

POLICY STATEMENT

CSU Fee Policy

AUTHORISATION

POLICY TYPE:	Operational
POLICY LOCATION:	Corporate and Community Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	CSU Coordinator
AUTHORISED BY:	Director of Corporate and Community Services
DATE ADOPTED:	
ADOPTED BY:	Manex
MINUTE NO: <i>(If required)</i>	
REVIEW DUE DATE:	December 2024
REVISION NUMBER:	
RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN	This policy supports Council's Delivery Program Strategy 4.2: Provide quality, accredited and affordable Education and Care Services within Bland Shire and surrounds (Bland Preschool, Family Day Care, Mobile Resource Unit and Toy Library services).

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS <i>Include names of former policies that this policy will replace if applicable</i>	AMENDED BY <i>(Where required)</i>
0	September 2014		
1	October 2015		
2	June 2018		June 2020
3	May 2021		September 2022
4	December 2022		December 2024

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed within 2 years from the date of adoption or as required in the event of legislative changes. The Policy may also be changed as a result of other amendment that are to the advantage that Council and in the spirit of this Policy. Any amendment to the Policy must be with the approval of the General Manager/Manex.

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure educators, staff, families and community members are aware of all fees and fee payment requirements upon enrolling in a service.

2. Scope:

This policy document applies to all enrolled families, educators and community members utilising any Children Services program.

3. Outcomes:

To clearly advise the setting and payment of fees takes into account all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the Australian Government Child Care Provider Handbook. All records held at the service will be maintained in accordance with the service Confidentiality and Privacy policy. Families will be provided with accurate fee statements and clear information regarding fee payment processes.

4. Roles and Responsibilities:

The Approved Provider will:

- Ensure the Service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations;
- Review the current budget to determine fee income requirements;
- Ensure the Fee Policy is readily accessible at the Service;
- Notify parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected;
- Ensure a notice outlining the fees charged by the Service is issued to all families as required.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Ensure a current Complying Written Agreement (CWA) is in place for each child enrolled in Mobile Resource Unit and Family Day Care;
- Ensure the same fee will be charged to all families for equivalent care arrangements;
- Ensure families will be issued with an invoice regularly reflecting the care used and charged for up to the end of the invoice period;
- Ensure a dated receipt in accordance with Australian Government Guidelines is provided for each payment.

Families will:

- Read the policy and refer any questions, queries or concerns to the Nominated Supervisor;
- Ensure all fees are kept up to date;
- If enrolled in a service with Child Care Subsidy available, provide documentation of any additional absence days as required (once the number of allowable absences has been reached);
- Provide two (2) weeks' notice of withdrawal from the service. If enrolled in a service with Child Care Subsidy available and the child does not attend during this two week period, full fees may be charged as no Child Care Subsidy reductions are available.
- If enrolled in Family Day Care, be required to pay fees on public holidays if the holiday falls on their normal day of care and public holiday fees are payable as outlined on the individual Educator's Fee Schedule;
- Pay any fees incurred in relation to outings and/or incursions if applicable

BLAND PRESCHOOL

Bland Shire Preschool fees are set according to the Bland Shire Council Revenue Policy each financial year. There are subsidy levels available to families if they meet certain requirements.

Fees (4 year old sessions)

1. Fees are charged termly in advance.
2. Fees are to be paid within four weeks of the commencement of each term.
3. Other arrangements (payment instalments) may be made after consultation with the Senior Early Childhood Teacher or Coordinator.
4. To apply for a further subsidy (other than fee relief), children must be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background (noted on their enrolment) or provide a current health Care Card or Parent Pensioner Card.
5. Two weeks' notice is to be given if a child is leaving the Preschool. Fees will be reimbursed if paid in full. If no notice is given the term fees will be payable.
6. If fees are not paid by the due date, the 'Failure to pay fees' procedure will be put into place. Inclusive of any alternative payment arrangements not being met.

Subsidies

Subsidies are available for low income earners with a current Health Care Card or Pensioners Card and children from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island background from the date this information is provided to the service.

4 year old preschool classes also receive "Start Strong" Funding Subsidy from the government. To be eligible for this, the child needs to be 4 years old and be eligible to attend formal schooling the following year and attend the preschool service at least 15 hours a week. If this requirement is not met full fees are payable.

Arrears

There is a procedure to be followed if accounts are not paid. If families are experiencing difficulties they can speak to the Senior Early Childhood Teacher or Coordinator and a payment plan can be established. It is the family's responsibility to contact the Preschool if they are having any difficulties.

Late Departure Fee:

A late fee will be charged for children who are continually picked up after preschool close.

MOBILE RESOURCE UNIT – UNGARIE/WEST WYALONG PRESCHOOL/LONG DAY CARE

Mobile Resource Preschool/LDC fees are set according to the Bland Shire Council Revenue Policy each financial year.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (CCS) & CHILD CARE SUBSIDY SYSTEM (CCSS)

- Our service will comply with the Australian Government requirements to be an approved education and care service for the purposes of CCS. The online Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS) reporting requirements and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS will be maintained by the service.
- It is the enrolling parent/guardian's responsibility to complete and lodge their CCS application with Centrelink prior to commencing care.
- All fees are charged at the full rate and submitted to the CCSS office. Each family's eligibility for CCS is then calculated, the service is then forwarded these funds. Deductions may then be applied to each individual family's accounts and the parent/guardian pays the gap amount.

- Any changes in a family's financial circumstances or working activities may result in an alteration of CCS (e.g. lodgement of Tax). It is the family's responsibility to contact Centrelink if they wish to dispute this or discuss it further.
- CCS will be deducted from a family's fees within 14 days of the service being notified of the amount by CCSS.

Bland Preschool and Bland Shire Mobile Resource Unit fees can be paid at the Children Services Unit and Ungarie Preschool by eftpos or over the phone. Bland Shire Council also accepts eftpos and phone payments.

Bland Preschool and Bland Shire Mobile Resource Unit fees are to be paid by week four of the current term.

Two weeks' notice is to be given if a child is leaving the Preschool. Fees will be reimbursed if paid in full.

If fees are not paid by the due date, or if weekly or fortnightly payments are not received regularly, the 'Failure to Pay Fees' Procedure will be put into place.

OVERDUE FEES

Parents/guardians with overdue fees will be encouraged by the Coordinator to discuss any difficulties they may have in meeting payments and make suitable arrangements to pay, including the option of a payment plan. If this is not done, or the agreed arrangements are not kept, the matter may be referred to a debt collector and/or cancellation of the child's booking may occur.

If a family has an outstanding account balance with one of Bland Shire Council Children Services Unit services then they will be unable to enrol in another Children Services Unit service, nor will any other sibling, until payment has been made in full.

Children Services Unit Failure to Pay Fees Procedure;

1. Week after the fees were due – Text sent.
2. Following week (if still not paid) – Second Text message.
3. Following week (if still not paid) – Phone call.
4. Should there be no response or attempt to pay fees, the Final Letter will be issued informing parents that;
 - a. Legal action will be taken to recover the debt.
 - b. The overdue account will be placed in the hands of Bland Shire Council to recover the outstanding debt.
 - c. A child will not be able to attend if there is an outstanding debt and he/she will go on the waiting list if they wish to return.
 - d. Since payment has not been made by the due date, payments must be made in advance for all future attendances.
 - e. If outstanding money is owed, subsequent children from the family will not be enrolled until the debt has been paid.
5. Enrolment cancellation letter sent.

LATE COLLECTION CHARGE

Our service reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians have not collected their child/ren from the service before closing time. This charge will be set at a level determined by the service and based on the service's need to recoup expenses incurred in employee overtime wages.

FAMILY DAY CARE

Registered educators with the Bland/Temora Family Day Care Scheme are providing care for children on behalf of the Bland/Temora Family Day Care Scheme and are therefore acting as

an agent of the Bland/Temora Family Day Care Scheme in regards to the collection of fees and negotiating care contracts.

All fees for childcare are administered by the FDC Educator. Refer to the individual FDC Educator's Fee Schedule.

Overtime and Penalty Fees (late pick up fee):

These fees are charged at the educator's discretion where parents are late picking up their child/ren. Child Care Subsidy does not cover this fee. See individual educator's fee schedules.

Termination of Care:

Parents are required to give at least fourteen days written notice to the educator and the Coordination Unit when ceasing care arrangements, otherwise full fees will be charged. If a child is absent on the last day of care full fees (no claim for CCS) will be charged up to the last day of attendance.

Educators are required to give at least fourteen days written notice to parents and the Coordination Unit when ceasing care arrangements.

The Family Day Care Coordination Unit will:

- Set the Parent Levy and Educator Levy each financial year based on the annual budget to ensure the required income will be received to run the service efficiently to meet legislative requirements;
- Not enter into discussions with Educators or families on matters relating to the value of an individual service compared to other services;
- Require educators to take responsibility for all fees incurred at their service;
- Monitor and process all Child Care Subsidy claims for Educators;
- Ensure that if there are outstanding fees payable to an Educator from a family, and the family requests the name of another Educator, the outstanding fees are paid before another Educator's name is given for child care.

Family Day Care Educators will:

- Determine their own fees and charging practices;
- Be available to provide care for the fee charged for that care;
- Provide families and service with a copy of their fee schedule at least fourteen (14) days prior to the implementation of the changes;
- Issue a receipt for all monies received from families;
- Only charge for children who are registered with the service;
- Not charge families when their service is closed, other than public holidays.

7. Definitions:

In this policy 'staff and educators' refers to staff employed by Bland Shire Council Children Services Unit and educators registered with the Bland/Temora Family Day Care Scheme. Families refer to any family that has an enrolled child at any of the services.

8. Legislation and Supporting Documents:

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010.
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Family Assistance Law