

# Parent Handbook



# **HATCHLINGS**

Early Learning Centre





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# Welcome To The Family!

The management and staff of Hatchlings Early Learning Centre welcome you to the family. We trust that the time spent at the centre for your child will be a happy and fulfilling experience. As part of our commitment to early learning (childcare), our service caters for 6 weeks to 12 years of age.

## Our centre provides:

- Educational long day care
- Nutritious meals for morning tea, lunch & afternoon tea
- Nappy service
- Development and extra-curricular programs including soccer, artist in residence and fitness
- An extensive Active-Prep program, including ongoing projects, cooking, science, language, Literacy, and mathematical concepts.

We are open Monday to Friday, 52 weeks a year (apart from gazetted public holidays). Hours vary between 6:30am and 6pm for your convenience.

Staff at Hatchlings Early Learning are always available to discuss any questions or respond to any concerns you may have during the orientation process and beyond. Please feel free to approach the staff at any time.

The office of Early Childhood Education and Care are our governing body who we work alongside to deliver the best outcomes for your Hatchling, their contact details are 07 5656 6688 should you ever need them.

Please take the time to read through this handbook as it will give you an insight into the philosophy, goals and routines within our centre. It will also explain our policies to aid in the smooth transition into the centre.

# Our philosophy is simple

We are committed to providing a comprehensive service with affordable high quality, developmental and educational early learning (childcare) to your community.

You must feel highly confident about entrusting your children to our care and education.

## Our goals are clear...

### Our goals for children in our care:

- To provide a safe, happy, and healthy environment, which recognises the special needs and talents of individual children through the employment of caring, qualified educators (staff).
- To ensure that all aspects of each child's developmental needs are programmed for and periodically assessed.

### Our goals for our staff:

- To promote ongoing training and professional enrichment to all staff with opportunities for career advancement wherever possible.
- To provide secure, supported employment through sound industrial rights, conditions, and personal practices.


### Our goals for our families:

- To provide basic support to families through the provision of high quality care, resources and education.
- To involve parents in decision making about centre policy development, staffing, and general centre management to as great a degree as possible.
- To provide services to families with different economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, preventing segregation on the basis of any of these factors, and always respecting the individual rights of all families.
- To support regulations governing children's services.

### Our goals for our community:

- To research and plan for children's services.
- To promote community awareness and understanding of quality children's services.
- To liaise with Federal, State and Local Government regarding funding, licensing, guidelines, and responsibilities.
- To provide children's services which are accountable to users, and responsive to their needs and the needs of the local community.





We aim to develop in each child the ability to:

- Feel confident
- Be independent
- Use his or her body skills
- Communicate well with others
- Learn to co-operate as part of a group, to share and take turns
- Express oneself through speech, movement, music and art
- Observe, explore, question, reason and problem solve
- Share ideas and opinions
- Be eager for new experiences

## Settling in

We aim to ensure that you and your child settle in and enjoy the Hatchlings Early Learning experience.

- Settling in is tailored to meet the individual needs of each child and their family.
- Our early childhood educators/teachers play an active role in gathering information from you and your family so we can then determine what is best for your child.
- We do this as our aim is to make the transition between home and the centre as smooth as possible.
- Our educators are always available to regularly discuss your child's day.
- We encourage you to spend time with your child to settle them in and you are more than welcome to phone us during the day to check on your child's progress.
- We assign a primary educator to assist in settling your child in each day and help them to overcome any anxiety they may be feeling.
- We aim to ensure that all educators know your needs and work together as a team to provide routine and consistency of care.
- We have developed a BUDDY SYSTEM in which we pair your child up with another child to help settle them into the centre.





## We are partners

Success in early learning is a goal that both parents and educators have for their children. Learning improves when parents are involved in their child's education. When parents work in partnership with their child's teacher, the child clearly benefits.

## So how can educators and parents work in partnership?

There are many things parents can do at home. Encouraging a positive attitude towards learning is one of the biggest favours a parent can do for their children.

Educators appreciate it when parents:

- Help their children understand that learning is important
- Set expectations for learning, by taking into account their child's ability
- Show an interest in what their child is learning and what is happening at the centre Remember that at this age, playing is learning tool!
- Reading the memos and information sheets that are sent home with their child Take note of important dates on the calendar
- It is important that educators and parents get to know each other to develop trust and respect.

## Children succeed when there is an open exchange of information that links the home with the centre.

Exchange ideas about the child's special talents and hobbies. We can then focus the child's learning through interests and strengths.

Inform the centre manager if the child has a medical condition that may affect the child at school – asthma, allergies, or diabetes, for example. Educators are not medical practitioners, and parents should discuss arrangements they have made for emergency situations.

Talk with the child's educator about what is being taught.

Discuss things like expectations and discipline. Explore ways that the parent and educator can help the child meet those standards and needs.

Let the educator know about situations which might affect the child's interest in the centre. A seriously ill grandparent, the arrival of a baby, or changes in a work situation can be upsetting to a child. Educators are better able to provide learning experiences for children if parents let educators know what is happening.



## Hatchlings Parent App

As part of our commitment to providing your child the best early learning experience, we're proud to announce Hatchlings will be using Kindyhub.

Kindyhub is a communication tool, allowing us to easily share your child's experience with you. Our educators capture your child's achievements throughout the day via Kindyhub with photos, notes and stories. Kindyhub saves us time, in-turn allowing us to spend more time with your child.

Thanks to Kindyhub we have our very own Hatchlings App available from the iTunes store. Download it today.





## Parent-Educator communication

Information regarding your child's day will be documented daily for you to view. This includes details of sleeping habits, toilet practices, child's response to the day and any health and safety issues that may have arisen.

Our staff will also speak with you informally upon collection of the child or through phone calls if any issues arise during the day.

Throughout the year we also offer parent/educator interviews as a more formal time for a parent and an educator to talk. Just like every child is different, so will each parent/educator interview. This will reflect that individuality. However, the following matters are often discussed:

- All areas of development for the child - samples of work may be shown.
- The parent's and educator's expectations for the child.
- How the educator evaluates progress.
- Joint development of a plan to help the child overcome any problems and to continue important accomplishments; and how parents and educators can work together on a continuing basis to encourage the child to do well.

## Parent Participation

We encourage parents to actively participate in the care of their children through involvement in decision making with regard to their child's care and education. Parents are welcome to spend time in the centre and share special occasions with their child.

You can become involved by joining the parent committee, fundraising committee or helping out in the centres daily routine. Please speak with your child's educator for more information.

## Parent Grievances

Our staff are here to ensure that your child is happy and healthy in their care. If there is a problem that arises that you feel you need to resolve with our staff, then please let us know.

Our grievance policy is displayed in the centre foyer, however if you do have a grievance, the first point of contact should be the Educator in charge of your child's room. They will work with you to resolve the problem.

If you feel that further resolution is required, then please speak to the Director of the centre who will work with you and the Educator to resolve the problem.

If failing this and you are not satisfied with the outcome, please contact the Regional Manager for the centre. You can obtain these contact details from your Centre.

All grievances will be taken seriously, and our best effort will always be forth coming. All outcomes will be discussed with the parent who is concerned.

## What do we do if a problem arises?

Children at times run into a roadblock or two. This is where communication is vital to solving these problems. When a parent has a concern, the first person to talk to is always the educator. This is a matter of protocol and a company policy called "The Grievance policy", as well as courtesy. In almost all cases parents and educators can find a solution together. If, for some reason, parents and educators are not able to resolve the problem, it may be helpful to have a joint meeting with the centre director and maybe even the Regional Manager. However, such action is not always necessary, especially if parents and educators are committed to working together.

## When good things happen?

Tell us! Compliments reinforce the good things that are happening in the child's life, either at home or, at the centre. Keeping in touch and working together is the best way to ensure a high-quality education for our children, and to help ensure their success not only in the centre and the early years, but also in life.





## Guiding Children's Behaviour

Children are encouraged to develop social skills that will allow them to resolve conflicts and meet their needs without the use of aggressive or destructive behaviours. Children are encouraged to respect themselves and others. When team members guide a child's behaviour they should aim to provide the child with clear guidelines as to why a particular behaviour is unacceptable. Children are to be given realistic limits to follow while they are in care.

## Programs and Routines

Our qualified educators plan experiences which develop children's skills in all developmental areas and display the weekly program in your child's room. Play activities allow children to naturally develop and have the opportunity to guide their own learning. Activity outcomes and individual observations on your child are documented in your children's files to assist in extending their skills and abilities.

Children have the opportunity for both indoor and outdoor play as part of each group's routine. The outdoor area is an essential part of the learning environment for children. All age groups utilise our specifically designed playgrounds to test their co-ordination, balance, skills and strength.

Routines allow times for individual play; small group play and large group sessions. Children's language and literacy skills are further developed during these times as children are involved in storytelling, drama, poems and games. Music also plays a large part during these sessions as children are able to experiment with dancing, singing and exercising their bodies.

## Remember, children learn through play.

The centre offers an extensive School Readiness program for children aged 3-6 years based on the National Early Years Learning Framework. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. The Framework also recognised the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy and social and emotional development).

We believe the value of play is of utmost importance to children as it is their way of learning about their world. While children are playing, they are able to express their creative ability, release emotions and can share their feelings.

We aim to guide your child in becoming an effective learner through creating an environment that is challenging and stimulating. The overall aim of our programs is to help your child in developing all areas necessary for success now and in later years.







## Fees

It is our policy that all families pay their fees two weeks in advance upon enrolment (this includes current week plus two). The parent must then continue to pay the weekly fee in advance in order to maintain a credit balance equivalent to two weeks of fees. It is recommended upon enrolment that fees are paid via Direct Debit. Direct Debit is an easy and convenient method of paying your account. Whilst Direct Debit is the preferred method of payment, we also accept BPAY and Centre Pay. All families must complete a Direct Debit or Centre Pay application form upon enrolment or obtain the centre's BPAY details.

If you are planning holidays, a holiday application form is available from the office. This form must be filled out two weeks prior to the holiday absence to receive discounted fees for up to four weeks a year. To receive this discount, fees must be two weeks in advance.

All children's booked days, including public holidays, must be paid to retain your booking. Late fees are charged if children remain in the centre after closing times.

Two weeks' notice is required if you wish to cancel a booking. Failure to do so will require parents to pay two weeks full fees. All accounts must be finalised by this time as any outstanding accounts will be forwarded to debt collection agencies.

## Child Care Subsidy

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment made by the Commonwealth Government to help families with the cost of quality early learning (childcare). A family's eligibility is subject to an income test and activity, which is administered by the Family Assistance Office (FAO).

It is the responsibility of the parent to register for Child Care Subsidy. Information and forms can be accessed from the Family Assistance Office (through Centrelink) or families can call direct on 136 150.

With the introduction of the Governments Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS), families will receive a CCS fee reduction only if they have registered with Centrelink, are eligible for CCS, have a formal enrolment at the centre and the centre has received confirmation from the Government pertaining to the percentage of CCS they are eligible for. If parents are not eligible for CCS, full fees must be paid.

## Signing a child into and out of the centre

Each child must be signed in and out of the centre every day they attend. This is a legal requirement that we must follow. These records are used in case of emergencies and for the calculation of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). If a child is away, ill or on holidays the corresponding days must be signed by parents/guardians.

### On Arrival at the centre you are asked to do the following:

1. Sign in at the kiosk at the front of the Centre, with your mobile number and unique pin number
2. Present your child to the Educator in charge

### Before you leave the centre you are asked to do the following:

1. Come into the room and greet your child
2. Collect child's belongings
3. With your child, say goodbye to the Educator in charge of the group
4. Sign out at the kiosk at the front of the Centre, with your mobile number and unique pin number



## Collection of Children

No child will be released into the care of any persons not known to team members. If team members do not know the person by appearance, the person must be able to produce some form of photo identification to prove that they are the person authorised to collect the child on the enrolment form.

In the event that a child has not been collected 15 minutes after closing time then the parents/ guardians will be contacted on the emergency telephone numbers.

If the child has still not been collected 30 minutes after closing time, then staff will follow the Department of Communities Abandoned Child Procedures including contact the Child Protection and Crisis Centre 24 hour service. Additional fees will be charged for a child that remains in the centre after the centre closing time..



## Absences

Parents are requested to phone the centre if their child is unable to attend their session for any reason. Notice is also required in the incidence of infectious or contagious diseases in the family.

Families receiving Child Care Subsidy are allocated 42 absent days including public holidays for each child per financial year. These absences can be taken for any reason and also include Public Holidays. Once the child has reached 42 absent days, CCS is not paid for any further absences, unless the absences are taken for an additional absence reason such as:

- Illness (with a medical certificate) Non-immunisation
- Parent with rostered day off (Statutory Declaration signed by a J.P required) Parent with rotating shift (Statutory Declaration signed by a J.P required) Temporary closure of a school or pupil free days
- Periods of local emergency Court ordered shared custody Attendance at pre-school
- There is no limit on the number of additional absence days a child's family may claim providing they are taken for the above reasons and have documentation/ evidence.

## Accidents and Incidents

Our educators organise both the indoor and outdoor environment to promote safety and allow for maximum supervision, in order to prevent accidents to children and staff.

In the case of an accident involving your child whilst at the centre, staff will immediately administer First Aid. If the injury requires further medical treatment, you will be contacted and a plan of action organized.

If a parent or emergency contact cannot be reached, the Director/person in charge will act on behalf of the parent and proceed with whatever medical treatment is required. An Educator known to the child will accompany the child to the Doctor/ Hospital and stay with them until the parent arrives. Documentation of the accident will be made on an Incident Report Form.

## Health

To minimise the spread of infection in our centres, children suffering from certain infections are excluded from attending early learning (childcare) depending on the infection. The exclusion periods are displayed in the parent information area. If a child in care has a suspected infectious condition the parents will be contacted and asked to collect the child as soon as possible. Parents are encouraged to seek medical advice and contact the centre to inform them of the outcome.

Children with a suspected infectious condition must produce a medical certificate before the child returns to care. The centre will inform all families of any infectious outbreaks and post signs which include symptoms and exclusion time from the centre.

The Authorised Director will not accept a child into care if they are not well enough to participate in normal activities, or require special attention because of ill health.

In the case where a child has a high fever, staff are only able to administer Children's Panadol where the parent's permission has been obtained on the enrolment form. Parents will be informed of this and documentation will be kept on file.



## Immunisation

Immunisation is currently not compulsory; however, it is important that parents and team members encourage immunisation. Parents must supply up to date immunisation records to the centre.

Any child who has not been fully immunised may be excluded from care in the event of a breakout of a vaccine preventable disease for the duration of the outbreak. They may also not be eligible for Child Care Subsidy.

## Medication

If your child requires medication whilst at care, a medication form must be filled in by a parent. The medication must be accompanied by a prescription label or authorisation.





## Nutrition

Children in early learning (childcare) may receive up to 70% of their daily food intake whilst in care. It is therefore essential that parents provide adequate nutrition in proportion to the time spent in care. It is also the centre's responsibility to help children and parents develop healthy food attitudes and habits. Please see your Director regarding any meals that may be supplied by the centre.

## Fire and Emergency Policy

Regular fire drills are held at the Centre and speedy evacuation is ensured in the event of a fire. Fire extinguishers are strategically located throughout the Centre. As part of our fire safety measures all children in attendance at the Centre are noted from the attendance sheet. Each child is identified during a fire drill. This is why it is important to ensure that you sign your child 'IN' and 'OUT' of the Centre each day.

## Clothing

Dress your child in play clothes that wash easily, so that your child may enjoy all the activities. In choosing what your child should wear to the centre, please consider the following:

Your child will be working with messy materials such as paint, glue, water and sand so must be able to stand a little wear and tear.

Clothing must provide some protection and be comfortable for both indoor and outdoor experiences.

They will be climbing, running, jumping and swinging so they will need clothes that neither restrict their activity nor reduce their safety (e.g. Slippery shoes, long skirts)

Will need clothes which allow them for growing independence i.e. pants that can come off easily for toileting. Please name all clothing and footwear.



## Sun Protection

Our centre takes care to protect the children and Educators from direct exposure to the sun. This is extremely important as children are very vulnerable to sunburns, which can increase their chances of acquiring skin cancer by almost 50%. This is one of the most common forms prevalent in Australia and skin damage from sunburn can never be repaired.

Our centre abides by all state regulations and the child care building code in regards to the amount of manufactured and natural shade available in the playgrounds. Shade structures are maintained in the annual playground improvement plan and regular maintenance is conducted as required initiated by the centre director.

We recommend that parents pack clothing for children that will protect them from the sun, such as longer sleeved t-shirts instead of singlets and loose clothing which covers all of their body (i.e. no midriffs or bare backs).

Sunscreen will not be applied to any child without prior written permission from the parent as per the enrolment form guidelines relating to the use of Foreign Substances.

Literature on sun care is available at the centre and for more information on the centre's Sun Protection policy, please ask the Centre Director.

## The National Quality Framework (NQF)

The NQF introduces a new quality standard to improve education and care across long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten, and outside school hours care.

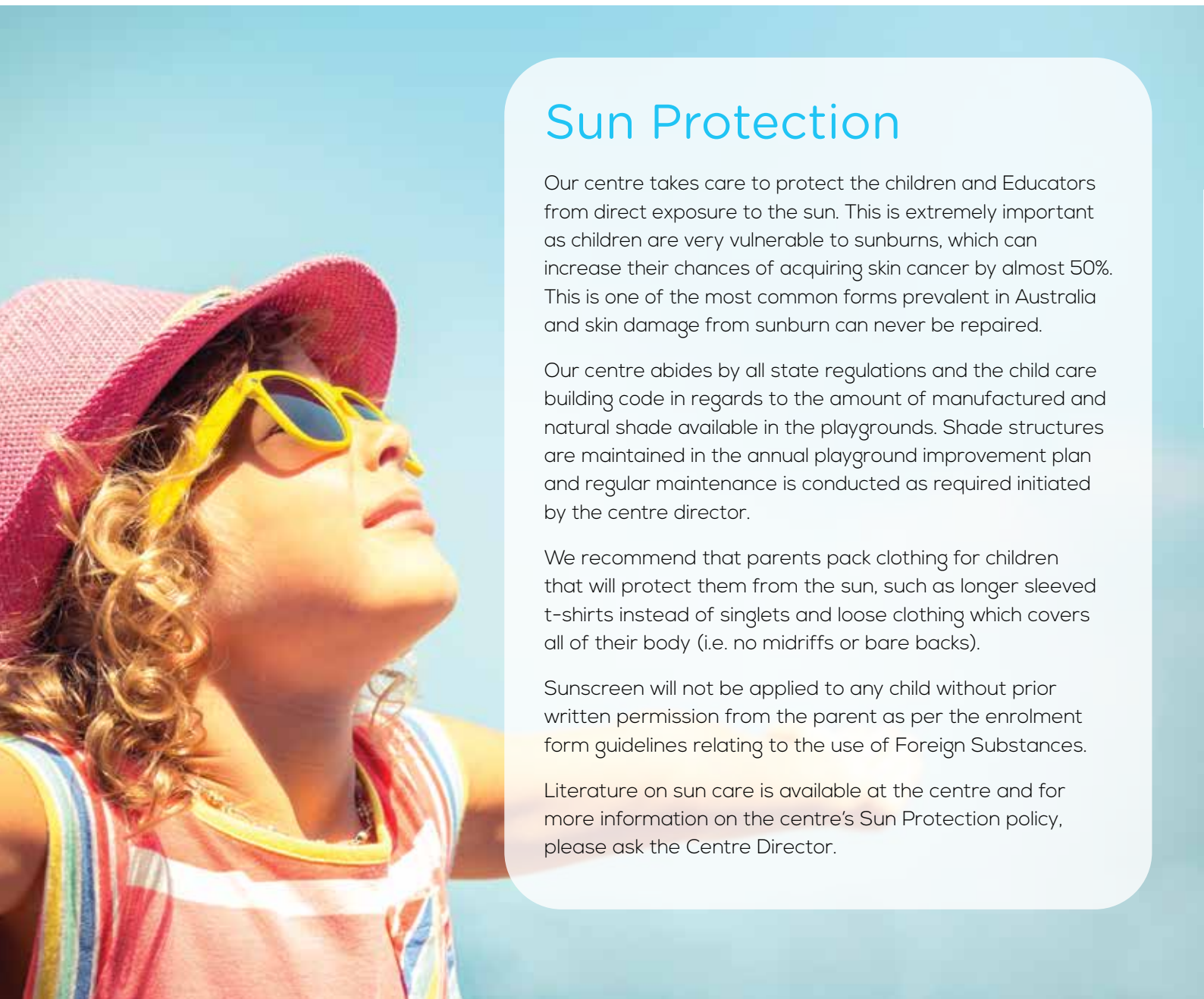
### The National Quality Standard (NQS) promotes continuous quality improvement

Children's education and care services covered under the Education and Care Services National Law are assessed and rated against the NOS. The process reflects a uniform approach to assessment and reporting across the range of service settings. The relevant regulatory authority in each state and territory undertakes the assessment and rating process. It is also the point of contact for any questions services may have about the assessment and rating process.

### The National Quality Standard Ratings

Ratings promote transparency and accountability and help parents assess the quality of education and care services available. Every service receives a rating for each quality area and an overall rating. These ratings must be displayed by each service and are published on the ACECOA and the MyChild websites.

**See more at:** <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/assessments-and-ratings#sthash.Leg1sJfo.dpuf>





## Priority of access

One of the main reasons the Australian Government funds early learning (childcare) is to meet the care needs of Australian families. However, the demand for early learning (childcare) sometimes exceeds supply in some areas. When this occurs, it is important for services to allocate places to those families with the greatest need for support.

To ensure that the centre adheres to the guidelines issued by the Australian Government, priority of access to childcare will be given according to children falling in the following categories:

**Priority 1:** A child at risk of abuse or neglect

**Priority 2:** A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under section 14 of the New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999

**Priority 3:** Any other child

In relation to priority 3, there are some circumstances in which a child who is already in a child care service may be requested to give up their place or change days at the service in order for the service to provide a place for a higher priority child, but only if:

The parent is notified of this policy upon enrolments AND The service gives that parents 14 days notice of the requirement for their child to give up their place or change days.

Within the main categories, priority is also given to children in:

- Families with low incomes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Parents or children with disabilities
- Families from non-English speaking background
- Single parent families
- Socially isolated families

For more information on our centre policies please speak with your Centre Director.



## Useful Tips

Separation anxiety is normal in the early weeks, so don't worry if your child seems upset at first. While there's no magic formula to make separation anxiety miraculously disappear, there are a few tips that can certainly help.

- Bring your child to visit us at Hatchlings Early Learning for orientation and meet our educators before their first day.
- Talk to your child about what will happen at the centre and reassure them that you'll be coming back.
- Work together with your child's teacher and educators - they have plenty of good ideas and reassuring advice.
- Try to keep goodbyes short. It's important to be strong, leave when you need to go and don't linger at drop-off time.
- Be calm, respond to your child's distress and comfort them, but remain firm about leaving.
- Spend extra time with them to reconnect when you come back and ask them about their day. Ask your educator for some useful questions that can help, encourage your child to open up about their days experience.
- We encourage you to bring in photos of your family that we can display around our centre, so when your child is engaged in learning they know you are always there.
- You are welcome to bring in cultural pieces that represent your family, we love having a piece of your home at ours - this brings everyone together and ensures your child feels they belong in our service.



## Early Years Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework is a National Early Learning Framework for children from birth to five years. As the early years are a vital time for children to learn and develop, the framework has been developed to ensure your child receives a quality educational program. Educators will use the framework in partnership with families to develop learning programs responsive to children's ideas, interests, strengths, and abilities and recognise that children learn through their play.

The Early Years Learning Framework describes childhood as a time of belonging, being and becoming:

- Belonging is the basis for living a fulfilling life. Children feel they belong because of the relationship they have with their family, community, culture, and place.
- Being is about living here and now. Childhood is a special time in life and children need time to just 'be' - time to play, try new things and have fun.
- Becoming is about the learning and development that young children experience.

Children start to form their sense of identity from an early age, which shapes the type of adult they will become.

Through the Framework's five learning goals educators will assist your Child to develop:

- A strong sense of their identity
- Connections with their world
- A strong sense of wellbeing
- Confidence and involvement in their learning;
- and Effective communication skills

Hatchlings Early Learning also offers an extensive School Readiness program based on the Framework. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development. We aim to guide your child in becoming an effective learner through creating an environment that is challenging and stimulating. The overall aim of our programs is to help your child in developing all areas necessary for success now and in later years. We work very closely with all local schools to ensure that every Hatchling is prepared and has the knowledge they need to continue on.





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