

CCS Fees, Charges, Waiver, Sponsorship and Refund Policy

Policy Statement

This Policy sets out the statutory and provider-based fees and charges that apply to Meerilinga children, community and parenting services. Meerilinga is a not-for-profit organisation and as such provides a fair, equitable and transparent approach to determining and administering fees, charges, waiver, sponsorship and refunds.

The fees and charges for our services are reviewed bi-annually to allow Meerilinga to maintain viability with provision of quality and equitable services.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with and may be determined by:

- Family Assistance Law
- Budget (Published Fees and Charges Addendum)
- Funding for Program or Service
- Determination of an authorised officer by a reasonable process (to sponsorship, payment plan, or refund).
- Associated Policies of the organisation.

Charitable services offered by Meerilinga to children and families are provided at cost recovery or free of charge.

Fees and charges apply to the following services:

- Children's Early Learning Programs, playgroup, events and activities
- Parenting and Consulting Services
- Community events and activities
- Hire of facilities and/or equipment
- Records retrieval and replacement

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that Meerilinga appropriately and fairly determines and administers fees across a variety of funding arrangements.

This Policy applies to fees, charges, sponsorship, payment plans and refunds applicable to clients undertaking a Fee for Service arrangement or a Partner Agreement.

Scope

This policy applies to the Board of Governors, Executive, all workers, customer, clients, learners, volunteers and those employed on a fee for service or contract basis while conducting Meerilinga business.

Exclusions

Meerilinga Training College.

Policy Review

At least annually or from time to time when the organisation makes changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations.

Policy Reviewed	15 February 2024	By	Advisor Policy and Compliance
Approved By	Manager Finance and Operations		
Previous Review	14 November 2023		

Implementation

Fees will be published and charged in accordance with relevant contractual and/or legislative requirements, guidelines set by the Executive, Manager Finance and Operations, and approved by the Board of Governors.

Written information relating to the fees, charges, sponsorship and refunds for services will be provided to clients and customers prior to any agreement to participate is reached.

The collection, storage, banking and reconciliation of fees, charges, sponsorship, payment plans and refunds will be carried out in accordance with relevant handling processes.

The applicable fees will be collected prior to a client participating in a service. Waivers, sponsorship or payment plans must be made on the prescribed application form and in place prior the date of fees being due.

Should a client be having difficulty paying fees as due, they should contact Finance prior the due date to discuss an alternate payment structure.

Requests for refunds must be made in writing. Consideration to waive these guidelines will be given in exceptional unforeseen circumstances at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Meerilinga will ensure and approve its financial capacity to refund client fees in accordance with contractual and/or legislative requirements.

Meerilinga may offer group concessions or discounted fees for its services. Each case will be considered on its merits.

Refer to Addendum Approved Schedule of Fees and Charges section.

Addendum Approved Schedule of Fees and Charges

The Approved Schedule of Fees and Charges outlines all fees that may be charged by Meerilinga for products and services or other engagement with Meerilinga in the current year. This document is published annually with the authority of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

1. Authorities

1.1 Authorised Officer

Only fees that have been approved by the CEO (or nominated delegate) can be charged. Fees not approved, cannot be charged or collected. The CEO is the Authorised (approving) Officer for waiver and sponsorship applications.

* Refer clause (6) Children's Program Fees. A limited authority has been approved in respect of Early Learning Fees

Fees listed in this document are invoiced and collected through Meerilinga Finance.

1.2 Authority to Approve Deferred Payment Plan

The Manager Finance and Operations or delegate may approve a payment plan as mutually acceptable to both parties. The plan **must** be documented, and final payment must not exceed the term of service.

An application on the prescribed form addressed to the Authorised Officer Manager Finance and Operations or delegate is required by the applicant. The written statement should outline what the individual / organisation can afford to pay towards the fees.

1.3 Authority for Fee Waiver or Sponsorship

The Executive may approve Fee Waiver or Sponsorship or due to financial hardship and determine on an individual basis and take into account all circumstances.

Financial hardship involves an inability of the individual to pay for their essential living needs or those of their dependents, rather than an unwillingness to do so. Customer hardship can arise from a variety of situations. Hardship can be either of limited duration or long term.

Severe financial hardship will be decided on an individual and organisational basis for the purpose of:

- Sponsorship
- Waiving any Meerilinga Fees
- Writing-off a debt to Meerilinga
- Making a decision about reducing or suspending the collection of fees

2. Fees and Charges Waiver

Equity between clients demands that the correct fees should be charged in accordance with Meerilinga published fees and charges. Fees must always be charged unless levying such fees would cause severe financial hardship or would be inequitable.

Employees must not unilaterally determine or promote that a fee should not be applied.

Administration of Fee Waiver

Only the CEO can waive, remit or reduce fees for hardship.

The administration fee will not be charged to a permanent staff member or a student who enrol their child into a regulated Meerilinga service in the year of employment or study.

In considering whether to waive, remit or reduce a fee or approve payment plan, the Executive will take into consideration all circumstances and evidence.

Factors contributing to severe financial hardship generally include family tragedy, financial misfortune, serious illness, threat, impacts of natural disaster, excessive debt-to-income ratio and other serious or difficult circumstances:

Individual

A person is considered to be in severe financial hardship when the charging of a fee or recovery of debt they would be left unable to meet basic living needs for themselves or their dependents includes the following:

- Food
- Accommodation
- Clothing
- Health/Medical treatment
- Education
- Job Security / Entitlements
- Access to or full participation in social / beneficial services
- Other basic necessities.

Business

Serious financial hardship can also apply to businesses associated with:

- Business closure
- Disconnection of an essential service
- Repossession
- Imminent legal action pending for non-payment of debts
- Period of review limitations
- Court orders
- Settlements
- Other necessities for the business or people you are responsible for.

Final approval will be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

3. Professional Service Fees

- \$150.00 per hour plus GST
- Cancellation of consulting services will result in a charge of 20% of the contracted fee.

4. Records Service Fees

External Charges	
Description	Charge
Record Retrieval	\$50.00 per hour or part thereof, together with off-site retrieval costs where applicable

5. Facilities and Equipment Hire Fees

Applies to Community Organisations, Non-Profit Organisations, and Private Business that promote/provide services to children and/or families. All fees quoted below are inclusive of GST.

5.1 Facility Room Hire

Facility Room Hire	Hourly Rate
Children and Community Service Activity Room	\$27.50
Children and Community Service Meeting room	\$27.50

- All casual hirings will be subject to a minimum bond of \$50 per booking, up to a maximum of \$100 at our discretion.
- A cleaning fee of \$50 per hour may apply if the hired room is not left clean at the end of booking.
- A discount of 20% is available for a hiring of six (6) or more hours.
- Request for a fee concession of up to 20% off the hire fee to be submitted to Manager Finance and Operations (MFO) or delegate, subject to the following criteria:
 - Not for Profit entity, and
 - Not in receipt of external funding, and
 - Community/Parent Committee managed.
- Additional subsidy will only be granted by the CEO on a case by case basis Where a group is both not for profit and community managed. See 1.3 - Financial Hardship.

5.2 Equipment Hire

Item	CCS's
Room Cancellation (<5days)	50%
Lost Keys	\$50.00
Staff callout/attendance (per hour)	\$50.00

Refund of Fees

In accordance with the published facility or equipment hire Terms and Conditions and in other circumstances, stated in a Memorandum of Understanding / Contract of Services / Payment Plan or Written Agreement bearing authority of the Chief Executive Officer.

A refund of 50% of the hire fee will be given if a hirer of facilities/equipment cancels with less than 5 days' notice.

A full refund minus a booking fee of 2.5% will be given if a hirer of facilities/equipment provides more than 5 days' notice of cancellation.

5.3 Meerilinga Organised and Facilitated Activities

One-off or casual activity	\$5 per event per family	Refer to MFO for any variation
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- Excludes events that are funded via grants/sponsorship

5.4 Staff Resource Costs

Description	Cost
Free dress shirt and polo shirt as per contract terms	Free
Ladies dress shirt – ¾ sleeves	P.O.A
Men’s long sleeve shirt	P.O.A
Meerilinga Polo	P.O.A
Meerilinga RAP Print Polo	P.O.A
Text Books	Cost recovery
Malicious damage or loss of work equipment	Replacement cost of Item

6. Children and Community Services Fees

6.1 Playgroups

Meerilinga Facilitated (Per Family and includes Parenting Groups)	Per Term	\$50.00
	Per Term for fortnightly groups	\$25.00
	Joining midway through the Term	\$25.00

6.2 Early Learning Programs

Meerilinga Early Learning Programs (ELP) are approved under the Family Assistance Law to receive and pass on Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments to eligible families as a fee reduction. The setting and payment of fees considers all requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Family Assistance Law, Privacy Act and the guidelines contained within the Australian Government Child Care Service Handbook. All records held at the service will be maintained in accordance with the Privacy and Security of Documentation and Records Management Policy.

Ballajura	Pre-Kindy Daily Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$120.00
Beechboro	Pre-Kindy Daily Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$120.00
	Bindi Kindi Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$60.00
Cockburn	Pre-Kindy Daily Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$105.00
	Bindi Kindi Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$60.00
High Wycombe	Pre-Kindy Daily Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$105.00
	Bindi Kindi Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$60.00
Kingsley	Pre-Kindy Daily Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$105.00
	Bindi Kindi Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$95.00
Woodvale	Pre-Kindy Daily Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$105.00
	Bindi Kindi Session	Fee effective 8 January 2024	\$95.00
Administration Fee (Per family, upon enrolment or re-enrolment, once per calendar year and non-refundable)			\$50.00

A limited special delegated authority (the authority) for the above fees is attached to the following positions:

- Advisory Enrolment and Inclusion

- Personnel Administration Officer

The authority is limited to:

1. Application of a Discretionary Concessional daily fee for those families that are ineligible for CCS or for any other reason at the discretion of the CEO.
2. The approved 'other' reason is for those families that are ineligible, unable or unwilling to deal with Centrelink.

The Discretionary Concessional Daily Fee is the applicable carded daily fee, less 20%, to a maximum (discount) rounded figure of \$25.

The authority, which is to be exercised on a selective basis, is to assist families secure or retain enrolment in the Early Learning Program. Families will have seven (7) days in which to accept the offer and formally enrol into the program. No extensions are applicable. The families will be required to complete all enrolment documentation including the CWA (Complying Written Agreement).

In the event a family in receipt of the concessional fee subsequently is in receipt of CCS they are to inform Meerilinga immediately and, will revert to the standard daily fee upon first payment of the CCS to Meerilinga.

The authority does not remove the requirement to assist families with Hardship or Sponsorship applications as may be necessary, and particularly in light of repeated requests for financial consideration from individual families.

Full details of assistance approved are to be documented on the relevant database, and arrangements confirmed in writing to the family (email, mail) by the approving officer.

The authority will be reviewed annually or as determined by the Chief Executive Officer.

Payment of Children's Program Fees

Fees will be paid electronically by Direct Debit from a nominated account, enrolling parents/guardians will complete a Child Care Easy Pay - Direct Debit Request and Service Agreement form via the Smart Central system.

The amount drawn down will be the remaining gap fee amount, after the CCS portion of the fee for eligible families has been received from Centrelink.

Refer to Department of Education - [Early Childhood Provider Obligations, Electronic Payment of Gap Fees](#).

Fees will be deducted each week on Friday of the current week of care.

A dishonour fee will apply from Child Care Easy Pay for failed direct debit transactions.

At the time of enrolment or re-enrolment, a one off \$50 non-refundable administration fee per family will be deducted. The child/ren must be living in the same house as the enrolling parent/guardian.

Meerilinga will provide a dated statement each week, in accordance with legislative requirements. *Regulation 168(n)*

Enrolment means attendance, applicable fees and acceptance of all terms and conditions for agreed routine daily sessions during licensed operating hours over forty eight (49) weeks per year.

Fees are payable for the agreed routine daily sessions of enrolment, this includes where absences are taken, such as public holidays, illness, vacations, school holidays or emergency closure unless cancellation by Meerilinga or the enrolling parent/guardian in accordance with the terms and conditions of enrolment or cessation of the service.

If places are available, parent/guardian can request (in writing) to book a casual daily session if that daily session falls outside their permanent and agreed routine daily session. Once the casual booking is confirmed in writing by the service, fees will be payable for that day and this includes if the child is absent as the place has been held for that child.

Fees will not be charged for Meerilinga Early Learning Programs published closure days. Annual scheduled closure for up to three (3) weeks over Christmas and New Year period.

Parent/guardians will be given at least two (2) weeks notice in writing of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. *Regulation 172(2)*

The enrolling parent/guardian is required to give two (2) weeks notice in writing of cessation of the care agreement with the service. Fees will continue to be charged for the notice period. If the child does not attend during this notice period, no CCS will be paid for any days after the child's last physical day of attendance at the service, therefore full fees will be charged.

Refund of Fees

In accordance with the applicable Children and Community Services published conditions. Requests for refunds in respect of Children's programs are to be referred to the Manager Finance and Operations or delegate.

Child Care Subsidy

Meerilinga will comply with the Australian Government requirements as an approved service for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) reporting requirements, keeping accurate records and any other requirements for claiming and administering CCS.

Upon enrolment, Meerilinga ELP will enter into a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) with the enrolling parent/guardian and the planned arrangements for providing care in return for fees. The agreement will be recorded electronically through the Commonwealth Government Child Care Management System (CCMS), printed and signed. Any changes to the CWA will require an updated agreement eg: fees, session times, routine bookings etc.

Should the enrolling parent/guardian wish to claim CCS, they are responsible for registering with Centrelink/Services Australia through myGov online services and completes an assessment to confirm eligibility to receive CCS. The enrolled child must also meet the Australian Government immunisation requirements.

The amount of CCS to which a family is entitled to is determined by the family income and activity test eg: work, study, volunteering. Families are responsible for keeping their details on myGov current and contact Centrelink direct if they wish to dispute assessments or discuss changes in their circumstances that may affect CCS entitlement.

Any changes in a child's routine enrolment arrangement must be given in writing via email, letter or new CWA.

Families are entitled to 42 absence days for each registered child in each financial year. CCS is paid for these days provided that the child would normally have attended on that day, and fees have been charged.

Additional absences can be claimed when the first 42 days have been used. Supporting documentation may be required for approval of additional absences.

All documentation pertaining to CCS will be kept for the specified period of time and made available to Australian Government Officers on request.

Sponsorship

Meerilinga may provide limited sponsorship in the Children's Services Programs across the

organisation. All families are eligible, however at the time of considering the enrolment, the Service Co-ordinator together with an Advisor will assess each potential case on its merits and submit a recommendation to the Chief Executive Officer. No commitment is to be conveyed to families.

It is important to understand, where families and/or children are deemed to be experiencing hardship or vulnerability, sponsorship enables equitable access and inclusion into Meerilinga fee charged group care and education programs.

As an organisation we believe all children have the right to attend our programs. We review each case and the organisations resources to provide the best outcomes for children and families. We also consider other ways Meerilinga can support families through our community and parenting services. Assessment for assistance in participating in our early learning program is a holistic process and funds are capped.

Our services will seek to provide information or referral to clients on external services available to children and families.

The provision of assistance through the Australian Government, Non-Government Centre Support (NGCS) element may be accessible to support services for children living with disabilities provided by non-school organisations. Applications can be made at [Children with special educational needs](#)

The CEO may provide a sponsorship for the full or partial fee. If approved, the conditions will be set in writing to the recipient and include an end date for review.

Refer to ELP Fee Sponsorship Approval Letter T548

Any approval will be based on and subject to the following:

- A recommendation – in addition to that from the Service Co-ordinator or Advisor Enrolment and Inclusion (e.g. from **Child Health, DCP, Meerilinga Parenting, Advisor Cultural Engagement and Liaison or Community Elder**).
- Continued attendance of the child (regular or extended non-attendance may result in withdrawal of the sponsorship).
- An Individual Support Plan.
- Approved additional gap funding where applicable to cover additional or specialised staffing / resources.
- An Agreed date for review

Additional Child Care Subsidy (Child Wellbeing)

Additional Child Care Subsidy provides additional fee assistance to support vulnerable or disadvantaged families and children.

This support recognises the preventative and protective influence of quality child care on a child's health, wellbeing and development; and the importance of continuity of care.

Approved providers can only make application for Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) where an enrolled child is at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

Any child identified as being at risk under the state child protection law will meet the definition of at risk and will therefore be eligible to receive the payment.

Meerilinga is not involved in making applications for the other types of Additional Child Care Subsidy available to families however will encourage families to contact Centrelink to apply for additional assistance.

- Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent) - to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren.

- Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) - to help families experiencing financial hardship.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (transition to work) - to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work.

Inclusion Support Program

The Inclusion Support Program assists our Early Learning Programs to include children with additional needs. This includes advice and support from contracted Inclusion Agencies as well as funding towards employing for additional support staff.

Inclusion Development Fund

Funding that supports our ability to include children with additional needs into our programs enabling them to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers.

There are two (2) streams of Inclusion Development Funding support accessible for our Meerilinga programs, which have different eligibility criteria, application processes and approved funding purposes.

These streams of support are:

- Subsidy for an Additional Educator - per-hour funding to the service to subsidise the employment of an additional educator to increase the educator-to-child ratio to support the inclusion of a child (or children) with diagnosed disability or
- Subsidy for Immediate / Time-Limited Support – enabling the service to immediately engage an additional educator for a time-limited period while an alternative and more stable solution is being determined.

Access to the Inclusion Support Program is done by the Advisor Enrolment and Inclusion through the web-based application; the Inclusion Support (IS) Portal. IS Portal is the gateway for our ELP services to complete an online Strategic Inclusion Plan and access funding available through the [Inclusion Development Fund](#).