

FEES POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 7

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the establishment, payment and collection of Fees;
- ensuring the viability of the Geelong Kindergarten Association (GKA) Services, by setting appropriate Fees and charges; and
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of Fees across the programs provided by the GKA.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

The GKA is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the kindergarten cluster, including setting Fees that will result in the Cluster being financially viable, 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 and outstanding debts;
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access a funded 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 and
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the GKA as the Approved Provider, educators, Kindergarten Committees, staff and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at a GKA Service.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the costs of the four-year-old kindergarten program. Income from other sources, primarily Fees, is required to meet all the additional costs incurred in the delivery of the children's program. In addition, the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to *Definitions*) enables eligible families to attend the four-year-old kindergarten program at minimal or no cost.

DET also provides funding for eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection or referred to child FIRST, to access kindergarten programs as outlined in the Kindergarten Guide. (Refer to *Sources*).

Pre-kindergarten programs do not receive Government funding. All costs associated with the pre-kindergarten program are met by parent Fees.

DET requires that funded 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, as required under Regulation 168(2) (n), 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 arrangements. The fees charged must comply with the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*), and be responsive to the local community and the viability of the Cluster. *The Kindergarten 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 2010* (Vic)
- *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management Standard 7.3: Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality Service*

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

Victorian Legislation- Victorian Law Today : <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au>

Commonwealth Legislation –ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

Approved Provider: An individual or organisation that has been approved by the DET as fit and proper (in accordance with Sections 12, 13 and 14 of the National Law) to operate one or more education and care services. The Geelong Kindergarten Association is the Approved Provider for all GKA Services.

Child Care Benefit (CCB) – For Registered Care only: A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use registered care services. Eligible families can receive a Child Care Benefit. Details are available at www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/

Cluster: The Geelong Kindergarten Association.

DET: Department of Education and Training.

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection or referred to child FIRST to attend an additional kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for

a specific number of hours. Details are available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/earlystart.aspx>

Fees Policy: means this policy as amended from time to time.

Fees: The contribution made by parents or guardians of the Kindergarten Children to the cost of the program provided to the Kindergarten Children.

Kindergarten Children: The children enrolled and attending at the Service.

Kindergarten Committee: The committee established by parents of the Kindergarten Children at each Service.

Kindergarten Enrolment Fee: A charge to secure a place that has been offered in a program at the Service. This is deducted from term one Fees.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid directly to GKA to enable eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program at minimal or no cost. Details are available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfeesubsidy.aspx>

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy: Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in the *Kindergarten Guide* available at www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx

Kindergarten Registration Fee: A payment contributing to administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the Service.

Late collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by GKA as the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).

Nominated Supervisor: A person who is a Certified Supervisor and has been nominated by the Approved Provider of the Service under Part 3 of the Act to be the Nominated Supervisor of that service, and who has consented to that nomination. The Nominated Supervisor has day-to-day responsibility for the Service in accordance with the National Regulations. All Services must have a Nominated Supervisor.

Pre-Kindergarten: A program for children turning three prior to May 1st. (refer to the GKA Enrolment Handbook)

Registered Care - In relation to CCB: Care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends, educators working within kindergartens, occasional care services and outside school hours care services that are registered with the Family Assistance Office. Eligible families can receive some reimbursement of costs when using a registered care provider. Details are available at www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/child-care-benefit/

Regulation: The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*

Responsible person: An educator who consents to being placed in day-to-day charge of the Service.

Service: A member kindergarten of the Geelong Kindergarten Association.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Kindergarten Guide*
www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx

- The Constitution of the Geelong Kindergarten Association

Service policies

- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Geelong Kindergarten Association as the Approved Provider is responsible for:

- reviewing the GKA budget to determine Fee income requirements;
- setting the Fees for all GKA Services;
- developing a Fees Policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay Fees, while providing a high-quality program and maintaining Cluster viability;
- implementing and reviewing the Fees Policy in line with the requirements of DET *The Kindergarten Guide*) (refer to *Sources*);
- ensuring that this Fees Policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (refer to *Definitions*);
- considering any issues regarding Fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the GKA and removing those barriers wherever possible;
- reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families;
- clearly communicating this Fees Policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible;
- providing all parents/guardians with access to a statement of Fees and charges (refer to Attachments 2 and 3) upon enrolment of their child, and ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the Service (Regulation 171);
- requiring all parents/guardians to agree to pay Fees via agreement in the kindergarten enrolment form;
- ensuring a notice outlining Fees charged by the Service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the GKA Service (Attachment 2 and 3);
- providing all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions;
- collecting and recording all Fee payments
- complying with the GKA *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of Fees
- notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the Fees charged or the way in which the Fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)). and
- Ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the Service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the Service.

The Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Person is responsible for:

- communicating to families options for payment when affordability is an issue;
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way;
- ensuring that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service;

- complying with the GKA *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees;
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service and
- as required assisting the Approved Provider, in sighting supporting documentation for access to the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

All Educators are responsible for:

- informing the GKA as the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding Fees at the Service;
- referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to GKA as the Approved Provider and
- As required assisting the Approved Provider, in sighting supporting documentation for access to the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- paying Fees by the due date;
- ensuring the GKA have current contact details;
- providing the required documentation to enable the GKA to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for eligible families (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families);
- notifying the GKA as the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of Fees and
- reading the attached documentation (Attachment 1, 2 and 3)

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of this Fees Policy have been achieved, the GKA as the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the Fees 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 Fees Policy;
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the Service because of their inability to pay Fees ;
- keep the Fees Policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the Fees Policy and the procedures set out in the Fees Policy as part of the annual policy review cycle, or as required and
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this Fees Policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Fee information for families.
- Attachment 2: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program.
- Attachment 3: Statement of Fees and Charges – Fee schedule – Pre-kindergarten program.

AUTHORISATION This policy was adopted by the Geelong Kindergarten Association on
2/12/2016

REVIEW DATE **2/12/2017**

ATTACHMENT 1: FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

1. Why fees are necessary

The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides per capita funding as a **contribution** toward the costs of providing a four-year-old kindergarten program. GKA meets the balance of costs through charging fees. Three-year-old kindergarten is funded exclusively by parent fees. DET provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program at a minimal cost or free of charge.

DET also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection or referred to child FIRST, to access additional kindergarten programs.

Kindergarten fees are compulsory and must be paid by the due date. The GKA provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees.

2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, the GKA Board sets fees each year for the programs offered by GKA services, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of GKA Kindergartens;
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the per capita and Kindergarten Fee Subsidy;
- 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;
- the requirements of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* and
- the reasonable expenditure in meeting the agreed program quality and standards.

3. Other charges

- **Kindergarten Enrolment Fee:** The GKA charges a fee for families accepting a kindergarten place. This fee is deducted from term one Fees. Families accepting a four year old place that have provided GKA with evidence of being eligible for a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy are not required to pay the kindergarten enrolment deposit.
- **Late collection charge:** The GKA Board 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 GKA Board.
- **Kindergarten Registration Fee:** The GKA charges a fee to register a child for kindergarten. This fee is not charged to families who have provided GKA with evidence of being eligible for a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy. This fee is not refundable.
- **Levies:** The GKA does not charge families any additional levies

4. Fundraising

Fundraising may be undertaken by Kindergarten Committees to pay for additional items for the Service. The participation in fundraising is voluntary.

5. Subsidies

5.1 Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

For eligible families, the State Government provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy to provide for 15 hours of kindergarten per week. Eligibility conditions change from time to time and can be found on the DET website. Families who are currently eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (four year old programs only) include those where:

- ❖ the child is identified by a parent, carer or legal guardian as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- ❖ the child individually 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 visa (subclass 200);
 - ❖ In-country special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201);
 - ❖ Global Special Humanitarian concern visa (subclass 202);
 - ❖ Temporary Humanitarian concern visa (subclass 786);
 - ❖ Protection visa (subclass 866);
 - ❖ Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203);
 - ❖ Woman at risk visa (subclass 204) or
 - ❖ Bridging visas A-E
- ❖ the child is identified on their birth certificate as being multiple birth child (triplets or more)

Supporting documentation must be sighted by the GKA as the Approved Provider on acceptance of a place or during the year if a family becomes eligible for a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy or a concession card expires. It is the responsibility of the family to provide this information to the GKA. Families are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy for the full term in which their concession is valid.

5.2 Early Start Kindergarten Grants

Three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection or referred to child FIRST are eligible to attend Early Start Kindergarten. This is an additional funded early childhood program that is planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher free of charge. GKA receives funding for children who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact the GKA for further information.

6. Child Care Benefit (CCB) – For Registered Care

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is an Australian Government payment that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved or registered care provider.

Registered care is childcare provided for work-related purposes, including training and studying, maternity leave, sick leave or voluntary work. Registered care is provided by individuals registered with the Family Assistance Office (FAO) and may include care given by kindergarten staff.

Further details are available at

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit>

GKA will issue a childcare benefit receipt biannually upon the request of a family. The receipt will be provided only when fees are paid in full for the requested time period.

7. Payment of fees

The GKA Board 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 annually to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the dates indicated on the invoice. Invoices and any subsequent statements will be accompanied by payment instructions.

Fees are due to be paid each term in advance of attendance. 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 full term invoice will be issued and fees must be paid according to the specified due dates. Receipts will be provided upon request.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the GKA to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan.

The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the GKA 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

- a statement will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date;

Where payment is still not received, the GKA will phone families to discuss payment options

- the GKA will continue to offer support to families to resolve the debt;
- the GKA will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector;
- if a debt collector is appointed it will be the responsibility of families to pay the costs incurred by the GKA in appointing the debt collector and

If, as a result of unpaid fees, 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.

9. Refund of Fees

Refund for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

- If a family becomes eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy during a term, a full refund of the applicable term's fees (and the Kindergarten Enrolment Fee, where appropriate) will be provided when evidence of this eligibility is provided to the GKA.

Refund of kindergarten fees prior to the commencement of the kindergarten year

- Prior to the completion of term 3 in the year before attendance in the relevant kindergarten program: if the GKA receives written communication of a child's withdrawal the GKA will provide a refund of the Kindergarten Enrolment Fee upon application.
- Prior to the completion of term 4 in the year before attendance, in the relevant kindergarten program: if the GKA receives written communication of a child's withdrawal the GKA will provide a 50% refund of the enrolment fee upon application.
- Children withdrawing after the end of term 4 in the year before attendance in the relevant kindergarten program will not be eligible for a refund of the Kindergarten Enrolment Fee.

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 or
- withdrawal of a child during term time unless exceptional circumstances apply

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.

If a family no longer requires a kindergarten place during the kindergarten year, the GKA must be provided with written notice that the place is no longer required at least six weeks prior to the end of term or the family will be liable for the following term's fees.

Children turning three during the year of enrolment

Full payment from the first day of term one is required if a place is to be reserved for a child in the pre- kindergarten program. Children can only commence the program when they are three years old.

10. Support Services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the GKA fee collection officer.

11. Notification of fee changes during the year

Fees set for the year will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances. Parents/guardians will be notified one term in advance of any fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

ATTACHMENT 2 STATEMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES 2016 (4 YEAR OLD)



1/2 Waratah Street
Geelong West 3218
Phone: (03) 5273 0200
Email: fees@gka.org.au

ALL FEES ARE TO BE PAID TO THE GEELONG KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION

Please contact the GKA Fee Collection Officer if you are experiencing difficulties paying fees.

Service Name:
Term 1
Term 2
Term 3
Term 4

Payment of Fees: Fees owing must be paid by the due date each term. Fees are paid in advance and are due on the last day of the preceding term.

Kindergarten Enrolment Fee: Parents/guardians are required to pay the Kindergarten Enrolment Fee to the GKA upon acceptance of an offer. This payment is retained and deducted from term one fees. Payment will secure the child's place in the four-year-old (funded) kindergarten program.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy: Families who are eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (refer to fee information for families in GKA Fees Policy) will not be required to pay fees. It is the responsibility of the family to ensure the GKA has been provided with current proof of Kindergarten Fee Subsidy eligibility.

Child Care Benefit (CCB): Bi annual Child Care Benefit receipts will be issued upon request. (Refer to Fee information for families in the GKA Fees Policy).

Late collection charge: The GKA Board reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child (refer to Fee information for families).

Unpaid Fees: The GKA reserves the right to employ a debt collector in the event of unpaid fees.

Withdrawal of a child: If a family no longer requires a kindergarten place during the kindergarten year, the GKA must be provided with written notice that the place is no longer required at least six weeks prior to the end of term or the family will be liable for the following term's fees.

ATTACHMENT 3 STATEMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES 2016 (PRE-KINDERGARTEN)



1/2 Waratah Street
Geelong West 3218
Phone: (03) 5273 0200
Email: fees@gka.org.au

ALL FEES ARE TO BE PAID TO THE GEELONG KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION

Please contact the GKA Fee Collection Officer if you are experiencing difficulties paying fees.

Service Name
Term 1
Term 2
Term 3
Term 4

Payment of fees: Fees owing must be paid by the due date each term. Fees are paid in advance and are due on the last day of the preceding term.

Kindergarten Enrolment Fee: Parents/guardians are required to pay the Kindergarten Enrolment Fee on offer of a place. This payment is retained and deducted from term one fees. Payment will secure the child's place in the three-year-old kindergarten program.

Early Start Kindergarten Grants: Families who are eligible for the Early Start Kindergarten (refer to fee information for families) will not be required to pay fees.

Children turning three during the year: Full payment from the first day of Term 1 is required if a place is to be reserved for a child in the three-year-old kindergarten program. Children can only commence the program when they are three years old.

Child Care Benefit (CCB): Child Care Benefit receipts will be issued upon request. (Refer to fee information for families in GKA Fees Policy).

Late collection charge: The GKA Board reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child (refer to fee information for families).

Unpaid fees: Access to a pre-kindergarten place may be withdrawn if fees are unpaid. The GKA reserves the right to employ a debt collector in the event of unpaid fees.

Withdrawal of a child: If a family no longer requires a pre-kindergarten place during the kindergarten year, the GKA must be provided with written notice that the place is no longer required at least six weeks prior to the end of term or the family will be liable for the following term's fees.