

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that families accessing the Ballan Community Childcare Centre (BCCC) are aware of the applicable fees and payment policy, and that staff are also aware of their responsibilities in this area.

The BCCC is committed to providing high quality, affordable care and educational programmes to families living, studying and working within our region. Fees will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with organisational budgeting processes. If it is determined that fees will increase, BCCC will provide families with a minimum of 30 days notice of this fee increase.

Definitions

<u>Child Care Benefit (CCB)</u>	Federal Government fee subsidy scheme. Applications can be made through the Family Assistance Office (FAO).
<u>Child Care Tax Rebate (CCR)</u>	Child Care Rebate (CCR) is a government initiative which assists eligible families with out-of-pocket expenses.
<u>Special Childcare Benefit</u>	Special Childcare Benefit (SCCB) is a government initiative designed to assist eligible families with care of children that are at risk, or for families experiencing hardship.
<u>Special Fee Relief</u>	A program run by Ballan District Health & Care (BDHC) to provide temporary childcare fee relief to family's who are experiencing exceptional short-term financial hardship.
<u>Out of Pocket Expenses</u>	Balance remaining after Childcare Benefit (CCB) and Childcare Rebate (CCR) – if eligible - have been deducted.
<u>Long Day Care</u>	Care that is booked on a permanent basis any time 6:30am – 6pm Monday to Friday. Long day care may be full-time or part-time.
<u>Permanent Long Day Care</u>	Care that is provided to any child who is enrolled on a permanent basis at BCCC. Can be full-time or part-time.
<u>Occasional care</u>	Care that is provided on an irregular basis, as requested by the parent.
<u>BCCC Schedule of Fees</u>	The summary of fees that are charged for the provision of education and care to children enrolled at the Centre.

Policy statement

- The BCCC Schedule of Fees will be updated at the end of each calendar year and published on the BDHC web-site by 8 December, prior to the commencement of the following year's program. The new fees will apply from the first day of operation in the New Year.
- The Schedule specifies 2 fee types: (i) Permanent Long Day Care – direct-debit (ii) Occasional Care.
- Occasional Care will attract a higher fee than those for permanent Long Day Care. See the BCCC Schedule of Fees for full details.

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- A booking for any type of permanent Long Day Care will have preference over a booking for Occasional Care.
- Parents who have children enrolled in permanent full-time or permanent part-time Long Day Care are required to set up a direct-debit facility with BCCC for payment of fees.
- Permanent full-time and permanent part-time Long Day Care fees will be debited from the nominated bank account on a fortnightly basis, in advance.
- An automatically generated receipt will be sent to the parents' authorised EMAIL address - as specified on the child's enrolment form – after the direct-debit payment is received.
- All bank and other costs arising from a failed direct-debit process will be borne by the owner of the nominated source account, where the reason for failure was insufficient funds.
- In situations where a child's permanent Long Day Care enrolment is terminated and is not, for example, carried over a school holiday period, the child cannot be guaranteed a place in the Centre should the parent decide to re-enrol the child at a later date.
- Occasional Care for the whole week's bookings must be paid in advance, in full, when first presenting to the Centre.
- Occasional Care fees must be paid at the Centre's front office by EFTPOS or credit card – or by cash to the main hospital administration office.
- Fees will be charged for public holidays and absences from booked days of care. Families will be given the option to swap their regular, permanent booked day for another day in the same week provided the Centre has vacancies.
- Out of Pocket expenses will be refunded for days of care when the Centre does not offer service such as gazetted Victorian public holidays.
- Out of Pocket expenses will be refunded for days of care when the Centre Closes – including gazetted Victorian public holidays that fall within the period of centre closure.

Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Tax Rebate (CCR)

- Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment made by the Commonwealth Government to families to assist with the cost of Child Care fees. Child Care Benefit is means tested and percentage paid by Centrelink depends on information the family provides to them about their family income.
- Child Care Rebate (CCR) assists families with out of pocket expenses and covers up to 50% of out of pocket expenses, up to a maximum of \$7,500 per child per financial year.
- All families will be informed about CCB during the enrolment and orientation process.
- Families have the responsibility to register for CCB before commencing care otherwise full fees will apply. All claims can be made by phoning the FAO on 13 61 50.
- CCB subsidies are deducted from centre fees when invoicing families if CCB is paid directly to the centre.
- Further information in regard to government childcare initiatives can be obtained from the *ChildCare Service Handbook 2012-2013*. See: deewr.gov.au/child-care-service-handbook

Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB)

- Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) is a payment that can cover up to the full cost of childcare and is available to assist families who are caring for a child at risk of abuse or neglect; or for families experiencing temporary financial hardship – exceptional circumstances where a family's income does not truly reflect their capacity to pay the normally charged fee.

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- Centre can provide approval for the first 13 weeks provided supporting documentation is provided and applications can be made for continuation of SCCB to Family Assistance Office (FAO)
- Further information in regard to government childcare initiatives can be obtained from the *ChildCare Service Handbook 2012-2013*. See: deewr.gov.au/child-care-service-handbook

Occasional Care

- Care can be booked on the day or up to a week in advance
- BCCC offers half-day or full-day Occasional Care only; if care for less than a half-day is required, a half-day fee will be charged. If care for more than a half-day but less than a full-day is requested, a full-day fee will be charged.
- Occasional Care will only be offered where vacancies exist in the required Room on the requested day. When considering competing bookings, preference will always be given to permanent booking applications over those for Occasional Care
- Full payment for the period of booked Occasional Care is required in advance to confirm the booking. For example, if care is booked for Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday in a particular week, full payment must be made for that week upon arrival on the Tuesday; otherwise the booking cannot be held if another application is made, and paid for, for that same vacancy
- A booking for regular care on a weekly basis does not qualify as Occasional Care
- Occasional Care can be booked on a maximum of 15 days (either half-day or full-day) during a gazetted Victorian Government School Term. Thereafter, the child must be booked on a permanent basis; no further Occasional Care bookings will be accepted for the remainder of the school term.
- Cancellations of Occasional Care must be made at least 24 hours prior to the booked session otherwise no refund of the pre-paid fees will apply

Special Fee Relief

- Special Fee Relief is a BDHC-run program available for families facing exceptional short-term hardship (where families do not meet the criteria for SCCB).
- The coordinator will assist any family in genuine need to lodge an application for fee relief.
- The application must be made in writing and outline reasons why the applicant is applying for fee relief and the period of fee relief requested. When applying for fee relief the applicant may be required to provide full evidence of annual income and expenses so that an informed decision can be made. This will include a Statutory Declaration signed by the applicant.
- The fee relief application will be discussed with and assessed by the BDHC Primary Health Manager or the Chief Executive Officer
- Each application will be assessed on an individual basis
- BDHC is responsible for determining the outcome of the application
- The decision on each application is final
- All special fee relief will be monitored through the service billing system

BCCC responsibilities

Our employees have a responsibility to ensure that:

- All families are notified of the Centre's fees & Fees Policy upon enrolment.
- Electronic receipts are emailed to the parents' authorised email address following direct-debit of funds from the nominated account.

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- Receipts/Invoices for Occasional Care are prepared and printed out for parents upon request.
- The due-date for all fee payment is clearly communicated to families.
- Families are informed of the requirements for payment and notification of absences from care.
- Families are notified that failure to pay fees may result in care being suspended.
- Receipts are provided for all fees paid.

Family responsibilities

Families have a responsibility to ensure that:

- Fees are paid in advance by the due date (both permanent Long Day Care and Occasional Care).
- A direct-debit facility is set-up upon initial enrolment where the child is enrolled in permanent Long Day Care.
- Payment of bank fees and other costs where direct-debit payments fail due to insufficient funds in the source account.
- Any difficulties making fee payments are discussed with the Centre Coordinator well ahead of the due date.
- Contact is made with the Family Assistance Office in regard to CCB applications, fee support, and changes to payments.

BCCC Schedule of Fees

This summarises the fees charged for the provision of education and care to children enrolled at the service. It specifies:

- Permanent full-time and part-time Long Day Care fees
- Fees for Occasional Care (charged at a rate higher than the permanent rate)
- Updated and published 8 December each year for the following year.

Note: further information in regard to net fees payable will be provided at time of enrolment to families who are eligible to receive subsidies under the CCB, CCR and SCCB programs.

The current BCC Schedule of Fees can be accessed at the following page on the BDHC website:
<http://www.ballanhealth.com.au/fees/>

Ceasing care

The Centre requires a minimum of 2 week's notice or fees in lieu when vacating your child's permanent full-time (or part-time) Long Day Care position, or when reducing your child's booked days in care. If there are children on the waiting list and we can sell your position, then the Centre agrees to waive the required notice period.

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Overdue accounts

Parents experiencing difficulty in meeting payment of fees may negotiate a payment plan to overcome this situation. Where satisfactory arrangements are not made or adhered to, Management reserves the right to give one week's notice of intention to suspend care. Failure to finalise accounts after this action will result in your details being forwarded to a debt collection agency. Accounts referred to a collection agency will have all legal costs, fees and commissions will be added to the amount due. Where more than one party is liable for payment of this account they will be liable jointly.

Interactions with other BDHC policies

Enrolment & Orientation Policy

BCCC Parent Handbook

References

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011