

Fees (7D)



Policy Statement

Our service has a commitment to ensuring our fees are as affordable and equitable as possible and that families have access to any fee reduction in line with NSW Department of Education funding.

The setting and payment of fees considers all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the NSW Department of Education Start Strong Program.

All records held at the service will be maintained in accordance with the service Confidentiality and Privacy Policy.

Families will be provided with accurate fees statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes.

Goals – What are we going to do?

- To deliver high quality service and facilities at affordable rates, whilst ensuring the long-term viability and continuity of service to our community.
- To ensure the fee schedule, and its terms and conditions, reflect Mt Warning Community Preschool's philosophy, and comply with the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*, *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* and ACECQA's *National Quality Standards*.
- To comply with the *NSW Department of Education's Start Strong* funding agreement.
- To specify each year's fee schedule, ensuring that the preschool offers an affordable service for all families, as all children have a right of equal access to quality children's services, regardless of economic status, cultural background, or disability.
- To provide a clear set of guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees, which ensures the viability of Mt Warning Community Preschool and the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees for the provision of a quality service for all families.
- To specify a fair and manageable system for dealing with the failure to pay fees, and/or inability to pay outstanding debts.

Goal Details

- Mt Warning Community Preschool is a community-based not-for-profit preschool and is run by a Management Committee. The service is dependent upon voluntary participation from several families and community members. In order to continue to provide an affordable, quality service, the preschool must charge fees that allow it to remain economically viable. The fees charged, with funds received from the NSW Department of Education, and fundraising, must cover operating costs. These include:
 - staff salaries;
 - sickness and holiday pay;
 - superannuation;
 - relief staff;
 - training;
 - replacement of worn out equipment;
 - acquisition of new equipment and materials for the children;
 - office materials;
 - telephone;
 - electricity;
 - cleaning; and
 - maintenance and repairs.

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Goal Details Cont.

Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks

National Quality Framework

Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management 7.1

- It is essential that fees are paid promptly each term to ensure the viability of the service.
- Financially disadvantaged families who require financial assistance and information about other financial and support services to be able to access this service. A fee schedule is included in the *Welcome Booklet* and the *Enrolment Form*.
- Mt Warning Community Preschool will maintain confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of all parents/carers of children enrolled at the service.
- The Approved Provider/Management Committee, when notified by the Director/Nominated Supervisor, may use their discretion in being flexible in the fee schedule for disadvantaged/vulnerable children when their families are experiencing *extremely significant* financial disadvantage.

Strategies – How will it be done?

Fee Payable/Accounts

- The Approved Provider/Management Committee will liaise with the Nominated Supervisor/Director in determining the fee schedule, to meet budget prediction for the year and fulfil obligations under the Start Strong Funding Agreement.
- The fee schedule and fees payment policy will be fully explained to families during the enrolment process.
- Fees payable will be invoiced at the beginning of each term and must be paid:
 - Fortnightly in advance- the first two- week payment is due on the first day of attendance for that term. Two week payments will be due every two weeks thereafter; or
 - A lump whole term payment. If a parent/carer elects to pay the whole term's fees, the payment must be paid by the second week of each term.
- Families will be given a minimum of 14 days' notice of any fee increase.
- Fees invoice will be sent electronically to the parent/carer and a hard copy is available by request. Please contact the Director/Nominated Supervisor and/or Administrator.
- Fee payment will be recorded per Start Strong Guidelines.

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Sources/ Useful Resources

Australian
Children's
Education and
Care Quality
Authority
Authority
(ACECQA)

www.acecqa.gov.au

Start Strong
<https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/start-strong-funding>

Fee Payable/Accounts Cont.

- Families should contact the service to advise of their child's inability to attend as soon as this is known. Fees will still be required on days the child would normally attend.
- Fees will not be charged for the NSW Department of Education school holidays, nor charged for public holidays.
- Fees will be charged for absence due to illness or personal holidays and for road closure due to flooding.

Setting Fees

- Mt Warning Community Preschool fees will be reviewed and set in term 4 for the following enrolment year by the Approved Provider/Management Committee.
- This allows the Director/Nominated Supervisor and Administrator to provide details of fees to parents enrolling or re-enrolling their children for the following year.
- In setting fees, the Approved Provider/Management Committee will examine the current budget, likely future financial liabilities and receive advice from the Director/Nominated Supervisor and Administrator.

Start Strong NSW Department of Education Funding

- To access funding, the service is compliant with the [Start Strong for Community Preschool program guidelines](#), which states *a child will need to be:*
 - *at least 3 years old on or before 31 July in that preschool year and not in compulsory schooling; and*
 - *attending an eligible early childhood education program.*
- Families may be able to access two fee-free days, under the *NSW Department of Education's Affordable Preschool Program*. This funding is reviewed annually, with changes in terms and conditions made accessible to families through electronic communication.
- Families will need to complete the [Start Strong fee relief declaration form: Community Preschool](#) on enrolment and if their preference for which service they are accessing Affordable Preschool funding changes.
- For any additional days requested, we adhere to equitable Priority of Access guidelines in the Start Strong Program Guidelines, being:
 - Children aged 4 who will be attending formal schooling in the following year;
 - Children age 3 and over, on or before 31st of July of the current preschool year, *and* from low income, disadvantaged socio-emotional background (e.g. refugee status, trauma etc.);
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;

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Related Policies

QA2- Children's Health and Safety

2G- Emergency and Evacuation Policy

QA4- Staffing arrangements

4F- Work, Health and safety Policy

QA6 - Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

6A - Orientation Policy

6C - Parental Involvement Policy

QA7 - Leadership and Service Management

7B- Governance and Management of the Service Policy

7C - Enrolment Policy

7G - Continuous Improvement Policy

7H - Policies Review Policy

7J- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

7L- Record Keeping Policy

Fee Payable/Accounts Cont.

Start Strong NSW Department of Education Funding. Cont.

- Children with English language needs;
 - Children with disabilities and special needs; and
 - Children who are at risk of significant harm.
- To access additional fee relief, families will:
 - Hold a current Low Income Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card. Families are required to provide a copy of their HCC or Pensioner Card on enrolment; and/or
 - Acknowledge they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and/orCommunicate with the Nominated Supervisor/Director, of the child/ren being disadvantaged/vulnerable. This can also be presented through communication from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, and/or government funded social services
 - We adhere to *NSW Department of Education* reporting requirements for claiming and administering subsidised funding.
 - It is the enrolling parent/carers responsibility to register their details and apply for a Low-Income Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card through their Services Australia My GOV account; parents/carers are required to provide these details and documents to Mt Warning Community Preschool.
 - Any changes to the family's financial circumstances may result in changes or cancellation the equity fee. It is the family's responsibility to keep their details on Services Australia My GOV current and contact their Centrelink office if they wish to dispute this or discuss it further.
 - Families will only be eligible for the discounted equity fee if attendance records are accurately completed and signed by the parent/carer, and other eligibility requirements are met.
 - It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the preschool of any changes to their eligibility for the Equity Fee. For example, no longer being eligible for the Low-Income HCC Card.

Schedule of Fees

Mt Warning Community Preschool's schedule of fees will be available to all current and new members of the service.

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Relevant Forms

Enrolment Form

Affordable
Preschool
Declaration Form

Annual Fee
schedule form

Fee Payable/Accounts Cont.

Other Fees and Charges

Mt Warning Community Preschool reserves the right to require additional fees.

- *Enrolment fee* is a one-time joining fee - \$35
- *Annual Membership* - \$20 (to be paid at the commencement of Term 1)
- *Occasional days*- \$ 37 (without concession)/ \$ 25 (with concession)
- *Late Collection* fee (3.30pm onwards) fee- \$ 37 then \$1 per minute after

Temporary Enrolments

Casual attendance, which is termed a Temporary Enrolment, is charged at a full session fee. Temporary enrolment places are to be negotiated. Fees for these sessions must be paid for on the day.

Occasional Days

Casual care for a child who is enrolled, but attends on another day, will be charged the standard daily fee. These are termed Occasional Days. Fees for these days must be paid on the day. Parents/carers are requested to phone the preschool prior to organising an Occasional Day to ensure adequate places are available.

Late Collection Charge

Mt Warning Community Preschool reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/carers have not collected their child/ren from the service before closing time. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Approved Provider/ Management Committee annually and based on the need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages. Parents/carers are asked to contact our service as soon as they become aware of possible late pick up. In the instance of an emergency and/or extreme unforeseeable circumstances, the Nominated Supervisor can use their discretion in this matter, regarding the reason for the late collection of the child/ren.

Make Up Days

- When a child has been unable to attend on one of their paid (i.e., fee- free days), *Make Up* days are an opportunity for children to attend on a day they are not enrolled. There is no charge for this day.
- Make up days are only possible if there is a place available and are only accessible if fees are paid in advance.
- Make up days must be booked in advance to avoid disappointment and confusion.

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Related Legislation

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Regulation 168(2)(n) – Education and care services must have policies and procedures

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) as amended 2011

Information for New Enrolments

- An *Enrolment Form and Agreement* is to be completed and returned by parent/carer that captures:
 - Fee payment schedule – payment, payment frequency, payment type, payment responsibility
 - Relevant funding assistance application – children’s services fee assistance application, eligibility for fee assistance, declaration by family
 - Enrolment agreement – acceptance of enrolment terms and conditions including payment of fees, provision of HCC/Pensioner Card (if claiming low income), payment of an annual membership fee, provision of two weeks’ notice if terminating placement, payment of two weeks’ notice in lieu of notice of termination of placement or failure to attend without notice,
 - The enrolment fee is payable upon enrolment of a child and is non-refundable.

Invoicing

Fee invoices are issued in week 1 of each term, and include the Attendance fee, Annual Membership fee and, when required, the once-off Enrolment fee. Fees are not subject to Goods and Services Tax (GST). Families will be notified of the methods of payment available annually.

Payment of Fees

- All fees and charges must be paid fortnightly in advance, unless otherwise arranged with the Director/Nominated Supervisor and/or Approved Provider/Management Committee;
- Attendance fees will be always payable, including absence of any child for sickness, personal holidays, or any other reason unless approved arrangements are made to the contrary.
- Fees are not paid for school or public holidays falling within the term.
- Fees are payable by direct deposit into the Mt Warning Community Preschool bank account. Direct deposits are to use their child’s name as reference. Cash payments for fees will be accepted. Parents/carers can place cash payments in envelopes provided at the sign in/off area and are asked to get a staff member to co-sign with the parent/carer before placing the envelope in the designated locked money box.

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Termination Fees

- A parent/carer can terminate an enrolment by providing two weeks written notice that the child will no longer be attending the premises. Where the required notice is not provided, two weeks' fees will be incurred.
- If a family provides two weeks notice that their child will be no longer attending the service, and fees have been paid in full for the term, families will be reimbursed for any fees already paid, exclusive of the two week notice period.
- The centre can terminate an enrolment where:
 - A child has not attended for a period of two weeks or more (except for holidays and medical circumstances as notified in writing by the parent/carer); or where
 - No payment has been received for outstanding fees where the centre has:
 - contacted or attempted to contact the parent/carer by written communication to discuss the outstanding fees; then
 - offered a repayment plan in writing that outlines required weekly payments; and then
 - provided a final notice of payment in writing.
 - The preschool can then approach the courts or engage a debt collection agency to recoup outstanding fees exceeding \$150 and any court costs associated with obtaining these.

Overdue Fees

Parents/carers with overdue fees will be encouraged by the Director/Nominated Supervisor to discuss any difficulties they may have in meeting payments and make suitable arrangements to pay, including the option of a payment plan. If this is not done, or the agreed arrangements are not kept, the matter may be referred to a debt collector and/or cancellation of the child's booking may occur (see Termination of Enrolment).

Enrolments in Term Four

Children enrolled for Term Four only must pay the membership fee on the date of enrolment, and fees must be paid in full two weeks before the end of term.

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Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Approved Provider/Management Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the service operates in line with the <i>Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011</i>. ▪ Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements ▪ Developing a fee policy that balances the parents/carers capacity to pay with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability. ▪ Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible. ▪ Providing parents/carers with a regular statement of fees and charges. ▪ Ensuring that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service. ▪ Notifying parents/carers within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. ▪ Ensure parents/carers are given Mt Warning Community Preschool's Enrolment and Agreement form to fill, sign and return to the Director/Nominated Supervisor and/or Administrator.
Director/Nominated Supervisor and Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing parents/carers with a regular statement of fees and charges. ▪ Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlements to concessions, where applicable. ▪ Notifying parents/carers within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected. ▪ Ensuring a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service. ▪ Ensuring any attending child/rens parents/carers have correctly filled out and signed the Enrolment and Agreement form.
Early Childhood Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referring parents/carers questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider, Administrator and/or Director/Nominated Supervisors.

Roles and Responsibilities. Cont.

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading this policy and referring any questions, queries or concerns to the Director/ Nominated Supervisor, Administrator and/or Approved Provider. ▪ Provide our service with any required documentation, such as Australian Government issued HCC or Pensioner Card; and communicate any changes to the family’s equitable status. ▪ Record the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending care. ▪ Notify the service if their child will not be attending on their enrolled day ▪ Ensure all fees are kept <i>at least</i> two weeks in advance. ▪ Provide 2 weeks’ notice of withdrawal from service. If child does not attend during this 2-week notice period full fees will be chargeable. ▪ Notifying the Approved Provider/Management Committee and/or Nominated Supervisor/Director if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 24 months.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family’s ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Approved by Management Committee	
Date Approved:	Date of Review:
Date Adopted:	Review Cycle: Bi-annual