

Policy Introduction

Weldon Children's Services strives to provide high-quality care, education, and leisure programs. To achieve this aim, we need to be financially viable at all times. Prompt payment of fees allows us to plan with certainty and meet our commitments. Our approach is to ensure our fees are as affordable as possible and that all families have access to any subsidies that are available to reduce the cost of care. We will advocate with governments for all children's rights to access early education and school-age care regardless of individual families' financial situation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to give families a clear understanding of Weldon's fee structure, payment requirements and Child Care Subsidy benefits before enrolment. This policy explains the process of fee payment and the necessity of ensuring children's fees are paid on time and the impact of the failure to pay fees on time.

Strategies for policy implementation

Weldon aims to ensure families understand the fee schedule and payment process required for high-quality care, education, and leisure programs to be provided for their child/ren. We are committed to meeting our obligations to maintain financial viability and comply with all Child Care Subsidy (CCS) legislative requirements. We have effective compliance systems in place to ensure childcare funding is administered appropriately. Weldon ensures the confidentiality and privacy of all personal information provided to our Programs about the enrolled child and family.

The Approved Provider will:

- Ensure the organisation complies with Family Assistance Law
- Ensure vacant places are filled under the appropriate priority of access policy for the programs we offer ([refer to priority of access guidelines – Enrolment and Orientation Policy](#)).
- As required under family assistance law, pass all fee reductions to families as advised by the Department of Education against *an attendance record report/child sign-in sign-out record* within fourteen days of being advised of the amount.
- Ensure the organisation submits online weekly *attendance record reports* to the Department of Education for each child accessing care.
- Comply with Australian Government or NSW Government funding agreements as required.
- Ensure the organisation remains financially viable and can meet its debts and other obligations as they fall due.
- Review fees annually in line with CPI and market forces
- Where assistance is provided by the Government's "Additional Child Care Subsidy", Weldon will not be charging any additional fees.
- Issue accounts, to provide families with a complete record of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and or other fee reductions that have been provided by the organisation, weekly.
- Only collect and disclose personal information about children and families to the Department of Education and/or the Family Assistance Office as legally required.

Fees Policy



Our nominated supervisor will:

- Ensure all families are made aware of program fees and bond deposit requirements.
- In conjunction with the Approved Provider, work with families to find a solution where families are experiencing hardship or where there are extenuating circumstances preventing families from keeping their accounts current or where the implementation of the policy creates an unreasonable financial burden.
- Ensure adequate records of attendance are kept for each child as required.

Families will:

- Obtain a Customer Reference Number (CRN) from Centrelink for the parent(s) and the child as soon as practicable before or on enrolment at the program.
- Sign in and out and record the arrival and departure times of their child/children attending care.
- Pay fees as they are due, even if a child is absent due to illness or accident.

Fee Structure

Our fee structure includes:

Administration fee:

An annual administration fee is payable for each family, upon initial enrolment and/or as bookings are confirmed to continue the care into the following year. Administration fees are payable for all program types.

NOTE: The administration fee is an annual fee per family, irrespective of the number of children attending the various programs noted above. e.g. where children are already booked into a Before and After School Care program and the administration fee has been previously paid to a program, no administration fee will be charged for Vacation Care.

Bond deposit:

On enrolment of a permanent booking, a bond (security deposit) equal to the sum of two full weeks' fees is required. The Bond is due and payable upon confirmation of enrolment. Bonds are held separately from general accounts. The bond may be adjusted from time to time based on changes in fee charges or changes in booking requirements, for example, decreases or increases in days booked.

Commencement of care

A payment equal to the sum of two weeks of care is payable before the commencement of care i.e., the current week and a week in advance. Note: We do NOT accept cash for any payments - fees are payable only by iPay, with iPay being a debit system that works in conjunction with our HubHello software (the childcare management system).

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

- Parents/guardians are required to register for CCS through their myGov account linked to Centrelink and provide documentation to support the CCS payment.
- CCS is paid directly to the program, and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's tax invoice).

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)

- Families can apply for ACCS through Centrelink for fee assistance.
- There are four different payments under the Additional Child Care Subsidy:
 - ACCS (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 and who are at risk of harm.
 - ACCS (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.
 - ACCS (temporary financial hardship)—to help families experiencing financial hardship. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.
 - ACCS (transition to work)—to help low-income families transition from income support to work. Families are required to contact Centrelink directly regarding this payment.

Non- Notification of an Absence fee:

A non-notification fee is charged where parents have booked their children into a placement for an early-year learning program or a before or after-school care program and do not advise the program of an absence by the set times.

Late Fees

Weldon recognises that there can be unforeseen circumstances that families experience, and we will work with families to ensure late fees are only applied in the appropriate circumstances.

- Weldon is not licensed or insured to have children on the premises after hours. To have children on the premises after hours is a breach of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations
- A late fee will apply when children are not picked up before closing time.
- A review of the child's enrolment will occur where families are consistently late collecting children.

General Fee Information

- Fees are charged for each session of care and vary depending on the age of the child in care and the family's eligibility for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).
- CCS is paid directly to the program, and this is used as a fee reduction (visible on a family's tax invoice).
- Families are required to pay the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount- the 'gap' amount.
- Fees are to be paid weekly through iPay, a direct debit system.
- Fees are payable in advance for every session that a child is enrolled for. This includes absent days and family holidays.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday, Early Years Learning families are required to pay for that day for a permanent booking unless it is a public holiday that falls within Weldon's close-down period.
- If a session of care falls on a public holiday, before and after school care families are required to pay for that day for a permanent booking unless it is a public holiday that falls within Weldon's close-down period or falls during a vacation care period or on a pupil free day.
- Fees are not charged for any before and after-school care programs that fall on a pupil-free day (staff development day), however, they are required to pay a fee if they attend a program provided on a pupil-free day. The fee charged will be set based on the program and activities provided. A pupil-free day is set by an educational institution. On a pupil-free day, students do not attend school. Pupil-free days attached to school holidays are not deemed to be vacation care.
- Fees are charged for the full sessions booked (regardless of the actual hours attended). Late fees do apply for families who arrive after the program closing time to collect their children.
- Where a family has two or more children attending a program with permanent bookings in a normal week of care, the older sibling (or older siblings if there are three or more children) will receive a 5% discount.

Payment of Fees

- Families are required to pay fees using iPay. iPay is a direct debit system that works in conjunction with our Hubhello software. On enrolment, the family is required to complete their iPay details within Hubhello.
- All fees and charges including those associated with the direct debit system are outlined upon enrolment.
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees.
- Families will be issued with a tax invoice weekly as per the fee payment and regulatory requirements.
- Families will be issued with a statement of entitlement fortnightly per the fee payment and regulatory requirements.
- The tax invoice will include details of the sessions of care provided, associated CCS payments received, and payments received from the family.
- The statement of entitlement will include details of the sessions of care, care summary, fees and subsidy summary, year to date absences. More information can be found here: <https://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/4/6/1/40>
- The tax invoice and statement of entitlement are generated using our Hubhello software which meets all requirements per Family Assistance Law legislation.

iPay

- When paying by iPay, the following charges apply:
 - when paying from a bank account (EFT) – no fees are incurred. (In this case, there is a charge per transaction by iPay, that is paid for by Weldon.)
 - Visa/Mastercard percentage (calculated on transaction value)
 - Failed Transaction charge (per failed or returned transaction attempt)The above fee types are charged to the benefit of the iPay service provider. Weldon does not receive any of the above fees for this iPay service.
- The current list of these fee charges is made available at the program, is noted on the tax invoice and is provided to families each year as fees and charges are reviewed.

Outstanding fees

Weldon recognises that there can be unforeseen circumstances that families experience, and we will work with families to agree on an arrangement to assist where there are circumstances of undue financial hardship. experienced.

Where there are outstanding fees, the Nominated Supervisor will, in conjunction with the Approved Provider, implement an overdue fee process with any families where fees are not a week in advance. The Nominated Supervisor will follow up on late payment accounts to organise a payment plan or, as a last resort, suspend care.

Arrangements for debt collection processes to commence will be made where no arrangement is agreed to, or an agreed arrangement is not maintained.

Change of Fees

- Fees are subject to change at any time provided a minimum of 14 days written notice is given to all families.
- CCS hourly rate caps may be increased by the CPI at the commencement of each financial year, Any CCS hourly rate changes are governed by CCS and are automatically adjusted through our CCS Software.

Absences

- Families are requested to contact the program if their child is unable to attend a particular session. The preferred method of contact is by telephone, email, or text message.
- The latest time required to notify your absence differs for each program type:
 - Early Years Learning Permanent Booking – absences should be notified the evening before or as early as possible on the day, however, must be notified by 10.00 am on the day at the latest.
 - Early Years Learning Casual Booking - absences must be notified by 6.00 pm on the previous day.
 - After School care bookings – absences must be notified by 12.00 pm on the day.
 - Before School care booking – absences must be notified by 7.00 am on the day.
- Families must still pay the 'gap' fee to the program if their child is unable to attend any permanent bookings
- Families must pay the "gap fee" to the program if they did not alert the program about the absence or cancel the casual booking in the required timeframes (as above)
- Under the Child Care Subsidy, families are entitled to 42 allowable absence days per child, each financial year and in some circumstances, may be entitled to additional absence days. (Refer to the Child Care Subsidy Handbook)
- Records and evidence will be kept by the program for each additional absence, where required.
- Families can view their absence count through their Centrelink online account via myGov and the weekly tax invoice and statement of entitlement.

Withdrawal of Enrolment

- Parents are to provide 10 business days' written notice of their intention to withdraw a child from the program.
- If withdrawal from the program is made without notification, the Child Care Subsidy may only be paid up until the child's last physical day of attendance. In this instance, full fees will be charged.
- The child needs to attend the program on the last day of the notice period to receive CCS.
- The full bond will only be refunded if fees are up to date and the child attended the last day of care
- Withdrawal from the program without the required 10 business days' notice, may result in the forfeiture of the bond

Bookings and Enrolments:

Bookings for Vacation Care are accepted and confirmed ONLY in the following circumstances:

- No outstanding fees for any other program one week before the commencement of vacation care
- A relevant vacation care booking is undertaken via the BookMe system in Hubhello.
- All booking confirmations are subject to availability.

Changes to Permanent Bookings:

- A change to increase specific days on an ongoing basis or swap permanent days requires notice in writing and will be accommodated as soon as possible, subject to availability.
- 10 business days' notice in writing is required to reduce days on any permanent booking.
- 10 business days' notice in writing is required to cancel or change a Vacation Care booking.

Annual Re-enrolment Process

Families will:

- Provide a written notice for withdrawal in a calendar year no later than mid-October or during the re-enrolment process (whichever occurs sooner). If families are not re-enrolling for the coming year, the last opportunity to provide withdrawal notice will be at the end of October. Late notice penalties will be applied if notice is given after mid-October. The late notice penalty will require full fees to be paid until the end of the current operational year (i.e. late December), regardless of the date of withdrawal if after mid-October.
- Provide written notice to withdraw or to reduce permanent placement days for the start of the following calendar year, no later than mid-October (dates are advised on the re-enrolment form). When written notice to withdraw or to reduce permanent placement days is not received by the required date in mid-October, full fees are to be paid for the new calendar year until the second week of March (dates to be advised on the re-enrolment form).
- Ensure any outstanding fees are paid in full and provide bank account details for the refund of bond monies.
- Bond refunds will be made as soon as practical after final attendances have been confirmed and processed.

Definitions:

Approved provider: The **approved provider** is the legal entity that holds the **approval** for running a program and is legally responsible for managing the program. Weldon is the approved provider of all the programs they operate.

Nominated Supervisor: The person who is **nominated** by the Approved Provider for the day-to-day responsibility of the program and who has consented to **nomination** in writing. In Weldon's programs, the Nominated Supervisor is the Director or Coordinator of the program.

Permanent Booking: A permanent booking is a booking for the same specific day/s or session/s each week or fortnight, with no defined end date on the booking.

A permanent booking is ongoing. Please note that the minimum number of days for a permanent booking in an Early Years program is two days (consecutive days are preferred).

Casual/Non-Permanent Booking: A casual booking is a booking that is made on an ad hoc, non-permanent basis, not on an ongoing basis. The booking has a start and end date and may be for an additional day or session that is not part of a permanent booking or for a one-off day as required.

A family may have a permanent booking for some days and a casual booking for other days. Unless there is an ongoing commitment for a booking, the casual booking surcharge will apply.

Links to other policies:

The following policies may be linked to this policy:

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Sources

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority.
- Australian Government Department of Education Child Care Provider [Handbook](#)
- Australian Government Department of Education <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood>
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (
- Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2023)