

FEES – FUNDED KINDERGARTEN

QUALITY AREA 7 | ELAA version 1.1



PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Yongala Preschool Inc., by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Yongala Preschool Inc..



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Yongala Preschool Inc. is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and/or Early Start Kindergarten.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge and parents/guardians attending Yongala Preschool Inc..

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
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Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	R	√			
Developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability	R	√			
Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET's The Kindergarten Funding Guide (<i>refer to Sources</i>)	R	√			
Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Yongala Preschool Inc. and removing those barriers wherever possible	R	√			
Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	R	√			
Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	R	√			
Providing communication to families explaining their access to one funded kindergarten program per child, per year.	R	√			
Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible	R	√			
Ensuring that the <i>Fees Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service (<i>Regulation 171</i>)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with fee information (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>)	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (<i>refer to samples in Attachments 2 and 3</i>) upon enrolment of their child	R	√			
Providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement (<i>refer to samples in Attachments 4 and 5</i>)	R	√			
Ensuring fees are collected and receipted	R	√			
Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions (<i>refer to Definitions</i>)	R	√		√	
Complying with the service's <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	R	√			
Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (<i>Regulation 172(2)</i>), and ideally providing one term's notice.	R	√			

Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner	R	√			
Reading the Yongala Preschool Inc. Fee information for families (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>), the Fee Payment Agreement (<i>refer to Attachments 4 and 5</i>) and the Statement of Fees and Charges (<i>refer to Attachments 2 and 3</i>)				√	
Signing and complying with the Fee Payment Agreement (<i>refer to Attachments 4 and 5</i>)				√	
Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees				√	
Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and/or Early Start Kindergarten, if eligible (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>).				√	
BOLD tick √ indicates legislation requirement					



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

The Department of Education and Training (DET) (*refer to Definitions*) provides funding for each child who is enrolled and attending a funded kindergarten program two years before school. Income from other sources, primarily fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred by the service in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (*refer to Definitions*) enables eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge two years before school.

DET also funds Early Start Kindergarten for three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from refugee or asylum seeker background and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in The Kindergarten Funding Guide (*refer to Sources*).

Regulation 168(2) (n) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that funded kindergarten services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable term and annual fees at the time of enrolment. Services must also advise eligible families of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (*refer to Definitions*) and/or or Early Start Kindergarten (*refer to Definitions*) arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy requirements (*refer to Definitions*) and/or or Early Start Kindergarten (*refer to Definitions*) and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the service. The Kindergarten Funding Guide (*refer to Sources*) outlines the criteria to be covered in the policy.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage (in relation to this policy): children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child experiencing vulnerability include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health; known to child protection; in statutory out-of-home care; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability (adapted from the Kindergarten Funding Guide)

Concession: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. This includes one of the following:

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card
- a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or White Card
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa (200-204, 786 or 866)
- Bridging visas for any of the above Refugee or Asylum Seeker visas
- Multiple Births (triplets or more)

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK): Early Start Kindergarten provides eligible children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten each week led by a qualified Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teacher. ESK is available to children who are at least three years old by 30 April in the year they are enrolled to attend the program and are:

- from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or
- known to child protection.

These children can also access free year-before-school kindergarten through the ESK Extension Grant regardless of whether they have accessed ESK in the previous year.

Early Start Kindergarten extension grants: provides a free or low cost year-before-school kindergarten program for children:

- not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- who participated in Access to Early Learning in the previous year or are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or known to child protection. A child is not required to access ESK in the previous year to access the ESK extension grant.

High priority families: as defined in the Kindergarten Guide this includes:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
 - A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets)
- Children with additional needs, defined as children who:
 - require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
 - require a combination of services which are individually planned
 - have an identified specific disability or developmental delay

Kindergarten Registration fee: A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the service, if applicable. High priority families (*refer to Definitions*) **should not be charged** any fees or levies, unless it is for outside the funded hours

Excursion/service event charge: An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs.

Fees: A charge for a place within a program at the service.

Kindergarten fee deposit: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the service. This is deducted from term fees. This deposit should not act as a barrier for enrolment of vulnerable families

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parent fees and enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten for 15 hours free of charge (The Kindergarten Funding Guide (*refer to Sources*))

Late collection charge: A charge that will be imposed by the approved provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (*refer to Attachment 1*)

Wrap around care: care that is provided by a kindergarten service to kindergarten children outside of the 15 hours per week program.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



SOURCES

- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training): www.education.vic.gov.au
- The constitution of Yongala Preschool Inc.

RELATED POLICIES

- Compliments and Complaints
 - Delivery and Collection of Children
 - Enrolment and Orientation
 - Excursions and Service Events
 - Inclusion and Equity
 - Privacy and Confidentiality
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EVALUATION



In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to affordability, flexibility of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- investigating what measures can be taken to reduce any barriers to access the program, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk ([Regulation 172 \(2\)](#))

ATTACHMENTS



- Attachment 1: Fee information for families
- Attachment 2: Statement of Fees and Charges – 3-year-old kindergarten program
- Attachment 3: Statement of Fees and Charges – 4-year-old kindergarten program

AUTHORISATION



This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Yongala Preschool Inc. on 5th September 2022

REVIEW DATE: 4/09/2023

ATTACHMENT 1. FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Yongala Preschool Inc. 2023

1. General information

The Department of Education and Training (DET) (*refer to Definitions*) provides funding for each child enrolled and attending kindergarten in the two years before school as a contribution toward the costs of providing the program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a kindergarten program free of charge in the two years before school, but only for 15 hours. Preschool hours beyond 15 must be paid for in accordance with this policy but are not compulsory.

DET also provides Early Start Kindergarten funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, from a refugee or asylum seeker background or children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

Yongala Preschool Inc. provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, the Committee of Management sets fees each year for the programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Early Start Kindergarten
- the availability of other income sources, such as grants
- the fees charged by similar services in the area
- the capacity of parents/guardians to pay fees
- reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards
- requirements of The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training) available from the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au

Once fees are set for the year, they will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if enrolments drop and the service is at risk of not being able to meet its expenses.

3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Yongala Preschool Inc. are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

Kindergarten fee deposit: This payment secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The deposit is retained as part payment on term fees. Families experiencing hardship should discuss any difficulties with the service.

- **Excursion/service event charge:** Parents are offered a package at the beginning of the year to reduce the cost of administration during the year. This will be \$200 for the year.
- **Additional hours fees:** Yongala Preschool Inc. offers families "[insert amount]" hours above the set 15 hours per week (600 hours per year). The additional hours fee is determined by the hourly program rate based on the scheduled 2023 fee
- **Non-refundable levy:** This levy is retained by the service and is included in the total fees charged by the service.
- **Late collection charge:** The Committee of Management reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Committee of Management

4. Statement of fees and charges

A statement of fees and charges for three-year-old kindergarten and/or four-year-old will be provided to families on enrolment (*refer to Attachment 2 and 3*).

5. Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by DET per capita funding and the fees charged. Fundraising is undertaken to meet the balance and/or pay for additional items for the service. While participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

6. Subsidies

6.1 Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy is provided by DET and enables eligible children to attend 15 hours of kindergarten free of charge. Eligibility conditions may change from time-to-time and must be checked in the most recent edition of the Kindergarten Funding Guide (*refer to Sources*).

Your child is eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy:

- if your child identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- if your child is identified on their birth certificate as being a multiple birth child (triplets or more).

or if your child holds or has a parent or guardian who holds, one of the following:

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card
- a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or White Card
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa (200-204, 786 or 866)
- Bridging visas for any of the above Refugee or Asylum Seeker visas

If your family or child has a humanitarian or refugee visa listed by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection which is not included in the above list, your child may still be eligible for the kindergarten fee subsidy.

Where a child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, no verification is required.

In all other instances, supporting documentation should be sighted by the service on acceptance of a place or on commencement in the program, however where there are delays, such as in obtaining health care cards for children in out-of-home care, the delay should not provide a barrier to the child accessing the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid.

6.2 Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten gives eligible children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school.

To be eligible, the child must be three by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and meet one of the following criteria:

- be from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- your family has had contact with Child Protection.

Children can also access free or low cost Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through the Early Start Kindergarten Extension Grant. Contact the service for further information.

7. Payment of fees

The Committee of Management will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. The first term's fees must be received in full prior to the child commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the enrolment officer to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

8. Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken:

- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date, and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- The Committee of Management will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.
- No further enrolments of children from the parents/guardians will be accepted until all outstanding fees have been paid.

9. Refund of fees

fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of the Committee of Management. There will be no refund of fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent, and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.
- During the orientation period where hours will be reduced to allow children to settle into preschool during the first month.

In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled

10. Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.

11. Notification of fee changes during the year

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents/guardians will be notified one term in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

ATTACHMENT 2. STATEMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES

Three-year-old funded kindergarten

Yongala Preschool Inc.

Fee schedule 2023

Three-year-old kindergarten

Hours:15 hours per week

	Fees (\$)	Yearly excursion package	Due date
	15 hours	\$200	
Kindergarten fee deposit	200	0	To secure offer 21 st October 2022
Term 1	0	0	10 th November 2022
Term1		200	1 st February 2023 Return of Kindergarten deposit once the child has started and payment of excursion package
Term 2,3&4	0		
Total	0	200	

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued yearly or on commencement at the centre and must be paid by the due date.

Kindergarten fee deposit

Parents/guardians are required to pay the fee deposit on offer of a place. This payment is retained and deducted from your excursion package. For those not taking up their place the deposit is non refundable.

Excursion package

\$200 per year due by 1st February

Children turning three during the year

Children can only commence the program when they have turned three. Fees to be paid upon commencement.

Late collection charge

- **Late collection charge:** A late collection charge is payable when parents/guardians are late in collecting a child from the service.

A late collection fee will be applied when:

- The parent/guardian is between 10 and 30 minutes late in collecting their child. The fee will be based on \$50 per 10 minutes or part thereof, from the conclusion of the session.
- The parent/guardian is over 30 minutes late collecting their child. The fee will be based on \$50 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, for the first 30 minutes. After this time the DET will be contacted and the parent/guardian will continue to accrue a fee of \$50 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, until such time as the child has been collected.

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued **2 weeks before due date** and must be paid by the due date or late fees will apply.

ATTACHMENT 3. STATEMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES

Four year old funded kindergarten

Yongala Preschool Inc.

Fee schedule 2023

Four-year-old kindergarten

Hours: 18 hours per week

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued termly and must be paid by the due date.

Kindergarten fee deposit

Parents/guardians are required to pay the fee deposit on offer of a place. This payment is retained and deducted from term fees. Payment will secure the child's place in the four-year-old kindergarten program.

	Fees (\$) First 15 hours	Additional 3 hours per week above the 15hours	Yearly excursion package	Due date
			\$200	
Kindergarten fee deposit	200		0	To secure offer 21 st October 2022
Term 1	0	300	0	10 th November 2022
Term1			200	1 st February 2023 Return of Kindergarten deposit once the child has started and payment of excursion package
Term 2	0	300		17 th March 2023
Term 3	0	300		2 nd June 2023
Term 4	0	300		1 st September 2023
Total		1,200		

Excursion package

\$200 per year due by 1st February

Late collection charge

- **Late collection charge:** A late collection charge is payable when parents/guardians are late in collecting a child from the service.

A late collection fee will be applied when:

- The parent/guardian is between 10 and 30 minutes late in collecting their child. The fee will be based on \$50 per 10 minutes or part thereof, from the conclusion of the session.
- The parent/guardian is over 30 minutes late collecting their child. The fee will be based on \$50 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, for the first 30 minutes. After this time the DET will be contacted and the parent/guardian will continue to accrue a fee of \$50 per 10 minutes, or part thereof, until such time as the child has been collected.

Payment of fees

Invoices will be issued **2 weeks before due date** and must be paid by the due date or late fees will apply

e Yongala Preschool Inc. *Fees Policy*