



Melrose Rural Care

From our philosophy: **"We aim to provide high quality care and education through a partnership between parents, children, community, staff and the Department of Education and Children's Services."**

With the belief that:

- ❖ "Children develop individually through stages, in their own learning style varying through cultural and family values and perception of these may vary.
- ❖ Healthy self esteem is the basis of positive physical, intellectual and social growth.
- ❖ We believe children need to express themselves in a safe environment.
- ❖ Children learn most effectively through hands on experience, through play.
- ❖ We value involvement of families and community and we encourage open communication.
- ❖ Our planning and evaluation is inclusive to children with additional needs.
- ❖ Our aims of planning and daily activities reflect our philosophy and are made available to families.

ACCESS TO THE CENTRE & CUSTODY ISSUES

CONSIDERATIONS:

Philosophy

- equal access
- meet community needs.

Legislation

*Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA); Legal access - Family & Children's Services/Police/Union Officials; Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA); Child Care Act 1972 (Cth); Guidelines for Discrimination of Eligible Child Care Centres (Childcare Benefit) (Cth); Priority of Access Guidelines (Cth).
DECS AIG sect 3 paragraph 84 – Custody and Access
(See support Document)*

Children need

- safe, harmonious environment;
- equal access to the program.

Parents need

- access to their children
- access to staff re children's participation;
- custodial rights to be protected
- access to child's records
- confidentiality.

Staff need

- safe, harmonious work environment
- controlled interruptions to ensure children's program is not negatively influenced
- access to union representative
- equal employment opportunity.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The centre will provide equal access to all families and children who request care, subject to the Commonwealth priority of access guidelines, and will ensure the safety and care of children in the Service. It will protect the custodial rights of parents and/or guardians. Other members of the community, professionals and students will be provided access to the centre where it enhances the quality of the program, protects the welfare and rights of children and staff and provides training and experience to students and workers within the children's services field.

HOW POLICY WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

- *Equal Opportunity principles will be observed in relation to access to the centre for children, parents and staff. (See Equal Opportunity Policy, Staff Selection Policy)*

Enrolments

- *Enrolments will be accepted according to the Commonwealth Government 'Priority of Access' Guidelines. Each enrolling family must complete an enrolment form. Where enrolling parents are not fluent in English the enrolment interview will, wherever possible, be conducted in their primary language. On enrolment, parents will be given a "Parent Handbook", advised about access to Centre Policies and asked to complete the enrolment form and fees agreement.*
- *Priority will always be given to permanent bookings (where families qualify under the same category). You may book one off sessions in advance, however if a permanent booking comes in you will be given 2 weeks notice if that session becomes unavailable.*
- *Full day bookings take priority over half day bookings. If someone has a half day booking they will be given the option to make their booking a full day or will be given two weeks notice. 2007, we are trialling half day bookings being allowed for the ½ day kindy, as this has an influence on bookings.*
- *All permanent bookings will be taken in sessions, however if you would like to make a booking of less time (minimum of 2 hours) you may do this the day before or the day you need care, if there is a position vacant.*
- *Two weeks notice and a signature is needed to cancel permanent bookings.*
- *A bond will need to be paid to cover 2 weeks of care. This bond will be taken off of your last two weeks of the permanent booking.*
- *Any spare sessions will be first in - following the priority list (i.e. 1) Children at risk, 2) Working or studying parents, 3) Other).*
- *In the event that the centre is fully booked and a child is assessed with high priority and needs care, they will be placed first on the waiting list if all current bookings are Priority 2 or higher.*
- *Block bookings. You may make a block booking for a maximum of ten weeks with the understanding that your booking is safe during that time. If anyone requires a permanent booking for this time slot, they will begin as soon as the block has ended. As the block booking is not permanent, the permanent position will take precedent, notice is not required for the block booking.*
- *Block bookings can only be secured two weeks in advance.*
- *If a place is not immediately available at the centre the family may be put onto a waiting list. When a place becomes available the Director will contact the family and enrolment may proceed.*
- *Enrolment forms will be updated annually or when a family's circumstances change, to ensure information is current and correct. Enrolment information will be kept in a confidential file. Access to this information is available only to the Caregiver, Director, Parent and Commonwealth Departmental Officers.*
- *Exclusion of children from the service will only occur after all other avenues of communication and support have been exhausted and when professional advice confirms a child is in psychological danger as a result of an unusually prolonged inability to settle into care away from the parent/guardian, or a child puts one or more children at risk through inappropriate/dangerous behaviour. (See also policy on Behaviour Management)*
- *See Health and Hygiene Policy for exclusion due to infectious diseases.*

Authorisation for Collecting Children

- *The names and contact numbers of all persons authorised to collect children from the Service must be included on the enrolment form. Any changes to these authorities must be advised in writing to the centre by the custodial parent as soon as possible.*
- *If the custodial parent arranges for an authorised person to collect their child from the Service, they must contact the Service to advise of this arrangement and confirm who will collect the child.*
- *If the centre has not been notified and someone other than the custodial parent arrives to collect the child, the Senior Staff Member will contact the custodial parent to obtain his or her authorisation. Wherever possible, prior notification in writing should be provided by the parent. The child will not be released until the custodial parent's authorisation has been obtained. If the authorised person is not known to the centre, the custodial parent will be asked to provide a description of the person concerned, who will also be required to provide proof of their identity.*

Before School Care

- *On arrival, a parent must sign in all children.*
- *At 8.40am, children will be signed out by the staff member and handed over to the teacher on yard duty.*
- *When children first begin school, a staff member will sign them out and watch them walk to their classroom.*

After School Care

- *The staff member will sign in all children.*

- All children will be collected and signed out by a parent or approved person.
- Children may not go home unaccompanied.
- If a child booked in for the program has not arrived 10 minutes after school has finished, the staff person will contact the nominated person to find out why (school services officer, management committee member etc.) The nominated person will hold copies of children's enrolment forms with parent and emergency contact details. These details will be updated when parents notify changes.
- The nominated person will investigate the reasons for the child's non-attendance by:
 - Contacting the school front office
 - Contacting the child's parents or emergency contacts.
- When the child has been located, the nominated person will tell the care staff member. If the child arrives at the service, the staff member will tell the nominated person immediately.
- If the child cannot be found, the nominated person will ensure that the child's parents and the police are informed and advise the care staff member.

Late Collection

- Parents / Guardians who are unavoidably detained and are unable to collect their child at the negotiated collection time must telephone the Service to advise of their lateness and expected time of arrival. If a parent/guardian is unable to collect their child prior to closing time they should arrange for another responsible adult to collect the child and advise the Service of this arrangement if other than on the enrolment form. This advice should be in writing if at all possible.
- If the parent / guardian has not contacted the Service and the child has not been collected within 10 minutes after the negotiated collection time, the Service will attempt to telephone the parent / guardian. If this is not possible the emergency contact people listed on the child's enrolment form will be contacted to arrange for the child's immediate collection.
- If no-one can be contacted and the child has not been collected 30 minutes after the Service's normal closing time, the Crisis Response and Child Abuse Service (CRACAS) will be contacted and asked to take responsibility for the child. A notice to this effect will be posted on the venue entrance with the relevant telephone contact numbers. **(Local sites will need to negotiate a crisis response with staff of the local FAYS office).**
- A late fee will apply if the child is not collected at negotiated time.

Family Contact

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians in a positive and supportive manner that encourages the parent/child relationship. Information with regard to family issues and personal lives will be handled confidentially. Every effort will be made to treat both parents / guardians equally. Without legal documentation, staff must respect that both parents have equal access rights to their child.
- Parents / guardians will have access, at any reasonable time, to qualified staff or the Manager to enable them to discuss any concerns regarding their child. This should be by telephone or by appointment.
- Parents/guardians may visit the centre at any reasonable time whilst their child is in care. However they are requested to give due consideration to the time of day in relation to the children's program ie. rest time would be inconvenient and could disturb other children.
- Parents/guardians may bring other relatives or friends to visit at convenient times that have been organised through the Director.
- Where a child attending the centre is not living with both parents/guardians, or where disputes arise in relation to responsibility of the child the following will apply:
 - Parental responsibility remains with both parents/guardians jointly and individually except where it is altered by a Parenting Order. In the absence of a Parenting Order the child will be released to either parent / guardian.
 - A Parenting Order may determine where the child will reside (Residence Order) which parent / guardian will have contact with the child and how this contact will happen (Contact Order), which parent/guardian has maintenance liabilities for the child (Maintenance Order) and where there are specific aspects of parental responsibility given to one parent/guardian (Specific Issues Order).
 - Where a non-enrolling parent cites a Parenting Order giving him/herself lawful access to the child, the Parenting Order must be produced for inspection by the Manager.
 - The enrolling parent will be telephoned both to check the existence of the Parenting Order and to be informed about the situation.
- If a parent/guardian who has parental responsibility for the child, arrives at the Service in a visibly intoxicated or unfit state to drive, to collect their child, the parent / guardian will be encouraged to contact an alternative adult

to drive them and their child home. Alternatively the Service will offer to call a taxi. If the parent / guardian insists on taking their child, the police may be informed.

Where human life is at risk any part of the above may not be able to be complied with. In such circumstances the police will be immediately informed.

Visitors

- Visitors may be invited into the Centre as part of the children’s program ie. Members of the Fire Brigade, Police, medical or nursing profession.
- Community people with a skill, talent or experience from which the children will gain experience or enjoyment.
- All community visitors to the Service should make an appointment with the Director or Senior Staff member.
- Any unwelcome visitor will be calmly asked to leave the Centre. Refusal to leave will necessitate the Director or Senior Staff calling the local police for the removal of the unwelcome visitor. Staff will not at any time try to physically remove an unwelcome visitor.

Students and Volunteers

- The Centre may offer student placements to:
- high school students who wish to gain work experience as part of their school program
- students attending early childhood or child care training at college or university
- All student placements will be negotiated through the Director.
- Students will be provided with clear guidelines in relation to their responsibilities and code of conduct whilst at the Service.
- Volunteers may be included in the Service’s program if considered appropriate by management. Potential volunteers will be interviewed by the Director to discuss what positive contribution they could make.
- Volunteers must be prepared to undergo a police and / or health check.
- All volunteers will be given clear guidelines in relation to their responsibilities and code of conduct whilst at the Centre. (See Centre Volunteer Guidelines)
- Volunteers and students are supplementary to staff requirements and will not be used to replace absent staff unless they are on the Centre’s payroll.

Professional Access

- Professional access to the Centre will be at the discretion of the Director or committee. If involving the children, the parents’ written consent will be required.
- Some professionals or officials may have the right to access the centre without prior consent. These include:
- Union representatives - have the right to access workplaces for the purposes of investigating whether industrial awards or agreements are being complied with. Such rights are usually found in the Award or industrial agreement that applies to that workplace.
- Family and Youth Services Officers – to investigate allegations of child abuse or risk under the Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA) Section 19.
- Police Officers (with warrant).
- OHS Inspectors - have the right of entry under Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986 (SA) Section 38.
- Officers of Licensing and Standards Unit (DECS) - have the right of entry under the Children’s Services Act 1985 (SA) Section 29.
- FaCS Officers - have the right of entry to inspect Centre records for accountability requirements under the Child Care Act 1972 (Cth).
- Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS) Officers

Signed :.....

Director

Date08

Review/09

Source- DECS Rural Care Handbook