



## Early Learning Subsidy & FAQ Update Monday 6th April

Dear Families,

We hope you've had a relaxing weekend.

We wanted to provide a further update about the new Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package announced Thursday, 2nd April. This new subsidy was designed to work together with the new JobKeeper payment.

At the time of the announcement, the new subsidy sounded like good news to the industry however now that the industry has had time to investigate this new relief package further, many centres are considering closing their doors as they can't afford to stay open.

Some important financial aspects of the government relief package

- Childcare is now free for families during this crisis up until 28th June, 2020. This will be reassessed by the Australian Government and we will keep you updated with changes.
- To replace the fees normally charged centres will receive a payment to the value of less than 50% of revenue earned in late February.

Even when factoring in the JobKeeper Payment, our calculations indicate that we will need to run the centres at a loss, even with employees agreeing to work less hours.

We are happy that families will receive free care in these difficult times. Another advantage of the Government announcements is that more of our valued team members should be guaranteed an income albeit with a reduction. We would like to make a special mention of our amazing team who have been incredibly flexible with their hours during this crisis.

### **From Home Isolation to Attendance**

Today we have had a lot of children attend care who were booked to be absent. These unexpected attendances have placed a lot of pressure on our staff. If your child was booked on the Home Isolation Support absence fee and you would now like your child to attend the centre we ask that you notify us of this change in writing with 48 hours' notice so we can roster accordingly.

## **Reducing the risk of COVID-19**

Reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection remains our priority. An increase in attendance due to free childcare unfortunately also leads to an increase in the risk of infection. We ask that children only be brought in if parents/guardians are working.

We are considering introducing the following measures:

Limiting the number of children in each room.

Limiting the number of children who can attend the centre.

Parents/guardians to wear disposable gloves when entering the service as a deterrent to touch their faces.

Please note these measures are on top of existing measures already introduced to minimise risk.

We have many common questions from our families. Below are the answers to the most common FAQs we are receiving.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Is childcare free for families?**

Yes, it is free commencing 6th April.

Will I get a refund for fees paid from the 23rd March 2020 to the 5th April 2020?

The Government has advised centres they are legally allowed to discount the gap fee paid over this period.

If we were to discount the gap fee, this would mean a reduction in revenue which we can't afford. We are unaware of any centre that will be discounting the gap fee for this last 2 week period.

### **Isn't the centre better off if we increase days?**

No. Our fortnightly relief package payment is now fixed regardless of attendance and bookings.

### **Can we increase days?**

If families need extra care, at this stage we are adding casual days. Please send an email to your centre's email address to request casual days. We will formalise a system to manage families requests for permanent extra days. This will be communicated once finalised.

### **Will I be charged the Home Isolation Support fee going forward?**

No, there will be no childcare fees charged from the 6th April.

### **You said: "We ask only essential workers to send their children to the centre". Are you asking us to not return to childcare?**

No, we are not asking you to not return to childcare. We are trying to manage the risk of infection balanced with the need for families to work. If you are not working, we ask that you consider keeping your child home to help us manage the risk of infection. We understand there are exceptions. At this stage we ask that you use a common-sense approach and we will continually reassess.

We want to assure you that we are here to support families. This letter is to provide perspective on our current challenges and for you to have an understanding of why some decisions are being made.

I'd like to again thank you for your ongoing support.

Let's get through this together.

*Jarrod & Samantha McDonald*