Payment of Service Fees and Provision of a Statement of Fees Charged by the Service

(Sourced: FACS, CCS Payments Handbook, KIM Kindergarten Funding Guidelines))

Policy Statement

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/guardians and children who attend the service. This policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines for the setting, payment and collection of fees which ensures the viability of the service and the equitable and non-discriminatory application fees across the programs provided.

Values:

The centre is committed to:

1. Providing responsible financial management of the service which includes setting fee structures that result in a quality service offering at reasonable and competitive rates.
2. Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with the failure to pay fees and/or inability to pay outstanding debts.
3. Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.
4. Complying with all legislative requirements.

Policy Background

Snuggles ELC is an approved Long-Day-Care Service & accredited Kindergarten.

As an approved service the Federal Government may offer fee assistance (Child Care Subsidy) to some families in order to reduce their weekly fees. This fee assistance is assessed on an individual basis and has certain eligibility requirements. The Primary Account Holder is responsible for contacting Family Assistance Office (via direct contact at Centrelink, phone or online) and linking their child/ren through their myGov account with the service prior to formal commencement of enrolment. Refer Childcare Fee Subsidy below. The service then deducts any fee relief from the scheduled fee and the primary account holder pays the ‘gap’.

Scheduled Fees are established by services and are more often than not, set at a higher rate than what the Government assistance may provide. This is required to ensure the service remains viable and operates at an appropriate level of quality and care. As such, the “gap” between the Scheduled Fee and any Government assistance is payable weekly/fortnightly by the Primary Account Holder. Whilst in most cases a ‘gap’ is still payable to the service, the fee assistance provided by the government has facilitated a more ‘affordable’ childcare industry.

The service has no control or input over the eligibility and payment of the Child Care Subsidy. The Primary Account Holder is responsible for ensuring their child/ren are registered and linked and for ensuring any information provided to Centrelink and/or Family Assistance Office (FAO) is accurate and current.

The Primary Account Holder is also responsible for ensuring any balance owing to the service is paid in a timely fashion.
Snuggles Early Learning Centre is also an Accredited Kindergarten, therefore the Department of Education and Training (DE) provides per capita funding as a contribution towards the cost of operating a formal Kindergarten program (curriculum).

The service itself is responsible for all operational costs for both the Long Day Care and the Kindergarten.

"Gap" fees are necessary because there is a shortfall between the level of government funding and the costs of operating a viable centre.

Parents/Guardians should be aware that childcare is not a free service and the service relies on prompt payment of fees to meet costs. All Parents/Guardians must adhere to this and other relevant policies and Management reserves the right to exclude a child (and any enrolled siblings) temporarily or permanently if non-payment of fees continues.

During the applicable timeframe Snuggles will promote and maintain in accordance with the BSBL State Kindergarten funding guidelines the 'Free kinder' initiative and this will be reflected on the statements of all eligible families.

Snuggles Early Learning Centre considers the safety, rights and best interests of children as the paramount consideration when developing policies and procedures.

Legislative Requirement

Section/Regulation	Description
2A	Paramount considerations - safety rights and best interests of children
Regulation 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
Regulation 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Regulation 172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

Principles

- We are committed to providing all families the opportunity to enrol their children. We aim for our fees structure to be fair and we accommodate payment plans for families requiring greater flexibility.
- We value our families and ensure there is two-way communication with them at all times. We ensure they are familiar with our fees at enrolment and we provide at least two weeks' notice of any changes to the fee structure.

- We prioritise good governance and quality management. Our fees structure is clear and transparent, and our systems and practices ensure that payments are processed correctly and receipts and statements are provided to families.
- The 'Free Kinder' state government initiative is supported by this service. Payments are credited to eligible accounts monthly from February and ceased from the cessation of enrolment or the completion of the funding subsidy, whichever comes first. This payment will be labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset and will only be paid at one service - where families attend more than one service they must choose where the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program (and therefore receive the Free Kinder funding) -children eligible for ESK are enrolled and funded under the ESK program

Key Terms

Term	Meaning	Source
Childcare Subsidy (CCS)	The main Australian Government payment to assist families with the costs of education and care for their children. It is, with some exceptions, paid directly to providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families make a co-contribution to their fees and pay the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount (GAP).	https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook
Long Day Care (LDC)	Long day care (often called Early Learning Centres) is available for children whose families are working or studying, or just need some regular time off.	https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/child-care-kindergarten/Pages/types-of-child-care.aspx
Notice Period (Fees)	The length of time stipulated by a service to notify families before making any changes that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. The notice period must be at least 14 days.	
Scheduled Fees	The daily and weekly fees, as set by the service	
GAP	The shortfall between the scheduled fee and any Childcare Subsidy received. Families who receive CCS are required to make a co-contribution to their child care fees under Family Assistance Law. They do this by paying the difference between the provider's fee and the CCS amount. This is known as the out-of-pocket or gap fee.	https://www.dese.gov.au/child-care-subsidy/child-care-fees
Primary Account Holder	The person responsible for the payment of accounts.	

Procedures

Setting Fee Structure and Policy

- The Director/s will set fees for the centre, taking into consideration:
  i. The operational costs of the centre and its programs.
  ii. The fees charged by similar services in the area.

- The Director/s will review (and change if necessary) the Fee Policy and Fee Structure on a regular basis to ensure the financial viability of the centre is maintained.
- Parents/Guardians will be advised of any fee changes in advance (14 days).
- Copies of the Fee Policy and Fee Structure are accessible to any enrolled family upon request.
- Details of the current Fee Structure is on display in reception.

Childcare Subsidy – Fee Assistance

Snuggles Early Learning Centre is licensed as an "Approved" Long-Day-Care-Centre and Kindergarten.

As a result, families may be eligible for fee relief in the form of Child Care Subsidy (CCS)
To be eligible for fee assistance, families must meet certain eligibility criteria, as determined by the Federal Government.
To check your eligibility or to register for the Child Care Subsidy, the Primary Account Holder should:

- Go online at https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy/how-claim
  Accessing your myGov account and completing and submitting the Activity Test on your myGov account. This will generate your Centrelink Child Care Subsidy hours and percentage eligibility for your family.
- Directly visit a Centrelink Office (Family Assistance Office - FAO)
- Or Phone – 136 150

The Four Step Process to Childcare Subsidy
https://www.vic.gov.au/how-enrol-child-care

Before your child can start at Snuggles you will need to complete a **4 step process** so that your Child Care Subsidy can be applied to your account. In the event that these steps have not been completed before your enrolment commences at the service, FULL FEES will apply until this is finalised.

Step One: The individual makes a claim for Child Care Subsidy with Centrelink (as explained above)

Step Two: The provider and individual make an arrangement for care of a child

Arrangement types under the new Child Care Subsidy system

1. Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) – *This is the most common family arrangement*
2. Relevant Arrangement – *The family do not wish to claim CCS*
3. Additional CCS (child wellbeing)- *provider eligible arrangement*
4. Arrangement with an organization (3rd party) ie *AMEP payments*

Step Three: The provider submits an enrolment notice

Step Four: The individual confirms the enrolment in their myGov account

You can complete these steps via your **myGov** account, the Centrelink online app, a phone call to Centrelink or by visiting your closest Family Assistance Office.

The primary account holder is also required to provide prior to your child's commencement

- Primary Account Holder CRN (Customer Reference Number) and Date of Birth
- Child/ren CRN (Child Reference Number) and Date of Birth
- A current Immunisation History Statement

At Snuggles Early Learning Centre we prefer payment via Direct Debit. There is also the option of payment via credit card. You will also receive a fortnightly statement.

Please note it is your responsibility to ensure

1. Your statement is correct, discrepancies must be brought to our attention within 14 days of statement of issue.
2. Notify us if your Child Care Subsidy has changed by providing the centre with the letter from Centrelink.
3. That on the drawing date there is sufficient cleared funds in the nominated account

Please note: failure to pay fees is a breach of the Conditions of Enrolment and may initiate the procedure for termination of care.

Fee Structure Overview

Snuggles Early Learning Centre is an approved Long Day Care Centre meaning the service charges a flat daily or weekly rate. The service is not an approved occasional care centre and therefore does not offer an hourly rate structure. Snuggles fees are based and charged on a 12 hour fee structure for 1 to 4 days and a 10 hour daily fee structure for full time children..

Official enrolment in a Long Day Care centre requires that Parents/Guardians commit to securing a place for their child on an ongoing basis until official notification to cease enrolment has been received by Management. For example, if a Parent/Guardian enrolls their child into the service on a Monday and Wednesday, they are effectively securing that place until cessation of enrolment (as per this policy) occurs. As a result, fees are payable regardless of in-attendance or hours of attendance.

The service operates from 6.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, every week of the year. The centre is closed on weekends and all Government Gazetted Public Holidays.

Fee Structure

Enrolment Bond

An Enrolment Bond of $50 per child will be requested upon acceptance of a place and confirmation of enrolment. The Enrolment Bond will be held by the centre and is a nonrefundable fee.

Orientation
Orientation is highly recommended at the service to assist with transition. The service offers all newly enrolled families two **free** short sessions to assist with the settling in process. Orientation sessions are subject to availability and must be scheduled in advance to ensure appropriate staffing and catering requirements can be met. Any additional orientation sessions can be organised at the standard ½ day rate as per the Fee Schedule.

Public Holidays
The centre is closed on all Government gazetted Public Holidays. As the centre is still required to pay wages for these days full fees remain payable.

Casual Absences
The centre staffs' and caters with the expectation that all enrollees will attend on their given days. As such full fees remain payable for any casual in-attendance. Casual in-attendance can be the result of (but is not limited to):

- Illness
- School Holidays
- Day Off
- Parents' RDO
- Annual Leave

Planned Leave
The centre offers a discounted rate for families that submit a 'leave form' **at least** two weeks prior to any planned absences. The discounted rate is capped at 10 days per child, per financial year. Please refer to the Fee Schedule for the current discounted rate.

Note:
Each enrolled child is entitled to a maximum of 42 absent days per financial year (as determined by the Federal Government). Any absences beyond 42 days may affect your Childcare Subsidy entitlement. Please speak to Management if unsure.

Late Collection
The centre closes at 6.30pm. It is a Centre requirement that there are never less than two staff members onsite when there are children present. As such Management reserve the right to apply a late collection fee of $3.00 for every minute past 6.30pm, in order to recover the necessary costs of keeping the centre open after hours.

Please also refer to the *'Delivery and Collection of Children'* policy for further information.

Late Payment Fees

In the event of continuous and/or unnecessary late payment of fees, Management reserves the right to apply a late payment fee of $5.00 per week.

Parents/Guardians who are consistently late with their payment may jeopardise their child's placement. Management reserves the right to exclude a child (and any enrolled siblings) temporarily or permanently if non-payment of fees continues.

Parents/Guardians who are experiencing short term financial hardship and are unable to meet their fees on time should notify Management in advance and every endeavour will be taken to accommodate the situation.

Reduced Days and/or Cessation of Enrolment
Two weeks' notice is required, in writing, of any reduction of days or cessation of enrolment. The two weeks' notice for cessation of enrolment must be paid in advance. If the child/ren does not attend on their last scheduled day, further fees will apply as a result of the Childcare Subsidy legislation.

Payment Terms
Fees are payable fortnightly, one week in arrears one week in advance as per the guidelines set out in this policy.

Method of Payment
EFTPOS, Credit Card, Online Deposit and Direct Debit are all acceptable methods of payment. Direct Debit is the preferred method of payment.(cash is no longer accepted for payment of fees)

Account Queries
Account activity statements are issued in fortnightly, however copies can be provided on request at any time.

Debt Recovery
The centre reserves the right to initiate action to recover debts owing to the service.

Refund of Fees
All fees are non-refundable.

Confidentiality
Management and staff will treat any information it receives relating to the Parent's/ Guardian's financial situation as confidential.

Link to Other Policies
Enrolment and orientation
Governance and management

Induction and Training
Snuggles Early Learning Centre is committed to the ongoing training and development of our Educators. Professional development is offered to Educators regularly to support the development, health and wellbeing of children and to support our community.

Sources and Further Review

- Services Australia *Applying for Child Care Subsidy Approval*, How to claim Child Care Subsidy
- The Department of Education *Kindergarten Funding Guide*, Kindergarten funding guide | vic.gov.au
- State Government Free Kinder Initiative 2025 Free Kinder funding requirements | vic.gov.au

Policy Review Date: June 2027

Fee Schedule
(as at August 2026)

Enrolment Fee:	$ 50.00 per child (payable upon accepting an offer)
½ Day (for orientation purposes only)	$92.00

Part Time:

Part Time or Casual Day	$ 193.00 per day
Planned Leave (conditions apply)	$ 151.50 per day

Full Time:

Full Time day ($860.00 per week)	$ 188.00 per
Planned Leave (conditions apply)	$ 151.50 per day

PLEASE NOTE :
Parents will be notified a minimum of 14 days in advance of a fee increase.
Reg 172 (2)
A Statement of Accounts will be provided to all families fortnightly or earlier as requested by families.