

Payment of Fees

Acacia is a charitable, not-for-profit, community-based organisation. Acacia has a commitment to maintaining fees at the lowest possible level whilst providing a high quality service and acknowledging qualifications, skills and dedication of staff.

Acacia believe that all children have a right of equal access to quality education and care services, regardless of economic status, cultural background or disability.

Fees are annually calculated which based on the annual budget estimate. Fees are applied through a financial year (July to June). The centre's annual budget determines the maximum fee for one week's care. Families will be advised in writing by providing 4 (four) weeks' notice of any fee changes. The centre provides regular information on fees in the Information for Parents, newsletters and signs on notice board.

In order to continue to provide an affordable, quality service, Acacia's centres must charge fees that allow it to remain economically viable. The fees charged, with funds received from the state and federal governments will cover operating costs. These include staff salaries, salary on cost, relief staff, in-service training, children's foods, drink and consumable, replacement of worn out equipment, acquisition of new equipment and materials for the children, office materials, telephone, electricity, cleaning, maintenance and repairs.

Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR)

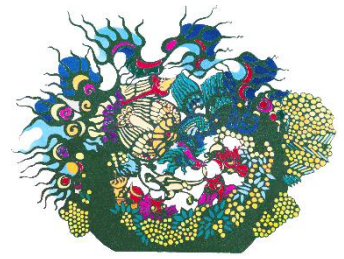
CCB is a payment made by the Commonwealth Government to families to assist with the cost of child care fees. CCR assists families with out of pocket expenses and covers 50% of out of pocket expenses, up to a maximum of \$7,500 per child per financial year. Families using Acacia's centres may be eligible to claim CCB and CCR as Acacia's centres are approved by the Department of Social (DSS).

Centrelink from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services will assess family income based on information provided by parent/guardian; a re-assessment can be requested if family circumstances change. Centrelink will advise family what percentage of the hourly fee they will pay, and a gap fee will apply. Parent/guardian must apply to claim CCB before commencing care or full fees will apply. All claims can be made by contacting Centrelink.

CCB will not be paid if a child does not attend on the first day of expected attendance or the last day of attendance, if leaving the centre. Full fees will apply in these circumstances.

To claim Child Care Benefit families are required to provide the Centre with the following information:

- Child's Full Name and Date of Birth
- Child's Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- Registered Parent/Guardian Full Name and Date of Birth
- Registered Parent/Guardian Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- Notification of if the child attends another service.
- Total number of children who are registered with Centrelink and are accessing any type of registered care (As this will determine the number of child percentage, the family will receive).



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It is the responsibility of the registered parent/guardian to notify Acacia's centres of any change to the number of children the family has accessing registered care, and failure to update these details may result in a debt incurred by the family

Adult Migrant English Program

The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship provides free child care for non-school children if their parents are required to attend classes while participating in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The cost of AMEP-related child care is the responsibility of AMEP service providers. The participant is not eligible for CCB, CCR or JETCCFA because the AMEP is paying for the child care.

Grandparent Child Care Benefit (GCCB)

GCCB is available to grandparents who:

- meet the existing CCB eligibility requirements and
- are receiving an income support payment from DHS or the Department of Veterans' Affairs and
- are the sole or major provider of the ongoing daily care for the grandchild and have the responsibility for the day-to-day decisions about the grandchild's care, welfare and development.

GCCB covers the full cost of the total fee charged for CCB eligible hours up to 50 hours for each child in CCB approved care each week.

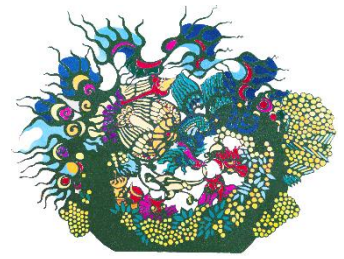
This benefit payment is only available to grandparents who claim CCB as reduced fees and cannot be claimed as a lump sum. Grandparents claiming GCCB need to apply directly to the DHS. Grandparents must notify the DSS before the grandchild/ren leave their care or of any other change in their circumstances. The payment of GCCB will cease from the date grandparents no longer meet the GCCB eligibility requirements.

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA)

JETCCFA is available to parents receiving the following income support payments:

- Parenting Payment
- Newstart Allowance
- Youth Allowance (for job seekers, not full-time students)
- Widow B Pension
- Widow Allowance
- Partner Allowance
- Carer Payment
- Special Benefit (who would otherwise be eligible for Parenting Payment or Newstart Allowance but who do not meet residency requirements)
- Community Development Employment Projects Participant Supplement (only when the parent had immediate previous entitlement to a JETCCFA eligible income support payment but it is no longer payable due to the supplement income)
- Means-tested ABSTUDY payments.

JETCCFA provides extra help with the cost of CCB approved child care for eligible parents undertaking activities such as job search, work, study or rehabilitation as part of an Employment Pathway Plan, to help parents/guardians enter or re-enter the workforce.



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JETCCFA can help meet the cost of care in CCB approved services by paying most of the 'gap fee' - that is, the difference between the full fee and CCB, for sessions of care used by parents to participate in JETCCFA-approved activities. All parents receiving JETCCFA will be liable to pay a small contribution to the cost of the care they attend.

Child care fees consist of CCB + CCR (JETCCFA in some cases) + Out of pocket

Fees are not subject to Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Please speak with our office staff to find out the centre current fees

Fee is charged immediately on the first commencing week.

When the child is absent as the result of sickness or other reasons, the full fee is still applied.

During the centre annual summer holiday (3 weeks), fees will not apply.

Fees are due and payable 2 weeks in advance. Payment is made fortnightly or monthly by cash, EFTPOS, Direct Debt, Credit cards.

The centre is open from 7.30am to 6.00pm. (7:00am to 6:00 St Albans) Monday to Friday

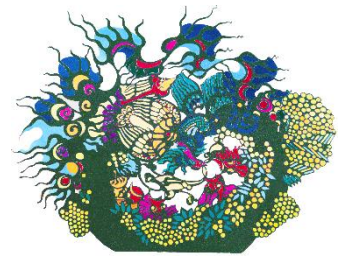
Part time bookings for childcare, a minimum 1 Full day, can be allocated strictly according to availability. Full time booked places take priority over part time attendance. Parents/guardians are advised that for peace of mind a full time booked place provides security for work related purposes.

Payment is expected within 7 days of receiving your account.

If you are having difficulty with paying your fees see the Director or Admin person as soon as possible. They can organise payment plan which is suitable for both parties.

Fees are applied to the below conditions or situations

- Full fee is required for all public holidays.
- Full fee payable when the child takes any holiday during the year whilst the centre is in operation.
- Notice to withdraw from the centre has to be given 2 weeks before the actual date of leaving. In case parents/guardians would like to withdraw their child from the centre 2 weeks before the Christmas-closing-period, Fees must be paid in full (even notice 2 weeks has been given).
- Full fees are charged for booked attendances. There is no reduction for days booked but not attended.
- Full fees are charged when children are away sick, or when they are excluded during outbreaks of infectious illness for which they have not been immunised.



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- In the event of a long term illness families are advised to negotiate an alternative arrangement with the Director.
- The centre will employ a service to pursue bad debts.
- The centre will proceed to legal action when other approaches have been exhausted.
- The centre reserves the right to cancel a booking if fees are outstanding and satisfactory arrangements have not been put in place.

Absences

According to the guidelines from Department of Social Services in Child Care Service Handbook, Child Care Benefit (CCB) is paid in certain circumstances when a family is charged for care that their child does not attend. These absence rules also apply to the payment of JETCCFA. Absences are categorised into two groups: absence days and additional absence days.

Initial 42 absence days

CCB is paid for up to 42 absence days for each child per financial year across all approved long day care services. Absence days are referred to as 'Initial 42 days absence' in the family assistance law.

- Each child receives a new set of initial 42 absence days at the beginning of the financial year.
- These absence days can be taken for any reason (provided the day being reported as an absence is a day on which care would have otherwise been provided).

Additional absence days

Once all the first 42 absence days have been used CCB will also be payable for absences taken for these reasons:

- illness (with a medical certificate)
- non-immunisation (with written evidence)
- rostered days off/rotating shift work (with written evidence)
- temporary closure of a school or pupil-free days
- periods of local emergency
- shared care arrangements due to a court order, parenting plan or parenting order (with copy of documentation)
- attendance at preschool
- exceptional circumstances

Absence days taken for the above reasons, after the first 42 absence days have been used, are called 'additional absence days'. There is no limit on the number of these days for which CCB may be paid, as long as:



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- they are taken for the reasons specified above, and
- supporting documentation (where required) is provided, and
- they are days on which care would otherwise have been provided

The centre can only claim CCB if these guidelines are followed, otherwise maximum fees will be applied.

Late Collection Fee

Late collection fee applies when a child is left after the centre closed times. The centre closes at 6.00pm sharp.

Should you be detained please ring the centre as soon as possible. If a child has not been picked up by 6.00 pm, centre staff contact parents/guardians at home or on their business phone number. The emergency number will be contacted, if parents or guardian are not available, to arrange alternative collection.

In the event parents/guardians will be late in picking up a child, it is expected that every attempt will be made to contact the centre to inform staff of the delay and the expected time of arrival. If a parent is extremely late and all attempts to reach emergency contacts have failed, staff will report to Child Protection Emergency Service.

Regulations require two staff to attend at all times that child is present. Although our staff is dedicated, each staff member has a family and home for which he/she is responsible. The centre applies a late collection fee for parents who collect their child after 6.00pm. The late collection fee is designed to act as a deterrent as it is important to protect the rights of staff to finish work at the end of their shift.

Late collection fee is \$25 for the first 15 minutes or part there of, and \$2.00 for every minute following. Child Care Benefit is not paid on this fee. The late collection fee is due and payable the following morning. This ensures that children and staff welfare are considered.

If parents/guardians are consistently late, the Director will arrange an interview where alternatives care for their child can be discussed

References

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority,

- *National Quality Framework Resource Kit, 2011*

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming - The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*
Commonwealth of Australia 2009

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