



# Acacia Children's Centre St Albans

# Family handbook

Our Centre has been rated as **EXCEEDING** National Quality Standards



Tel: (03) 9356 9731  
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## BACKGROUND

### *Acacia's Brief History*

Acacia, established in May 1982, is a community-based, ethno-specific, not for profit organisation, which provides childcare services and promotes children's services to Indochinese families. As a community-based organisation, Acacia has been managed by a committee of management consisted of parents who placed their child(ren) at the centres and local community people.

From the outset, the childcare service had only one childcare centre. In 1999, Acacia has developed and implemented its best management practice by offering the Fitzroy Crèche & Day Nursery an opportunity to be part of the Acacia childcare service.

As Acacia grew stronger, the committee of management wanted to invest for the future of Acacia to ensure its longevity and to assist the wider Indochinese community. They decided to expand and build a third centre, which was designed to include facilities that enabled Acacia to further expand in other services that the community needs.

Currently, the childcare centres are:

Acacia Children's Centre at 13 Belgium Avenue, Richmond 3121,

Acacia Fitzroy Crèche at 187 Napier Street, Fitzroy 3065 and

Acacia Children's Centre - St Albans at 159 Taylors Road, St Albans 3021.

### **OUR VISION**

***Harmonious communities, thriving on differences, where families and educators strive to understand and learn from each other***

### **OUR MISSION**

***Providing a high quality learning and supportive environment that fosters respect, confidence and belonging***

### **Our Values**

At Acacia we uphold the following values:

- **Compassion**
- **Honour**
- **Integrity**
- **Learning**
- **Diversity**

Acacia respects the rights of children as enshrined in the 1991 United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, and commits to advocating for these rights.

Acacia's committee and staff recognise that Australia's indigenous people are the oldest inhabitants of the vast Australian continent, and also acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is a heritage that needs to be maintained and passed on to future generations.

Acacia's programs also reflect the full appreciation of Australia's multicultural society, enhancing the children's awareness of, and respect for, cultural differences and similarities. Our programs are designed to help children in developing all areas for success now and in later years, and to equip them with the necessary tools to deal with life.

We believe that Acacia plays an integral part in servicing and belonging to our wider community, and a responsibility to respect and value diversity, social justice and equity.

### CHILDREN

We

- value each child as an individual with unique interests, strengths and abilities.
- believe that each child comes to the centre with a different set of experiences, interests and knowledge. Acknowledging that children belong first to their own family, in a diverse cultural and community environment, we therefore, seek to build on the child's home experience and diverse lifestyle to foster a sense of being.
- believe that children need good physical health, care, sensitivity and interactions to promote positive attachments that lead to a strong sense of self-worth and wellbeing, so children can realise their full potential.
- believe children need to be safe, feel secure, cared for and happy. When children feel safe and develop a sense of trust, they will only then freely explore the environment, take safe risks and learn.

### FAMILIES

We

- believe that children first belong to their family and we acknowledge their immediate and extended families are their initial and important teachers.
- acknowledge the importance of working in partnership with families and building on the foundations of understanding each other's expectations, attitudes and knowledge in preparation for future transitions.
- believe that families have the right to feel welcomed and be involved in our programs.
- value each family diverse child-rearing practice and work in a reciprocal and collaborative way to maintain and support each other in the role of nurturing children.

### Curriculum

We

- believe that children are resourceful learners who are capable of constructing their own knowledge about the world around them.
- believe that learning occurs in a social context, with meaningful participation and interactions. We encourage the idea that children learn through play and thus Acacia has developed and implemented a learning program that is child initiated and focused. Furthermore, we scaffold their existing interests, knowledge and skills, through a collaborative and reciprocal relationship with the children, their families and educators.
- believe in a holistic approach to teaching, which encompasses all areas of development.
- believe that assessments are vital for both children and educators to evaluate, reflect and improve on current knowledge and pedagogical practices.

## ENVIRONMENT/ COMMUNITY

We

- believe in promoting awareness of environmental and sustainable practices in our program.
- value the natural environment, which fosters children's curiosity and exploration in the world around them.
- believe in providing a supportive, stimulating and nurturing environment; contributing to the development of the children's sense of self-worth, connectedness to Acacia's community, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.
- believe that our program needs to reflect and connect with our local community. We value working in partnership with the community and building relationships with them to ensure an inclusive program and pedagogical practice.

## STAFF/ EDUCATORS

We

- value and respect each educator as an individual, as well as a valuable part of our team, that brings with them a wealth of knowledge, skills, experiences and qualifications.
- understand that learning is an ongoing process through reflection and further professional development.
- believe in working in an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- believe educators should work in a safe and secure environment that promotes their sense of wellbeing.

## Management Committee

As a community-based, not for profit and charitable organisation, Acacia believes in the importance of parents and community involvement. We aim to provide opportunities for parents to be involved in the day to day program; in decision and policy making through participation on the Management Committee, in social events and other activities of the centre.

The Committee administer Acacia's centres, classes and other activities. All parents are eligible for election as a Committee member by nomination at the Annual General Meeting.

The Committee meetings are held at the centre. Minutes of meeting can be accessed. Parents are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting, which is held at the Moon Festival usually in September or early October. A reminder and invitation will be extended to parents. A copy of the constitution is available for parents to read.

## Operation

### Hour of Operation:

**6.30am until 6.15pm – Monday to Friday**

**Open 49 weeks of the year (Closed on public holidays)**

**We close for 3 weeks during the Christmas holidays. (No fees will apply during the 3-week closure)**

### We have 4 rooms;

- **Gumnut room: 12 children**
- **Wattle room: 12 children**
- **Waratah room: 22 children**
- **Banksia room: 22 children**

## Enrolment

**The director will notify a family when a place is available for their child at the Centre. Once you have been allocated a place, the following documents and information will be required before your child can commence.**

- A completed enrolment form;
- A completed Orientation survey;
- A copy of the child's Immunisation History Statement from Australian Childhood Immunisation Register
- A completed medical management plan which includes Action plans and any Medication or aides required to fulfill the Action plan requirements (if any medical condition has been confirmed);
- Child Care Subsidy requirements;
- Kindergarten enrolment form for children enrolled in 4-year-old kinder program;
- Outing authorisation form if applicable.

## Fees

- Fee is charged immediately on the first commencing week for all days booked.
- When the child is absent as the result of sickness, vacation or other reasons, the full time fee is still applied.
- Payment is made weekly, fortnightly or monthly by Direct debit. Fees are required to be paid 2 weeks in advance.
- Fees are payable for all public holidays.
- Fees are not payable for the 3 weeks that we close at the end of each year.

## Child Care Subsidy

### Child Care Subsidy Package

CCS (Child Care Subsidy) is a payment made by the Commonwealth Government to families to assist with the cost of child care fees.

Centrelink from the (DHS) will assess and determine a family's level of Childcare Subsidy. The 3 things that will determine a family's level of CSS are

1. Family's combined income
2. Activity test (activity level of the parent undertaking the least activity)
3. Service type (type of childcare service)

### Activity test:

The higher level activity will equal to more hours of subsidy.

The following factors will determine the level of activity:

- Amount of work, training, study, volunteering and other recognised activity carried out.
- Paid and unpaid leave
- Travel time to work from the centre

Exemptions such as disability, carers, incarceration

For more information please refer to Fee policy

## **Arrival & Collection**

### **Arrival**

The daily attendance record must be signed and the time entered whenever you leave your child or pick up your child from the centre.

On arrival, your child must be placed in the care of an educator and you must sign and record the time in. Please inform us if there are changes in your child's health, behaviour or routine and ensure that educators are aware of your child's arrival prior to leaving the centre.

When collecting your child from the centre, you must sign-out your child on the attendance record provided in each room. Please ensure that educators are aware that you are taking your child from the centre. Feel free to discuss your child's day with the educators, but do not forget to talk about it to your child as well.

Children need to establish a good routine in order to obtain maximum benefits from our learning programs in our centre. Arrival before 10.30am allows your child to settle and create friendships. This is also a great opportunity for the parent/guardian to participate in the education of your child and share information with the educators in the room as this may not be possible when you picking up your child at the end of the day.

If you have an important appointment need to come late, you must ring the centre by 9.30am to allow staff and other children to follow their routine appropriately. On the day of late arrival, parents/guardians responsibility is to exchange information regarding the child's needs and routine with the educators.

### **Late Collection**

The centre closes at 6:15pm sharp. Should you be detained please ring the centre as soon as possible. If your child has not been picked up by 6:15pm, centre staff contact parents/ guardian 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.

Regulations require two staff to attend at all times that child is present. The centre applies a late fee for parents who collect their child after 6.15pm. A late fee will be charged at \$25.00 for every 5 minutes they are late or part thereof. The late fee is due and payable the following morning. This ensures that children and educator welfare are considered.

## **Authorisation to Collect Children**

A child can only be collected from the Centre with a person who is the parent/guardian or authorised nominee, or with the written authorisation of one of these, except in the case of a medical emergency.

If your child is under custody or access arrangements, a copy of this document must be provided to the Director.

If the authorised nominee is not documented on the enrolment form, parent must inform the centre's staff in writing or verbally before that person comes to pick up the child. On arrival, this person needs to show the centre's staff identification to the staff before being permitted to remove the child from the centre.

## **Notification of Withdrawal**

Notice to withdraw from the centre has to be given in 2 weeks before the actual date of leaving. In case parents would like to withdraw the child from the centre in the 2 weeks prior to the Christmas-closing-period, the full fee is fully (even if you have given notice 2 weeks before).

### ***Change of details***

Please notify the Director as soon as possible of any changes to your contact details or your emergency contact detail.

Please keep the centre up to date of your child's immunisation and medical details.

### ***Orientation to the Centre***

Settling your child into the centre can be a difficult time for children and parents as well as educators. Young children may feel confused by the new environment, new routine and new faces. If possible, it is a good practice to gradually introduce your child to the educational and care setting. Start by coming with your child for an hour then slowly increasing the length of time the child spends at the centre without you.

Children developmentally have no sense of time; they are not mentally able to comprehend that their parent will come back. To them, once a parent leaves as far as they are concerned they have lost their parent. Children do not think the same way as adults. However, children are very adaptable and usually within a short period, they are able to settle in.

They learn by looking, feeling and experiencing things. Thus, we hope that parents will co-operate positively in carrying out the gradual introduction of the program.

Some children settle very quickly while other may take longer. Parents can help their child adjust by:

- Initially only leaving the child for short periods (not for 8 hours the first few days)
- Being confident, in themselves (if parents are anxious they can easily influence the way a child feels).
- Ensuring that the child has his or her "security object" such as teddy, blanket, or bottle
- Always telling the child that you are going and that you will be back
- Writing out your child's routine and discussing it with staff.

In case you are unable to stay with your child during the settling period, staff will do their best to settle your child as much as possible. Please do not hesitate to ring to see how your child is progressing

### ***Transitioning from room to room.***

Children moving up into a new room will undergo an orientation period whilst they are at the centre. Families will be consulted through the process and be given the opportunity to meet the educators in that room. At this time you will be given information about the room's expectations, routines and program.

### ***Program***

The centre is committed to ensuring that our educational program is delivered by highly qualified and experienced staff/educators. We have a leadership team consisting of Assistant director, Educational leader, Health and safety Representative and room leaders who work closely together to ensure continuous reflection occurs

## **Early Childhood Educational program**

**Curriculum:** Our curriculum is influenced by the Early Years Learning Framework. It has an important place to teach children a holistic and dynamic play based program that caters for each individual child's need. Our programs are designed to help children in developing all areas for success now and in later years, and to equip them with the necessary tools to deal with life. Our curriculum currently consists of the following;

- **STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics)
- **Literacy**
- **Environmental and Sustainable awareness**
- **Community and Cultural**, Bilingual and Aboriginal culture awareness
- **ELLA** lingual program (Japanese)
- **PATHS** Health and wellbeing program that foster children social and emotional literacy
- **Smiles for Miles**, hygiene and oral health,
- **Healthy Eating and Being Active** teaching children about nutrition
- **Body awareness** teaching children to be aware of their own body
- **Road Safety**. Teaching children about using the roads and surrounding safely
- **Animal Fun** physical activity and mental health

## **Outdoor Play**

Daily outdoor activities are an important part of your child's health. The fresh air meets the child's needs daily for general wellbeing and healthy development. If children are dressed properly, weather conditions should not pose any health risk. Weather permitting; children will play out door each day. All children who are well enough to be at the centre will be expected to participate in the outdoor activities.

Please dress your child in weather appropriate clothing.

## **Excursions/incursions and events**

Acacia will organise various excursions, incursions and events to extend or enhance the educational program which are inclusive in your daily fee. A risk assessment will be completed prior to these activities and be available for you to read. Parents are required to given written consent before any child leaves the premises for these activities.

**Parents are encouraged to volunteer to act as supervisors for excursions involving their child if you have a valid working with children check.**

## **Connection with services**

From time to time children and families may need extra support from other professional services, such as family support workers, psychologist speech therapist, occupational therapist. Acacia educators will work in collaboration with families to assist with any referrals.

## Documentation of learning

Documenting children's learning is a powerful tool for viewing the learning process and assessing children's outcomes as per our guidelines in the National Curriculum (EYLF) and the *National Quality Standards*. By making learning visible it immediately becomes a shared communication tool between educators, children and families. Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation for the program.

Educators are responsive to all children's strengths, abilities and interests. They value and build on these to ensure each child's are engaged in their learning and to ensure their individual goals are achieved. These are documented in various ways throughout the year, please see your child's educators for more information.

At Acacia we inform families of their children's learning through an App where you will see and read about what they are learning. We ask that you download the **School Stream App** to stay up to date with the program.

Acacia will not disclose children's identity (images and names) unless we have obtained signed consent from the individual family.

## How to get the School Stream app on your mobile device

### iPhone / iPad iOS



1. From your mobile device go to the **App Store** search
2. Tap the **FREE/GET** button to the right of the School Stream listing
3. Tap the **INSTALL** button
4. Enter your Apple ID and password & tap **OK**
5. Wait for the install icon to change to **OPEN**
6. Tap the **OPEN** button
7. You will be prompted to accept push notifications, you will need to select **OK**
8. Start typing **Acacia Children's Centre – St Albans** into the search then **SELECT Acacia Children's Centre – St Albans, passcode 3021**

## National Quality Rating and Assessment Process

Services will be assessed and rated against the seven Quality Areas of the NQS. The NQS is divided into seven Quality Areas:

1. Educational program and practice.
2. Children's health and safety.
3. Physical environment.
4. Staffing arrangements.
5. Relationships with children.
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.
7. Leadership and service management.

They will also be given an overall rating. The rating and assessment process aims to drive continuous quality improvement at services and provide families with better information for making choices about their children's education and care.

## Families Involvement

In creating positive relationships, Acacia encourages all families to participate in our service program in various ways, such as;

- Joining Committee of Management, subcommittee
- Attending events, AGM
- Participating in or assisting with your child's program
- Donation of your expertise or goods
- Providing feedback for our Quality improvement plan or other educational programs

If you like to know more about how you can be involved please see your centre director or your child's educators.

### **Nutrition/oral health**

Acacia adheres to our oral health and nutrition policy when planning the 4 week summer or winter menus. In planning menus, we try to offer varied culturally inspired dishes that reflect all our families. All children's individual nutritional needs are taken into account to ensure that all children are catered for. In addition, we ensure that they are nutritionally balanced and that all food groups set in The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating are included.

The food groups consist of: breads, cereals, vegetables, fruit, dairy and alternatives, meat and alternatives

Menus are displayed at the centre and on the school stream app. All families are welcomed to share home recipes with us so we can use in future menus.

All meals are cooked on the premises by a trained chef or cook with fresh local ingredients.

In addition, to adhere to our oral health policy only milk and water are served to children.

The older infants up to pre-school age children are encouraged to rinse their mouth out with water or drink a glass of water after eating. Children at the centre will be eating lots of fresh fruit and veggies and will be offered milk and water as these foods help build strong teeth.

### **No foods are to be brought into the Centre due to allergies and food safety policy. Exemptions for infants and individual children's medical dietary requirements**

Baby formula in an unopened tin & 2 bottles etc.

Breast milk – frozen or fresh in a clearly labelled container & 2 bottles

All mothers are welcomed to breast feed their child at the centre.

### **Birthday**

We encourage parents to celebrate your child's birthday at the centre. However, due to the National Food Standard and the Victorian Government Food Safety Laws require foods that serve at the centre are safe. Parents are advised that the centre will not accept any kind of cake from parents, please do not bring cake to your child birthday party.

The centre's Cook will make a cake to celebrate your child birthday party.

The centre does not encourage children to have sweets. Please do not wrap present for other children in your child's group, as some parents do not want their child to consume sweet.

The children's birthday party will be held at the afternoon tea. If you would like photos of the day, please supply a camera. Staff will be very happy to take photos for you.

### **Rest, relaxation and sleep times**

Opportunities for sleep, rest and/or relaxation are offered in our service. Younger children have individual cots in a supervised and peaceful cot room. Older children may rest mattresses laid out for them. At Acacia we believe it is important to accommodate each child's individual sleep and relaxations routine. This is done in consultation with the families depending on the age/stage of the child

A record of the child's daily sleeping hours will be recorded on the information board. Any difficulties or change in sleeping patterns will be reported to parents.

## **Clothing and personal belonging**

**Clothing** Spare clothing for children to change into after messy play and in case of toilet accidents. Clothing should be comfortable for art & craft activities and outdoor play. Wet or dirty clothes will be put into a plastic bag and placed in your child's bag to be taken home.

**Footwear** No thongs and slip on shoes are permitted to be worn at any time. Footwear must be comfortable, flat and sensible for climbing and running with a non-slip surface i.e. runners, boots.

Footwear should also be easy for the older children to place on by self to encourage self-help skills.

Our sun protection policy is followed from the beginning of September until the end of April and whenever the UV Index level reaches 3 and above

To ensure that all children are protected from skin damage caused by ultraviolet rays of the sun, the Centre ensures that (from September to April):

- All children to wear broad brimmed or legionnaire style hats - no baseball caps, for outdoor play. These hats will protect their face, neck and ears from the sun.
- we encourage you to dress their children in t-shirts, shirts and dresses that cover their shoulders, i.e. no singlets or tank tops
- SPF 50+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen is applied at least 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied every two hours when outdoors. This is recorded on the daily information board

**Jewellery** Parents are advised not to allow your child to wear jewellery such as necklace, bracelet, earring, etc. (while they are at the centre) as these can be broken and children can be at risk if they swallow them.

**Money** The centre will not take responsibility for the loss of money, as it is not necessary for your child to have money while at the centre.

**Toys** It is difficult to keep watch or be responsible for toys that children bring from home and it can be devastating for a child if their toys are lost or broken.

War toys (i.e. guns, knife, swords etc...), war games and other violent games are prohibited at the centre, parents are asked to ensure all toys of this nature are left at home.

All clothing or belongings need to be clearly labelled. No responsibility will be accepted by the centre for lost or damage items.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The centre daily health and safety practice will be adhered to the Educational and Care Services National Regulations 2018, Food Act 1984, and Quality Improvement and Accreditation System.

### **Illness**

Parents will be immediately contacted when their child becomes ill or sick whilst in care at the centre. If parents are unable to be contacted, an emergency contact person will be notified immediately and arrangements are made for the child to be picked up from the centre as soon as possible.

All efforts are made by staff to comfort the child until he/she can be picked up.

### **Infectious Disease**

The child will be excluded from the centre if he/ she infested with an infectious disease listed by the National Health and Medical Research Council. This list is displayed at the centre  
A medical certificate must be provided before the child can return to the centre.

Parents will be informed if either a child or a staff/educator member has an infectious disease.

Any children or member of staff who is suspected of, or is found to be suffering a transmitted disease or condition, will not be permitted to remain on the premises and will only be allowed to return after a medical certificate has been provided.

### **Accident and Injuries**

We aim to ensure that your child is safe at all times, but as a parent you will know that sometimes accidents happen. If your child has a minor accident at the service, we will apply first aid and complete an accident report form, which you will be asked to sign when you pick up your child.

If the accident is more serious, we will follow procedures as outlined in our *Incident, Injury and First aid Policy*. You will be called as soon as possible

On enrolment day, parents must sign a form authorising the centre to seek medical, hospital treatment including the calling of an ambulance and agree to pay all the expense incurred in the event of emergency, illness or accident

An accident or injury requiring the attention of a medical practitioner or hospitalisation the centre has to submit a report to the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

### **Administration of Medication**

Parent must notify staff that the child requires medication. Parent's authorisation is required to allow staff administering medication. Medication supplied by parent must be prescribed from a registered practitioner.

Medication can be administered when the following requirements are met:

- Medication must be kept in their original containers bearing the original label with the child's name.
- Dosage is administered according to label or written authorisation by a medical registered practitioner.
- Medication provided must be the current
- Name of the child, medication's name, dosage and time of administration must be entered and signed by parents in the Medication Records as well as verbally explain to staff.
- Non-prescribed (Panadol, Nurofen) and prolonged use of medication will require written authorisation from a medical registered practitioner.
- No medication is given unless a prescription with original label on the container with the current date and the correct child's name.

When giving medication, two staff members will check the dosage to ensure accuracy and both will sign the Medication Records.

## Medical condition

Any child who are diagnosed with Anaphylaxis, asthma, allergies, diabetes, etc.. will need to complete a medical condition plan with us.

In addition, a Signed Medical Action plan with a photo and any devices need to be provided whilst your child attends our service. **This includes Epi Pen Jr, Antihistamines, Asthma pump and spacers.**

Please notify us of any changes to your child's action plan. All medical condition plans will be revised at least on an annual basis.

## Child safe Environment

Acacia is committed in providing a child safe environment which ensures;

- That all Early educational and care regulations and laws are met
- That all staff, students and volunteers adhere to the child safe standards
- Staff will adhere to child protection laws when reporting incidents to child protection
- That we have a Smoke, Alcohol, drug free Environment at all times where children are present
- Smoking is prohibited within 4 metres of the centre building, in the playground, on excursions and wherever in sight of the children
- That all occupational, health and safety regulations are met.
- That all Information and records concerning your child: enrolment forms, health records, observation records and all other information about your child are kept confidential.

## Code of conduct for families

From time to time families may need to raise complex concerns or issues with the educators. However, physical violence, intimidation, verbal abuse or swearing towards any educators, students, volunteers or other family members will not be tolerated.

Any person not complying with educators request to cease inappropriate behaviour will be asked to leave the centre. Police will be called if these requests are ignored.

For further information, please refer to our Code of conduct policy.

## Complaint or Concern Procedure

The following procedure is to be applied when parents are concerned about any aspect of Acacia's services:

- Please speak to the person in-charge of the room
- If you are still not satisfied, please speak to the centre's Director.
- If the matter is unresolved, it can be discussed with the Managing Director via email [acacia@acacia.org.au](mailto:acacia@acacia.org.au).
- In the case that the matter remains unresolved, take your concern to the President. It can also be presented in writing to the Committee of Management via email .
- If the matter is still unresolved, the complaints may also be taken to the Children's Services Advisor (CSA), Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 900/1 McNab Ave, Footscray 3011 Tel: 8397-0300 or 8397-0246 Fax: 8397-0303