

## Payment of Fees Policy

### Purpose

This policy outlines ECMS's approach to the setting, communication, and collection of fees across all early learning services, including sessional kindergarten and long day care with integrated kindergarten programs. It ensures:

- Transparency and fairness in fee administration.
- Compliance with legislative and funding obligations.
- Support for families experiencing financial hardship.
- Financial sustainability of ECMS services.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- The Approved Provider, persons with management or control, Centre Director, Nominated Supervisor, and persons in day-to-day charge.
- Early Childhood teachers, educators, staff, contractors, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others enrolled and participating in ECMS programs and services, including during offsite excursions and activities.
- All ECMS-operated Early Learning Centres and Kindergarten programs.

### Policy Statement

ECMS is a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality early childhood education. ECMS is committed to an anti-bias approach in early childhood. ECMS operates within a framework of social justice and equity - this means we celebrate family and cultural diversity and aim to be supportive, responsive, and inclusive of all children. We aim to:

- Maintain a fair and transparent fee structure.
- Ensure families are informed of all fee-related matters.
- Support families through flexible payment options and hardship assistance.
- Uphold compliance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, and relevant government funding programs, such as Free Kinder and the Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

ECMS implements its policy through supporting procedures, which also provide for the following where fees are chargeable:

- Fees to be reviewed annually.
- Families to complete a direct debit request form before a child starting at a service.
- Families may request payment plans in cases of financial hardship. Regular payment for ongoing services is a required part of any payment plan.
- Fees apply during absences and notice periods.

ECMS does not require the payment of a bond to secure a child's place at our centres.

### Free Kinder Requirements

ECMS complies with the Victorian Government's Free Kinder requirements across both sessional and integrated long day care kindergarten programs.

- **Entitlement:** Families are entitled to 15 hours of free kindergarten per week (or 5-15 hours for three-year-old kindergarten) without being required to purchase additional hours. Under the Best Start Best Life (BSBL) reforms, Victorian children have access to two years of free kindergarten (3-year-old and 4-year-old programs). Pre-Prep will start in 6 local government areas (LGAs) in 2025, and gradually roll out across the state, with programs expanding to 30 hours per week by 2032.
- **Offset in Long Day Care:** A free kinder offset is applied to fees no less frequently than monthly, beginning with the first invoice of Term 1. Invoices will show this as Victorian Government Free Kinder Offset.
- **Deposits and Fees:** Enrolment deposits are refundable. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee subsidy are exempt from enrolment deposits and waitlist fees.
- **Donations:** Any donations are voluntary and not required for participation
- **One Service Rule:** Families with children enrolled in more than one service must nominate a single service to receive Free Kinder Funding. If a nomination is not made, families may be responsible for paying the full year's fees.

### Roles & Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Holds ultimate accountability for policy implementation and compliance.</li></ul>
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for oversight of fee structures, debt management, and financial compliance.</li></ul>
Financial Controller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recommends debt write-offs and oversees debt collection processes.</li></ul>
Area Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure policy compliance across services.</li></ul>

Document Name: Payment of Fees Policy	Next Review Date: July 2026	Document Version: 1.0
Document Owner: CFO	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2025 Page 2 of 3

This document is not controlled once it has been printed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with Department of Education and local government.</li> <li>• Monitor fee collection and support Centre Directors and Nominated Supervisors.</li> </ul>
Centre Directors, Nominated Supervisors and Enrolment Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate fee information to families.</li> <li>• Support enrolment and CCS processes.</li> <li>• Monitor payments and initiate payment plans.</li> <li>• Maintain records of fee-related communication.</li> </ul>
Accounts Receivable Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue invoices and monitor overdue accounts.</li> <li>• Initiate debt collection processes.</li> <li>• Communicate with families and external agencies.</li> </ul>
Educators, Students, Volunteers, Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support families with fee-related queries.</li> <li>• Direct families to appropriate contacts.</li> </ul>
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand and comply with fee requirements.</li> <li>• Notify the Centre of changes affecting CCS.</li> <li>• Engage proactively regarding financial difficulties.</li> </ul>

#### Related Legislation, Regulations and Resources

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Regs 160-162, 168, 173)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Subsidy) 2023
- National Quality Framework
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards

#### Related Policies and Procedures

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Early Learning Centre Enrolment Policy
- Kindergarten Enrolment Policy
- Privacy Policy and Collection Statement
- Orientation Policy

Document Version History			
Version	Reason for Amendment	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	Policy drafted and approved	ECMS Executive	July 2025

Document Name: Payment of Fees Policy	Next Review Date: July 2026	Document Version: 1.0
Document Owner: CFO	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2025 Page 3 of 3

This document is not controlled once it has been printed