational costs of Nought to Five ECC and ensures the continued efficient running of the education and care service;
- Fees are reviewed on an annual basis, or more frequently if required;
- Families will be given a minimum of one (1) months' notice of any fee increase.
- Communication with parents is effective and done in a timely manner with regard to changes to fees, fees owing, payments made, late collection fees and any additional fees such as excursions, fundraising, maintenance levy etc.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

Waitlist: Enrolment

RELATED NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 7 – GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
Standard 7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
Element 7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
Element 7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

111	Administrative space
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Education and Care Services National Regulations	111, 168, 170, 171, 172
Family Assistance Law	Incorporating all related legislation for Child Care Provider Handbook in Appendix G

A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999	
Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017	

STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES

Bond Payment

A bond consisting of two (2) weeks full fee is to be paid in order to hold a child's position at Nought to Five ECC. The bond must be paid prior to commencement at Nought to Five ECC.

A bond adjustment is also required for subsequent changes to fees. If you increase your child/ren attendance days, you will be required to top-up your bond to ensure it remains two (2) weeks of full fees. If you decrease your child/ren's attendance days and / or your child/ren move to the next room, you will be refunded part of your bond – ensuring your bond is no more than two (2) weeks of full fees at all times.

If all accounts are paid in full and no amount is outstanding when the child leaves Nought to Five ECC, the bond payment will be refunded to families approximately two weeks after a child's last day (excluding centre closure periods), once the final CCS reconciliation has taken place.

Free Information

Fee schedules and payments will be fully explained to families on their orientation days. The current rates can be obtained from the office or on our website (www.noughttofive.com.au).

The office administrator is responsible for processing fees. Families should contact the office administrator in the first instance regarding any fee related queries.

Fees

Fees are set at a 'per day' rate in all rooms and the charge is **always** for a full day (10.75 hours), regardless of a child's actual attendance. For example, if a child is present at the centre for six hours over the course of a day, the charge is still for a full day (i.e. 10.75 hours).

Late Collection Penalty Charges

Our license finishes at 6:00pm. Any children and parents still on the premises after this time puts Nought to Five ECC in breach of our license. Therefore, a flat rate late collection fee of \$30.00 is charged if a child has not been collected by 6:00pm. This fee is regardless of whether pickup is at 6:01pm or 6:10pm for example. If pickup is later than 6:30pm, higher penalties may apply.

If a parent feels that lateness occurred due to exceptional circumstances, the reason should be put in writing to the director. Each case will be individually assessed and a decision made by the director within seven (7) days. Parents will be notified of the decision by telephone or email. If late collection occurs twice in a month, the child/ren's placement at Nought to Five ECC could be reviewed.

If a child has not been collected by 6:00pm and the parent has not notified the centre, every effort will be made to communicate with the parent. If unsuccessful, emergency contacts listed on the child's enrolment form will be contacted.

If we are unsuccessful in contacting the parents/ emergency contact person, Eastwood Police Station will be contacted for assistance.

Additional Fees

Any extracurricular activities such as excursions, incursions etc. are charged at an additional fee. This will be added to your fees account and shown as a separate charge.

Payments for these extracurricular activities are to be paid by direct deposit, or cash if listed as an option. When notifying you of these various events, we will provide you with the relevant payment details and instructions.

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Maintenance Levy

We do ask all our families for help towards maintaining Nought to Five ECC, either through attending two (2) working bees a year, or paying \$100 (\$50 per working bee). Monies received for these events will go towards having equipment repaired, lawns mowed, rubbish removal of faulty equipment, etc.

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Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Government assistance with fees can be obtained by applying to Centrelink for eligible families (e.g. Australian permanent residents / citizens who do not exceed the annual household income threshold and whose children remain up to date with their immunisations).

CCS will be applied as a reduction to each week's fees. Eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is based on and subject to a standardised income test. Once a claim is lodged and processed (approximately 2- 3 weeks), the government department will notify parents of the percentage of fees to be subsidised. This percentage is then applied to the weekly fees and families pay the outstanding balance (referred to as the 'gap fee'). Families must provide all relevant CRNs to Nought to Five ECC to enable CCS to be applied to their account.

PLEASE NOTE: Once we enrol your child/ren at Nought to Five ECC, **you will need to accept / review the enrolment online** through your MyGov Centrelink account or the Centrelink app. Full weekly fees will need to be paid until we start to receive your CCS payments. CCS is always received one week in arrears, meaning we will not start to receive CCS for your child/ren until their second week of attendance, at the earliest.

It is a government requirement that all persons receiving CCS, notify the government of any changes in their financial circumstances. It is also a requirement to notify the government of any situational care arrangements, for subsequent children, that attracts the CCS subsidy e.g.: before and after school care, family day care, etc.

Start Strong Long Daycare Funding (Fee Relief Payment)

The Start Strong Fee Relief program for long daycare provides funding to deliver affordable quality early education to children who turn four years old on or before 31 July any given year and for children who are three years old and not yet four years old on, or before, 31 July any given year.

The Fee Relief Payment is completely separate to CCS, and is not linked to a family's residency status or household income. Neither does the payment impact a family's CCS entitlements.

The Fee Relief Payment is offered to families as a weekly reduction to their gap fee, allocated across Nought to Five ECC's total number of operating weeks for the calendar year (50 weeks). The payment is a flat rate pay, and eligible children receive the same amount per week, regardless of how many days they attend weekly.

Where a child is enrolled in more than one service (e.g. at a preschool or another long day care service), families can only access the Fee Relief Payment from one service. All eligible families must complete and return a declaration form to nominate which service they will access the fee relief from.

Payment of Fees

Fees must always be paid one week in advance, on Fridays. Fees are payable for all public holidays, absences for sickness, and family holidays. Weekly payments are preferred, but fortnightly or monthly payments can be considered following communication with the office / director / Management Committee.

Fees are to be paid by direct deposit into Nought to Five ECC's nominated bank account, as follows:

Account Name:	Nought to Five Early Childhood Centre Incorporated
BSB:	062 281
Account No:	0090 3810

Parents must ensure their **child's surname** is included in the deposit description. Direct deposit fee payments should be set up to come out of your account every Friday, to ensure we receive your payment by Wednesday the following week (fee processing day).

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Late Fees

If your account is in arrears at the end of processing fees on Wednesdays, each week a late payment penalty of \$20.00 will automatically be applied to your account.

If fees are in arrears by two (2) weeks or more without explanation, the place of the child/ren within the centre will be in jeopardy.

Absences from Nought to Five ECC

Parents are required to inform the centre whenever their child is going to be absent from Nought to Five ECC. This is a mandatory government and centre requirement. Absentee forms are available on the Nought to Five Audiri app, under *Forms > Absentee Record - Nought to Five ECC*. Alternatively, you can either email or telephone the centre to advise of absences.

In the case of illness, parents must notify the centre of their child's condition, as Nought to Five ECC is obliged to inform the Health Department of any infectious diseases existing in the centre.

Fees are payable during these periods of absence from Nought to Five ECC.

CCS Absences

CCS subsidy is applied for allowable absences up to a total of 42 days per financial year (unless otherwise is decided by the government). After this time, full fees apply to retain a place.

There are strict rules around CCS at the start and end of a child's enrolment. Centrelink will generally not pay CCS for any absences before your child physically attends or after the last day your child physically attends care. You will need to pay full fees for these days.

However, if you have an approved reason, Centrelink will pay CCS for up to seven (7) absence days (these are calendar days). You can use these either:

- before your child attends their first day.
- after the last day they physically attend.

Approved reasons include any of these:

- your child is ill.
- your child's carer or their partner or another person your child lives with is ill.
- your child is attending preschool.
- your child is spending time with a person other than their usual carer as required by a court order or parenting plan.
- your child's early childhood service is closed as a direct result of a local emergency.
- your child cannot attend because of a local emergency.
- your child's carer chooses not to send the child due to a local emergency.
- your child's enrolment ceased incorrectly.
- You have experienced a family tragedy.

Unexplained Non-Attendance

Children who are absent for two weeks without notification or communication from the family, may have their child/ren's enrolment terminated. All efforts will be made by Nought to Five ECC to contact you to ascertain the whereabouts of your child/ren prior to this. This is to ensure Nought to Five ECC is not at a financial loss. The family's two (2) week security bond will then be applied to CCS payments reclaimed by the government.

Financial Difficulties

If a family is experiencing financial difficulties, a suitable payment plan may be arranged with authorisation of the Approved Provider. The payment plan should be designed to clear debts while maintaining regular payments for any ongoing early childhood education and care services, and it should be sustainable for both parties.

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Families can apply for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) through Centrelink for additional fee assistance.

There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:

- **Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)**—to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect. The approved provider is involved in determining children who may require additional support who are at risk of harm
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent)**—to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship)**—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work)**—to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment

Debt Recovery Procedure

It is important that a debt is not left to accrue. If a family has outstanding fees, the following procedure applies:

- Every family must pay fees at a minimum for the current week, or one week in advance.
- Fees are processed each Wednesday afternoon. If a fee payment has not been received into Nought to Five ECC's account by the time we print our bank statements, a *Late Payment* penalty of \$20.00 will be automatically charged to your account.
- The Invoice issued each week on a Thursday will reflect the following:
 - The penalty charge incurred
 - The outstanding fees owing and
 - The fees currently due to bring your account back to one week in advance.
- By the Friday, the total amount on your invoice **must be paid in full**.

If the debt remains, the director or office administrator will contact you by phone to organise a specific day and time for this payment to be made. Until this payment is made your child/ren will be unable to attend Nought to Five ECC. You will still be charged for your child's normal attendance days during this time.

If this situation occurs with a family on more than one occasion, you will be required to attend a meeting with a Management Committee representative and/or the director to decide on the viability of your child/ren remaining at Nought to Five ECC.

Change of Fees

Fees are reviewed annually, or more frequently if required, by the Management Committee. Families will be given a minimum of one (1) months' notice of any fee increase.

CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the CPI at the commencement of each financial year, Any CCS hourly rate increases are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software

Withdrawal / Termination of Enrolment

Nought to Five ECC requires a minimum of four (4) weeks' notice of intention to withdraw a child from being enrolled (excluding any periods of centre closure e.g. end of year closure). This allows time to reallocate the place, and calculate fees owed and any refunds due. A form is available on the Nought to Five Audiri app, under *Forms > Withdrawal From Care - Nought to Five ECC*.

You will need to pay your usual fees up to and including your child's last day. At the end of your last week at Nought to Five ECC, attendance will be sent to the government. Assuming there are no changes to your

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CCS payments and all your fees have been paid, we will refund your full security deposit into your nominated bank account approximately two weeks after your child's last day (excluding centre closure periods).

Fee Concessions

A concession for the payment of fees is granted for the two-week period (12 week days) that Nought to Five ECC is closed over the end of year period.

Circumstances which do not attract a fee concession are:

- Public holidays (except Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day)
- If siblings are enrolled
- Family holidays
- Your child/ren are sick
- Absent days for any other reasons

Fee Related Administrative Tools

Initial Fee Payments	Security deposit and first week's fee details are provided in the letter of offer. These amounts need to be paid prior to the child's start date to secure their enrolment.
Amended Fee Advice Form	Details changes to a child's account when changes to fees are made (usually at the beginning of July)
Enrolment Details Form	Details changes to a child's account when attendance changes for an upcoming year result in changes to fees.

Sources and Further Reading

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

ACECQA - *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (October 2023)

ACECQA – [Payment of Service Fees and Provision of a Statement of Fees Charged by the Service Policy and Procedure Guidelines](#) (August 2021)

Department of Education, [Additional Child Care Subsidy](#) (2023)

Department of Education, [Child Care Package](#) (2023)

Department of Education, [Child Care Provider Handbook](#) (October 2023)

Department of Education, [Guide to Additional Child Care Subsidy \(child wellbeing\)](#) (October 2023)

