



Dear Parents & Families

Following the announcement by the government on Monday 8th June regarding the ECEC relief package and return of the Child Care Subsidy System, we can now provide clear details about what is going to happen over the next few months, and how we will be managing the transition back to normal operations for our services.

Since the last update sent at the end of April, we have seen a steady increase in children returning to our services. This transition has been very smooth, and the communication from all of our parents and families has really helped out this process, and we would like to thank you all for this. As numbers of children attending grew, we made the decision to increase staffing earlier than we had originally planned for June, and we put this in place from 25th May. This helped out many parents and families who were returning to work as the coronavirus situation started to improve, with restrictions easing and businesses starting to return to normal operations.

With our state government announcing stage 2 & 3 of easing restrictions through the month of May, along with the federal government announcing confirmed dates for the ECEC relief package to cease, we are now expecting to be back at full operations through the month of July, and we are really looking forward to seeing everyone back at MSS and Waabiny, as well as lots of new members of our community, for the remainder of 2020 and beyond.

Outlined below are all the important details, and actions required, for the next couple of months as we make our way out of the COVID-19 crisis.

REMINDER ABOUT OUR COVID-19 HEALTH & SAFETY MEASURES STILL IN PLACE

- Social distancing – applies to all parents, employees and contractors at the service. Keeping a 1.5m distance (where possible), and physical contact is prohibited (eg. Handshakes). Children are being educated on these measures (eg. Sitting further apart at mat time, wider spacing between beds at sleep time and children at opposite ends of each other, encouraging not to touch each other), and we have implemented extended outdoor times in the daily routines.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and Safe Work Australia have both updated their guidelines for mandatory physical distancing requirements in workplaces for the Early Childhood Education sector, acknowledging that these requirements for workplaces are neither appropriate or practical in this setting. The physical distancing requirements of 4 square metres per person, and maintaining a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres from others, will only apply in Early Learning centres between adults, and where possible and realistic.

- Specific isolation areas in each room are continuing to be used for anyone presenting with symptoms of illness.
- Revised guidelines for exclusion from the service for children presenting with any symptoms like runny nose, cough, temperature, rash etc.. In any of these cases, the child will be isolated, and the parents called to collect and get a medical clearance before returning to the service.
- Increased cleaning and disinfecting of regular contact points such as door handles and frames.

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- Where possible reducing multiple contact points around the centre. The main one is encouraging parents to use the Xplor Home app on your phone to sign children in/out instead of using the HUB iPads in reception.
- Centre tours and new enrolments have been ceased temporarily and will be reinstated from Monday 15th June.
- We are now encouraging, where possible, for families to nominate only one parent/guardian to be responsible for arrival/collection of their children from the service at all times. This is to reduce the number of persons entering the service.
- All deliveries to the service will continue to be collected outside the front door, which will again limit the number of persons entering the service.
- All external contractor work has been temporarily cancelled, unless deemed essential. We will be able to reinstate contractor work from Monday 29th June, provided that contractors meet health requirements as provided in our medical policies.

ECEC RELIEF PACKAGE END DATE AND RETURN TO CCSS

Below is a timeline of events, along with action items required by parents and families, detailing the transition from the ECEC relief package back to the Child Care Subsidy System (CCSS).

MONDAY 15TH JUNE – TEMPORARY CHANGE TO CANCELLATION POLICY

As detailed in the previous update (29/4), we will be implementing a temporary update to our bookings policy from Monday 15th June. This period was originally ending on Friday 31st July, but due to the extension of the ECEC relief package, this will now end on Friday 14th August.

Any cancellations to bookings during the period Monday 15th June – Friday 14th August will be governed by the update to the bookings policy. The temporary update to our bookings policy is:

There will be a 2 week notice period for all bookings cancellations. This includes reducing/removing booked days permanently, as well as full cancellation of an enrolment. Fees will be payable for the full notice period, whether the child is attending or not. (Please note that parents will not be liable for payment of fees during the ECEC relief package period)

This is to ensure that we can manage our staffing and bookings correctly through the transition period.

ACTION REQUIRED

- **Check your current bookings via either the Xplor Home app, or by contacting us directly. If your bookings need changing/updating, please contact us via email as soon as possible.**

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MONDAY 29TH JUNE – RETURN TO NORMAL BOOKINGS

Under the current ECEC relief package, you are able to keep your child at home and retain your bookings at our services. If your child was not attending during this time, your bookings were marked as absent, but your bookings remained in Xplor, secured for when you decided to return your child to care. The end date for this is Monday 29th June, when all of your bookings in the system will return to standard attendance bookings.

We will be returning to full staffing from this date, and will ensure that we can offer all available places to full capacity to our parents and families.

Please note that for the period between Monday 29th June and the end of ECEC relief package, you will not be required to pay fees for any bookings.

ACTION REQUIRED

- **If your children will still not be attending due to COVID-19 reasons after Monday 29th June, please advise us by email**
- **If your children will not be returning and you wish to cancel their enrolments, please advise is by email as soon as possible**

MONDAY 13TH JULY – ECEC RELIEF PACKAGE FINISHES, CCSS RESTARTS

Currently under the ECEC relief package, childcare is free for all parents & families and services have been receiving fixed income payments from the government to subsidise this. Since Monday 6th April, you have not been required to pay fees for any of your bookings.

On Monday 6th June the government announced that as of midnight Sunday 12th July, the ECEC relief package and free childcare will come to an end. This means that from Monday 13th July, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will be applied to your account and services will be required to start charging the gap fees to parents, as per the obligations under the Family Assistance Law.

CCS will start again automatically on Monday 13th July. It is your responsibility to ensure that your CCS eligibility is current, and that your details are correct. If your CCS eligibility is not current as of Monday 13th July, you will be required to pay full fees until this is corrected.

As per our bookings policy, fees will be payable for all booked sessions whether attending or not. This will apply from Monday 13th July to all bookings that you have in Xplor.

Changes to allowable absences

From Monday 13th July 2020, families can receive CCS for absences up to seven days before a child’s first, and after a child’s last physical attendance at a service, where they have been booked in for care, for any of the following reasons:

- Any of the additional absence reasons as outlined in the Child Care Provider Handbook
- The child, the individual who cares for the child, the individual’s partner or another person with whom the child lives is ill (no medical certificate required of the child has not used 42 absence days)

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**MONTESSORI STEPPING STONES & WAABINY OSHC
PARENT & FAMILY NOTICE RE: COVID-19 & ECEC RELIEF PACKAGE**



- The service has changed ownership
- The usual service is closed and the child is attending a different service under the same provider
- A family tragedy (a major event including the death of an immediate family member) has occurred, or
- The enrolment ceased incorrectly

ACTION REQUIRED

- **Check that all of your details are up-to-date and correct with Centrelink, via your myGov login or Express Plus Centrelink app. This includes checking your subsidy information, as well as your family income estimate for 2020-21.**
- **If you received CCS in the 2018-19 financial year, ensure that you have confirmed your family income for this period by June 30th, 2020. If you do not do this, your CCS will not start again automatically.**

FRIDAY 17TH JULY – FIRST DEBIT OF FEES

This will be the date of the first debit of fees from your account. As per previously, the debit will occur at 12:00pm every Friday (or alternate Friday for fortnightly debits), for the outstanding amount shown on your account. You are able to access your account via either the Xplor Home app, or web login.

ACTION REQUIRED

- **Ensure that you update your direct debit details through your Xplor web login. Please do this even if you have had your details lodged previous to the ECEC relief package, as this will ensure that your billing details are correct and current.**

MONDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER – FEE INCREASE

As part of our annual review, we would usually be looking at applying any fee increases for Montessori Stepping Stones from around the start of the new financial year. Due to the current situation, we recognise that many parents and families are experiencing some form of financial hardship through this period, we will not be implementing any fee increases until September 28th this year. We will absorb costs through the first quarter of 20/21, to ensure that all our parents and families have access to the care that they need. As always, we will try to keep this fee increase as low as possible, and will advise of the new daily fee at the start of September.

Please ensure that you action any of the above items in red if they apply to your situation. If you are unsure about any of the action items, please contact us directly and we can advise.

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IMPORTANT LINKS

AHPPC statement on Early Childhood and Learning centres

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-statement-on-early-childhood-and-learning-centres>

Safe Work Australia – physical distancing in Early Childhood Education

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/early-childhood-education/physical-distancing?tab=tab-toc-employer>

Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package FAQ's

<https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare/childcare-faq#section-information-for-families>

Child Care Subsidy

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>

Xplor Parent support page

<https://support.ourxplor.com/hc/en-us/categories/203542608-Home>

The cooperation and communication from all of our parents and families throughout the COVID-19 crisis has been exceptional. We would again like to extend our sincere thank you to you all for this.

As always, please reach out to us if you have any questions/concerns or would like to discuss any of the information in this notice.

Sincerely

Jason & Erin Place

Montessori Stepping Stones & Waabiny OSHC

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