

Last reviewed: September 2019

Nillumbik Playhouse Policy

Payment of Fees

POLICY STATEMENT

Council's Playhouses are not-for-profit services, licensed and operated by Nillumbik Shire Council. To provide high quality education and care, the Playhouses needs to remain financially viable at all times. Fees are set by Nillumbik Shire Council and are reviewed annually to ensure they are as affordable as possible. The Playhouses financial health and continued access to education and care will be maximised by ensuring all families are aware of all fees charged by the services, the fee payment process and their obligation to pay fees upon request.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Primary Nominee, Approved Nominee, Accepted Nominees, Educators, Staff, Students on placement, Contractors, Volunteers, Parents/Guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of the Playhouse, including during offsite excursions and activities, and any other individual involved in this organisation.

LEGISLATION

Children's Services Regulations 2009 (v10)
40(10(f); 41(b)

Children's Services Act 1996 (Vic)
Section 31

Education and Care Services National Regulations
168(2)(n)

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Section 172; 175

National Quality Standard
Quality area 7.3

GOALS / What we are going to do

- Inform families about how the Playhouse operations are funded and follow a clear and transparent process for setting fees.
- Provide a clear and accurate Statement of Fees charged by Playhouse and explain this statement to families upon enrolment.

- Provide families with information regarding the availability of Government payment support options such as the Child Care Subsidy.
- Effectively manage the fee payment process, provide reasonable notice of when fees are due and offer payment options.
- Record all fees payments according to Australian Government Guidelines.

EVALUATION

To ensure continuous improvement, the Primary Nominee will:

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, including children, families and staff.
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy.
- Notify Parents/Guardians when making any changes to this policy or its procedures.
- Make updates to the policy as part of the service's policy review cycle, or in response to current legislation, research, policy and best practice updates, or as otherwise required.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

All Playhouse policies, forms and records.

RESOURCES

Department of Human Services- A guide to Australian Government Payments
www.humanservice.gov.au

ACECQA- Quality area 7: Governance and leadership
www.acecqa.gov.au

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted on 25 September 2019.

REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed in December 2020.

PROCEDURE/ How it will be done

The Approved Provider will:

- Determine the required fee level to meet budget predictions for the year.
- Consider any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Playhouse and remove these barriers wherever possible.
- Publish fees and charges.
- Notify Parents/Guardians with 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

The Primary/Approved Nominee will:

- Inform families of the conditions under which fees are charged (See Appendix 1)
- Ensure a notice outlining the fees charges by the Playhouse is displayed prominently in the main entrance of Playhouse.
- Provide Parents/Guardians with a monthly reminder of any overdue amount owing.
- Provide families with information regarding the availability of government payment support options such as the Child Care Subsidy.
- Collect all relevant information and maintain relevant documents regarding families with entitlements to concessions, where applicable.
- Respond to questions and concerns regarding the payment of fees in a timely manner or provide the contact details of the Playhouse Administration Officer.

The Parent/Guardian will:

- Pay all fees and charges on or before the due date.
- Contact the Playhouse Administration Officer directly if they experience difficulties with fee payments.
- Abide by the conditions as set out in Appendix 1- Statement of fees and Appendix 2- Changes to care arrangements.

Appendix 1
STATEMENT OF FEES
Fees Chargeable

Program fees

- Fees are charged as per the child's booked sessions of care.
- Fees are not chargeable for Victorian School Holidays or Public Holidays.
- Fees charged by the Playhouses are based on a session fee (either four or five hours depending on the day of attendance) irrespective of the actual hours of attendance.

Late Collection Fee

The daily fees are based on the opening hours provided for the centre. In the event that children are collected more than 15 minutes late, an **additional hour of fees** will be charged to recoup the associated educator costs.

Fees Payment Process

Families will be invoiced for the sessions of care provided at the end of each fortnight.

Payment of each invoice must be made within 14 days after issue of the invoice. Details on how to pay are listed on each invoice.

Parents experiencing difficulties in paying debts are encouraged to contact the Playhouse Administration Officer directly.

Payment Plans

Families experiencing genuine difficulty with payment of their fees may be offered a payment plan. The payment plan is designed to clear debts while maintaining regular payments for any ongoing care. The recommended additional payment each fortnight is 25%-50% of the regular fees paid by the family. Payment Plans must be negotiated and agreed on the basis that ongoing fees for services will remain current and the additional payments are only to clear debts so that the arrears and late payment fees do not continue to increase.

Once agreed, the Playhouse Administration Officer will document the payment plan and terms of the agreement and email a copy to the Parent/Guardian or person responsible for fee payment.

Management of Overdue Accounts

A summary of unpaid invoices will be emailed on a monthly basis. If payment has not been received or a payment plan entered into within 30 days of issuing the invoice, a formal 'Termination of Care' notification will be sent which will be deemed to provide two weeks' notice of cancellation of service.

If there is no payment received or payment plan entered into within the two week notification period, the child's position will be forfeited and no further care will not be provided.

Once all debt has been paid, care may resume if a place is available, otherwise the family can opt to go on the waiting list.

Recovery of unpaid fees

Families that leave the Playhouse without rendering full payment of fees will be pursued for payment. The unpaid account will be placed in the hands of a third-party collection service and any associated fees will be charged to the family.

If a family/fee payer feels that they have a grievance or believe they have been unfairly treated, they are advised to follow the Grievance Procedure.

Child Care Subsidy

The Playhouses are approved providers of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and therefore children attending Council's Playhouses may be eligible to receive CCS to reduce the fees payable by the family.

It is the responsibility of the family to contact Centrelink to register their child and undertake an assessment to determine the child's eligibility to receive CCS.

It is the responsibility of the family to provide correct customer reference number (CRN) on their child's enrolment form, complete their assessment and confirm the enrolment in their MyGov account in order to claim CCS.

If a child is eligible to receive CCS, Centrelink will determine the amount of subsidy and advise Playhouse of this. Centrelink will withhold 5% of your subsidy each fortnight. This is to reduce the chance of an overpayment and will be balanced at the end of the financial year.

If a child is not eligible to receive CCS or the family chooses not to register for CCS, the family will be required to pay the full fee charged by Playhouse.

Fees chargeable

Children eligible to receive CCS are provided a reduced hourly rate of care which is applied to the Playhouse hourly cost.

If the child is receiving CCS, they are eligible to 42 allowable absences per year in which Centrelink will still pay CCS. If a child is attending multiple services and receiving CCS at all services, the child is only entitled to 42 allowable absences across all services.

Where the child exceeds the number of allowable absences, the family will not receive the CCS portion of the fee and will therefore be required to pay the full fee charged by Playhouse.

Fees payment

The family member nominated at Centrelink to receive the CCS, is the person responsible for ensuring the payment of fees.

CCS Allowable Absences

Once the 42 absence days have been taken, CCS can only be paid for additional absences if certain criteria are met. If a family wants to receive CCS for additional absence days for a child, they will need to provide documented evidence to the service to support one of the following reasons:

- illness (with a medical certificate)
- non-immunisation (with written evidence)
- rostered days off/rotating shift work (with written evidence)
- temporary closure of a school or pupil-free days
- shared care arrangements due to a court order, parenting plan or parenting order (with copy of documentation)
- attendance at preschool
- exceptional circumstances.

If documentation is provided for an additional absence after the child care service has already submitted an absence report, the original report will need to be cancelled and a replacement submitted. The replacement report needs to include the reason for the additional absence.

For more information relating to CCS and allowable absences, please see www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0

When Child Care Subsidy is NOT payable for a child's absence from care

Child Care Subsidy will not be paid for an absence before an enrolled child physically attends a session of care, including where:

- a child is booked in to start at a service on a particular date, and does not attend on that day, or
- a provider charges a family to reserve a place for a child who has not yet physically attended care.

A child care service is taken to have permanently ceased providing care for a child on the day the child last physically attends a session of care.

Child Care Subsidy will not be paid **for absences submitted after a child's last day of child care**. This includes where:

- a family has confirmed their child's last day at a service, but that child does not physically attend their last booked sessions of care, or
- a provider continues to charge fees for sessions of care after a child has left the service, because the family did not give the agreed period of notice that they no longer require child care.

Appendix 2

CHANGES TO CARE ARRANGEMENTS

Additional Days/Casual Days

Additional days for a defined period of time may be available upon request. Fees for additional days of care are included in the fortnightly invoice. Where vacancies do not exist, families can opt to be placed on the waiting list. Two weeks written notice is required to cancel additional days.

Single casual days may be available upon request. Fees for single casual days are included in the fortnightly invoice. At least 24 hours written notice is required to cancel single casual days, otherwise the usual session fee will be charged.

Changes to your child's regular booked days

All reasonable efforts will be made to support families to access alternative days of care should their circumstance change. Two weeks' written notice is required to change your child's regular booked days of attendance. Where vacancies do not exist, families can opt to be placed on the waiting list.

Swapping days

All reasonable efforts will be made to support families to swap days of care in any given week. One week's notice is required. Where the alternative days are available in the same week and adequate staffing can be provided, care may be offered. Parents/Guardians will be notified of availability the week prior to care, as vacancies cannot be confirmed until this. Usual charges for absences on regular days of care apply if requests to swap days cannot be accommodated or for absences on agreed alternative days.

Notification to cease care

Two weeks' written notice is required to cease care completely or cease individual days of care. If two weeks' notice is not provided, families will be invoiced for the additional two weeks. If your child does not attend their last sessions of care, families will be charged full fees for the days they are absent.

Termination of care

A 'Termination of Care' notification may be issued to families under certain circumstances including non-payment of fees; incomplete authorisation or child enrolment records; or inability to provide a service. Families will be provided with two weeks' notice of termination of care.