



The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc.

Section 1 Operational Policies

(developed and endorsed September 2010 - amended August 2012, July 2018)

Preamble

Rainbow operational policies have been developed to show the intention of the Association to operate as an open community based organisation. However it should be recognised that due to the position of the Association receiving Government funds that support many of our services and operations we have little option in many cases as to the policies we follow. We are required to operate within and adhere to various laws regulations and accountabilities. Our use of our premises is regulated by our Development Approval from Ballina Shire Council. Our early childhood education & care services are regulated by the NSW State Government and the Commonwealth Government. Our kitchens are inspected and approved by Ballina Shire Council. Our early childhood intervention service operates under accountabilities set out by the NSW State Government and the Commonwealth Government.

We appreciate that our external mandates set out clearly that we must operate within the framework of those expectations. We can and do then make some choices about some aspects of how we operate within that mandatory framework. As a result any policy set out in the section is by its nature to be taken as policy in addition to those government regulations. The clauses of these policies provide specific detail that supplement the external mandates that deal with many aspects of our operations. In no way are they to be taken in any way to override, set aside or act contrary to those external mandates.

These policies make it plain that Rainbow intends to operate within all external requirements and Regulations. As such it is not necessary for our policies to set out in detail the various aspects of operation that are covered already by Regulation. The detailed requirements of Regulations can be taken to apply to the operation of the service.

Under our Mission, Rainbow recognises that the operation of the service is required to find an appropriate balance between three factors. They are

1. The quality of the services provided
2. The suitability of the services in meeting the needs of families in the community
3. The affordability of our services for families

Each of those factors can be at cross purposes. The desire for the highest quality care for one family may be at odds with flexibility required by another family. The cost of additional resources to increase educational quality to satisfy some families may render the service unaffordable for other families. The centre strives to find an optimal balance.

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1) Approvals of the services

a) Explanation Rainbow recognises that the operation of its services must be within the guidelines of the provider, service and funding approvals. Hence the centre must have processes that ensure appropriate approvals are in place for all services. Management must ensure centre staff understand the approvals and that the services operate within those approvals.

b) Implementation

- i) Rainbow management shall seek and maintain its provider approval and the approval shall be displayed at its main office.
- ii) Rainbow management shall seek and maintain service approvals as necessary for services it provides and the approvals shall be displayed as appropriate to be accessible to families.
- iii) Rainbow shall appoint and engage suitable persons as nominated supervisors for all its services and ensure those persons have all necessary qualifications and approvals for those positions.
- iv) The nominated supervisor of each early childhood education and care service shall ensure service notices are displayed as required.
- v) The nominated supervisor of each early childhood education and care service shall ensure required records of supervisors are kept as required.
- vi) The nominated supervisor shall ensure that at any time they are not present while a child is in care, another staff person who is a certified supervisor, shall be placed in charge during that period.
- vii) The centre Director shall maintain a record of all funding agreements and ensure all centre services operate within the requirements of the agreements.
- viii) Rainbow shall ensure a responsible person is physically present at each service at all time the service is operating.
- ix) Rainbow shall ensure that all eligible staff have supervisor certificate and child protection training and have consented to be placed in day to day charge as a responsible person.

2) Service access

a) Explanation At most times the demand for centre services will exceed the early childhood education and care places available in the centre. It is the intention of the centre that a fair and equitable process is implemented to determine which children and families are able to enrol at the centre. As well, under both Commonwealth and State Government requirements, the centre must follow priority of access guidelines.

b) Implementation

- i) When families approach the centre to enrol a child, the family will be made welcome and sufficient information collected from the family for the centre to implement an ordered enrolment process within the relevant government guidelines.
- ii) Although the agreement with the Commonwealth Government for priority of access is no longer in place, the organisation will continue to offer a place in the centre to:
 - (1) Children at risk of harm
 - (2) Working parents, those seeking employment or those studying for work related purposes.
 - (3) All other families

- (4) The organisations intention to support families within the community will also demonstrate priority of access to children in
 - (a) ATSI families
 - (b) families which include a disabled person
 - (c) lower income families
 - (d) those from language backgrounds other than English
 - (e) families who are socially isolated
 - (f) single parents
 - iii) Although the agreement with the NSW State Government is no longer in place, prioritising a place in the centre should be given to:
 - (1) Children at risk of harm
 - (2) Children or parents with a disability
 - (3) Families from ATSI backgrounds
 - (4) Families on low incomes
 - (5) Families living in isolated circumstances
 - (6) Families from diverse cultural backgrounds
 - iv) A waiting list for long day care and after school care will be developed and updated regularly which enables the centre to take into account the above priority factors in offering a place to any child.
 - v) In general any decision made by the Department of Human Services in relation to the status of a family will be accepted by the centre. However families who may fail the Activity Test applied by the FAO may still access child care through the Child Care Safety Net. On provision of suitable eligibility for Additional Child Care Subsidy, those parents shall be regarded as qualifying for child care in applying any priority of access.
 - vi) Community Services NSW guidelines define families at risk.¹ Families referred by appropriate external agencies (Community Services NSW, Brighter Futures, The Family Centre, Brighter Futures etc) will be considered as families of children at risk. As well, for the purpose of the priority of access guidelines the centre shall consider children in the full time care of foster carers, grandparents or other non-parental family members as being “children at risk”. It is considered that risk factors must have been present for the grandparents or other family members to have needed to take over care of the children.
 - vii) In making any offer of a place the centre will take into account the capacity of the service to provide appropriate education and care to a new child and the effect that child’s enrolment may have on the education and care provided to children already in the service.
 - viii) In order to allow early childhood education and care places to be available when needed for working families the Director may restrict the enrolment of children of non-working families to days with less early childhood education and care demand.
 - ix) If there are higher priority children on the waiting list, the continued enrolment of lower priority children already in the centre, may need to be modified in accordance with priority of access guidelines. The Centre will inform all lower
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priority families who are offered a place that such enrolment is not guaranteed to continue if higher priority families require the place. However the centre will adopt a sensitive and reasonable procedure in the event of any lower priority family being asked to change or give up enrolment in the centre, taking into account the rights of the family to fair treatment and the needs of the child to consistent education and care.

- x) Enrolment for vacation care will be for one school holiday period only, and new enrolment will need to be made each subsequent holiday period. Under the Child Care Subsidy System, a Complying Written Arrangement will need to be renewed between the service and parents in the case of those families who use vacation care only.

3) Enrolment

a) Explanation These policies are designed to ensure Rainbow enrolment procedures:

- i) provide the centre with all the information it requires about a family
- ii) provide families with all the information they require about Rainbow.
- iii) make new families feel welcome at Rainbow.
- iv) comply with all Laws, Regulations and other requirements set out by government about the records we hold about families using Rainbow.
- v) develop a positive relationship between families and the centre
- vi) allow the child and parent the chance to have a positive initial experience of being at the centre

b) Implementation

- i) Enrolment form
 - (1) The centre will develop an enrolment form that seeks all the relevant information required by the centre to provide optimum education and care for each child. The enrolment form will also seek all the information the centre is required to maintain about families to comply with all relevant Laws and Regulations, especially related to Commonwealth Government's Child Care Management System (CCMS) and to the Early Childhood Services National Regulation 2018.
 - (2) The enrolment form should be completed for each family before the child can attend the centre. Under the Regulation, the centre must hold certain information about a child before that child can attend. At the discretion of the Director, the centre may accept a child into care as long as the basic required information is provided and allow the family to complete the enrolment form later. Parents will be advised on completing the form to ensure that when changes to details occur, they have a responsibility to inform the centre.
 - (3) The enrolment form requires the parents to include the names and contact details of any person authorised to collect the child from the centre and an emergency contact in the event the parent/s cannot be contacted. Parents are asked to ensure at all times that the names and contact details of authorised persons and emergency contacts are kept up to date.
 - (4) If a child is the subject to a legal order or agreement, the service will seek to be provided with a copy plus any subsequent alteration to the order or agreement registered by a court.
 - (5) If the child has any ongoing illness or medical condition, on enrolment the centre Director and parent shall discuss, agree on and complete an emergency medical action plan to be followed in the event of the condition occurring at the centre.

- (6) At the beginning of each subsequent year, and at any other time deemed necessary by the centre, the Director will ask families to complete some aspects of the enrolment form again. This process will ensure that important details remain relevant and up to date.
 - (7) All enrolment forms are to be kept in the centre in a manner that ensures the information remains confidential and that only those authorised to access the information can do so.
- ii) On enrolment
- (1) Families will receive a comprehensive Handbook setting out information which the parent needs to know about the centre. Further copies of the handbook will be available at all times in the centre and the Handbook shall be updated each year to ensure it remains relevant and reflects current practices.
 - (2) Families will have the opportunity to meet the Director and seek any further information they may require about the centre, its program or procedures and policies.
 - (3) Families will have the opportunity to be oriented to the centre, its layout services and facilities and the operational details of the centre.
 - (4) At least one relevant family member will have the opportunity to meet with a staff member to discuss the enrolment, the particular needs of the family and the settling process.
 - (5) The family will confirm the days and times of normal attendance and the centre will confirm the fee to be paid by the parent for that care.
- iii) Initial attendance
- (1) The initial transition into the centre will be individualised to meet families and children's needs. The centre acknowledges that parents are taking a major step in trusting the centre with their child, and the centre will act in a professional and supportive way by acknowledging the importance of that decision.
 - (2) In settling a child to the centre, it is considered that it is essential that parents feel confident of the education and care their child will receive. However, it is also important to note that each parent, each child and each family are different and the settling process for each child will be different and will be driven by the decisions of the family about what is appropriate for themselves. New families are asked to discuss settling their child with the staff to determine the process that best suits them.
 - (3) In establishing trust, children need to know that parents are leaving and the reassurance of when parents are returning. Staff will ask parents to always farewell children and to take their child to a staff member prior to leaving, especially during the settling period. Parents will be invited to phone the centre throughout the day, as often as they like to share their child's day. Staff will communicate regularly with parents in regard to their child's day at the centre. The centre will provide detailed information about the child's day on the first few occasions and if possible photos of the child's activities during the day.
 - (4) Staff will seek out parents in the initial transition period on a regular basis to ensure that the centre is meeting the expectations of the family, and give the family an opportunity to ask further questions about any aspects of the centre's operations.

4) Operational Parameters

a) Explanation Rainbow recognises that the services available at any time will have been organised to meet the best interests of families and children at a time in the past, and that the parameters of each service need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant to possible changes in community requirements.

b) Implementation

- i) Within the limits established by the service approvals, the Committee shall determine the hours and days and numbers of children to be enrolled. The centre shall monitor family and community needs to assess what numbers, days and hours allow families to reasonably access the centre and its services.
- ii) The centre will liaise with the community and existing families to determine the needs of parents. Where such needs fall outside existing approvals, the centre shall make arrangements as necessary with the relevant Local, State and Commonwealth authorities to vary the license and services offered by the centre.
- iii) Decisions about hours and aspects of the operation of the centre will be taken by the Committee in recognition of those needs but also taking into account the available resources and the times during which it is possible to provide high quality early childhood education and care.
- iv) The centre will consider a balance between making the services available for as long a period as possible to meet family needs and the extra costs involved in opening for longer periods.
- v) The Committee shall also consider the quality of services able to be offered and may choose to operate at less than full capacity under the approval if that is considered to be in the overall best interests of families and the community.
- vi) The hours and day of operation will be provided to those who request it, posted in the centre and on the website and provided to parents enrolled at the centre. The centre will operate for a minimum of 48 weeks per year and will normally be closed on designated public holidays and weekends.
- vii) The centre will normally close for a period during the end of year Xmas – New Year period, and be open for the rest of the year. The Committee will determine the times of operation and any days of closure and parents will be notified in advance.

5) Authorisations

a) Explanation

- i) The centre is troubled by the requirement under the Early Childhood Services National Regulation 2018 that early childhood education and care services establish a policy re “authorisations”. The Regulation clearly sets out in detail the authorisations required under the Regulation, and since the centre is required to and is committed to following the Regulation – nothing else should be necessary. None the less, in a spirit of adhering to the requirements this policy has been developed.
- ii) In accepting the care of a child in the centre, the Provider and the Nominated Supervisor take on an important legal responsibility for a child on behalf of a family for a short period of time. In doing so the centre states in its philosophy that it recognises the family as the primary carer and the centre supports the family in that role. Hence in making many decisions about the care of each child the centre needs to have authorisations from the family so as to be sure about the wishes of the parents as primary carers in particular circumstances.

b) Implementation

- i) On enrolment the nominated supervisor shall establish reasonable grounds to satisfy themselves about the identity of the child and the authority of the parent to enrol the child and establish whether any legal restrictions are in place about legal authority in relation to the child or restriction of access to the child. The nominated supervisor shall ensure all other staff are aware of any such restriction.
- ii) The centre shall seek from the parents authority to undertake education and care of the child which enrolled at the centre. Such authorisation shall include the capacity to manage such medical care and physical care as is appropriate for the child.
- iii) In the event that the centre is asked by the family to provide specific medical care including giving medication or medical procedures, appropriate written authorisation must first be obtained from the parent.
- iv) In the event that the centre proposes take the child from the centre premises for a excursion, appropriate written authorisation must first be obtained from the parent.
- v) The nominated supervisor must establish written permission from a parent prior to any other person being allowed to collect the child from the centre, except in emergency situations.
- vi) The nominated supervisor must establish written authorisation from a parent regarding an alternative emergency contact in the event of any circumstances requiring contact with the family when the parents of the child are not able to be contacted.
- vii) The nominated supervisor will ensure families are aware that the centre will refuse to proceed if authorisation is not in place.
- viii) The nominated supervisor will ensure staff do not proceed in any circumstance where appropriate authorisation is not in place, except: where a child requires emergency medical treatment. The centre shall inform the parents at the earliest available opportunity when such emergency action is taken.

6) Arrival and collection

a) Explanation When a parent drops a child at the centre, the centre takes legal responsibility for that child for the period from when the parent leaves to when they return later in the day. The procedure for arrival and collection of children at the Centre needs to ensure the safety and well being of the children in our care. Parents need to be given information to make it clear what is expected of them and what they can expect of the centre, and what the legal situation is. At the end of the day, we hand responsibility for the child back to the family and we need to provide appropriate information at that time about the child's day.

b) Implementation

- i) Arrival of children
 - (1) Children may not be left at the centre prior to the opening hours of the service. However a parent and child may enter the centre prior to 7.10am once a staff member arrives, as long as the parent remains with the child at least until opening time.
 - (2) On arrival the person bringing the child to the service is responsible to sign the child in on the electronic sign in which will record time of arrival.
 - (3) Other information, (e.g. not a usual person will be collecting the child, or child collected at an unusual time) should be given to a staff member to be recorded in the diary in the office
 - (4) Children or the parent are to place the child's belongings in their locker.
 - (5) Parents are asked to apply sunscreen on their children and check the child's nappy if applicable, on or before arrival.

- (6) The person dropping the child off must ensure that a staff member is aware of the child's presence before leaving the centre.
 - (7) Should a child require medication of any kind, parents must fill in and sign the medication form and ask the staff member to store the medication in a suitable place.
 - (8) Parents bringing children to vacation care may drop the children off at an excursion site if required. Since children frequently go on excursions, and departure times are dictated by the bus timetables, the group must leave on time to catch the bus. Parents arriving at the centre after departure may sign their children into the program at the centre and then take their children to join the excursion using their own transport.
- ii) Collection of children
- (1) Children must be collected and parent and child must leave the centre by the closing time of the centre.
 - (2) The authorised person collecting the child must sign out on the electronic sign out which will indicate the time of departure. If the staff member is unfamiliar with the person collecting the child, they will check the enrolment form to ensure the person is authorised and seek proof of identity from the person if considered necessary.
 - (3) The authorised person and child are to ensure all belongings are collected and taken home from the centre.
 - (4) The authorised person must ensure that a staff member is aware that they are taking the child/ren from the centre.
 - (5) If the child is to be collected from the centre by anyone not authorised on the enrolment form, parents should give written permission and must inform the centre prior to collection. The person collecting the child will be asked to show photo identification. If possible the parent will be asked to fax permission to the centre.
 - (6) The centre will not release the child to anyone who is not authorised on the enrolment form without prior consent from a parent.
 - (7) If there is an emergency, and the parent or an authorised person cannot collect the child, the parent should notify the Centre. The parent will be required to indicate who will collect the child and provide a description of the person to staff and ask the person to provide the centre with photo proof of identity when they arrive. If possible the parent will be asked to fax authorisation to the centre for that person to collect the child.
 - (8) If the child has not been collected from the centre and the parent cannot be contacted, the centre will contact the emergency contact listed on the enrolment form, and negotiate what is to happen.
 - (9) If at closing time or in some other emergency, no contact can be made with any person listed on the enrolment form, then the Centre will contact the Dept of Community Services or the Police.
 - (10) At closing time, those staff on duty must undertake checks of all areas of the building and cross check sign out records to ensure all children have been collected from the centre and no child is being left in the centre after closing.
- iii) Custody issues and collection of children
- (1) In the event of any custody dispute or other family dispute the centre cannot take the side of any parent.
 - (2) In the absence of a copy of any court order or other custody document, staff will treat each parent as having full access and rights to information about the child,

access to the child and the right to collect the child and the child's belongings from the centre.

- (3) If a person wishes to collect a child from the centre, and that person is known to staff as the parent or can prove they are the parent, the centre staff are obliged to allow that person to collect the child.
- (4) If there is any court order or other document known to staff, which legally restricts that parent's access to the child, staff will inform the parent that they should not remove the child from the centre. However staff cannot take any action to physically stop or hinder that person. Staff will however immediately contact the other parent and the police about the matter.

iv) Late collection of children

- (1) If a parent arrives at the centre after closing time or has not left the centre prior to closing time, the staff will remind the parent of the need to leave the centre with their child by closing time at the latest. The staff member will note the late departure in the centre diary and the Director will notify the parent of the policy re late collection. In reasonable circumstances, the Director has the discretion not to record the incident as a late collection.
- (2) Wherever possible, if a parent knows they are held up and will be late, the parent should advise the centre when they will arrive to collect their child.
- (3) If the parent arrives at the centre after closing time or has not left the centre prior to closing time on a second occasion in any calendar year, the staff will remind the parent of the need to leave the centre with their child by closing time at the latest. The staff member will note the late departure in the centre diary and the Director will notify the parent in writing of the policy re late collection. This notification will include a warning that in the event of any subsequent late collection, the parent will be required to show cause in writing to the management committee why the child's enrolment should not be cancelled.
- (4) If the parent arrives at the centre after closing time or has not left the centre prior to closing time on a third occasion in any calendar year, the staff will inform the parent of the need to leave the centre with their child by closing time at the latest. The staff member will note the late departure in the centre diary and the Director will notify the parent in writing that a recommendation will be made to the next meeting of the Management Committee to cancel the child's enrolment. The letter will also invite the parent to either write to the committee or attend the meeting if they wish to show cause why the enrolment should not be cancelled.

7) Early childhood education and care fees

a) Explanation - Rainbow aims to provide a quality service that meets family needs and that is as affordable as possible to families. Fee levels will be set by management each year on completion of an annual budget and according to the centre's required income. As a non-profit organisation the centre needs early childhood education and care fees to be paid promptly so that it can continue to operate for the benefit of the community.

b) Implementation

i) Determination of gross fee levels

- (1) The Committee will annually set a budget for the centre ensuring sufficient resources to operate the services efficiently and effectively.

- (2) That budget shall take into account projected operating costs for the year and will also take into account the need to set aside funds to provide for prudent longer term operating requirements.
- (3) The Committee will then determine a fee level which allows the centre to collect sufficient funds to provide the required resources and services.
- (4) On days where vacation care excursions are to be held from the centre, the base daily vacation care fee for the day may be increased by the addition of extra charges related to that excursion (e.g. movie admission, special activity fee, bus fares etc)
- (5) Parents will be informed of the decision of the Committee and will be given two weeks' notice of any changes in fees.

ii) Determination of net fees payable–

- (1) The net fees payable by each days early childhood education and care shall be the gross fee applicable for that service minus any subsidy received on behalf of the family. Until such subsidy is confirmed the family's fee is the full fee. If such subsidy being received for any reason does not eventuate or is cancelled, the family is responsible to pay any gap fee that eventuates.
- (2) Rainbow is approved to provide Child Care Subsidy (CCS) to eligible families. This benefit can be paid directly to the centre unless otherwise instructed by the parent. On enrolment the parent will confirm in writing whether CCS is to be claimed in relation to the child's attendance.
- (3) The centre will inform new parents that to receive CCS they must register with Centrelink for CCS eligibility. The centre will assist the parent re how to apply for registration at the Family Assistance Office (FAO).
- (4) The centre will register the child and family within the Child Care Management System (CCMS) to activate potential benefits. Parents will be informed that the centre does not calculate any CCS, and that the centre relies on the CCMS to inform it of any family entitlement.
- (5) The centre will assist any family who may be eligible for any other subsidy to access that subsidy.

iii) Fees payable by each family – long day care and before and after school care

- (1) On enrolment in long day care or before or after school the family will confirm in writing the days of regular enrolment for early childhood education and care. The parent becomes liable for payment for the early childhood education and care for those days whether the child attends or not, until notice is given to cancel that regular enrolment.
- (2) The centre will confirm the enrolment in writing to the parent. The centre will provide an estimate of the net fee payable by the parents after CCS if the parent shows the centre documentation confirming the family's CCS % eligibility. The amount of CCS to be paid will depend on the income level of the family and the options chosen by the family. As the maximum benefit payable under CCS is less than the normal early childhood education and care fee payable, the parent must agree to pay the gap fee.
- (3) Where the family does not apply for CCS or is not eligible for CCS, then the fee payable is the gross fee.
- (4) Where parents use extra care, extra fees will be charged. When such extra care is used, the weekly fee account will be adjusted at the end of the week to reflect the extra fees. Payment should be made for that care in the same week, and the parent can check with the centre as to what extra early childhood education and care fee will be payable.

- (5) Fees are to be paid for the days the child is booked at the centre, including times when the child is absent due to illness or holidays. Fees are also charged for public holidays if the child would normally attend the centre. The only exceptions are:
 - (a) No fees are charged for periods of closedown of the centre: i.e. for long day care during the Christmas - New Year period.
 - (b) No fees are charged for after school care during school holiday periods.
- (6) Fees are payable for absence days as the centre must still pay its staff and other operating expenses for those days, and when a child is absent, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is still paid by the government up to the limit for the number of allowable absences for each child each financial year. If a child is absent for more than the “allowable” days then no CCS is payable for further absences. Although the centre is closed for public holidays, fees are still payable for those days if the child would normally attend on that day, as the centre must still pay its staff and other operating expenses for those days. Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is still paid by the government up to the limit for the number of allowable absences for each child each financial year. If a child is absent for more than the “allowable” days then no CCS is payable for further absences and the parent pays full fees for those days.
- (7) Parents withdrawing their children from Rainbow must give two weeks’ notice of cancellation of care. Fees are payable for that two weeks period, even if the child does not attend.

iv) Fees payable by each family for Vacation Care

- (1) Prior to each school holidays families will be given an opportunity to enrol for the coming vacation care period. To enrol the family will confirm in writing the days of enrolment for that vacation care period.**
- (2) When a family has an existing family fee account, the vacation care fees shall be charged to the account in the normal way, although no separate VC bond is payable.**
- (3) When a family does not have an existing family fee account, the centre will calculate the fees payable by the parent for the whole holiday period, and that amount will be payable prior to enrolment being confirmed. If the family has a known CCS history that fee estimate will be based on net fees payable. If the family does not have a known CCS history the family will pay full fees in advance.**
- (4) Once actual CCS entitlement is confirmed by CCMS, any overpayment will be repaid. Any additional amount owed is expected to be paid as soon as possible after each vacation care period. Enrolment for subsequent vacation care periods cannot be made until the family fee account is at least up to date.**
- (5) Any enrolment for Vacation Care is not considered to be completed until any fees owing by the family has been paid.**
- (6) Where parents use extra care, extra fees will be charged and that amount is payable prior to the extra care being used, and the parent can check with the centre as to what extra early childhood education and care fee will be payable.**
- (7) Fees are to be paid for all days the child is booked at the centre, including times when the child is absent due to illness or other reasons.**
- (8) Fees are payable for absence days as the centre must still pay its staff and other operating expenses for those days, and when a child is absent, Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is still paid by the government up to the limit for the**

number of allowable absences for each child each financial year. If a child is absent for more than the “allowable” days then no CCS is payable for further absences and the parent pays full fees for those days.

(9) Parents cancelling the enrolment of their children from vacation care must give two weeks’ notice of cancellation of care. Fees are payable for that two weeks period, even if the child does not attend.

v) Fee accounts

- (1) The centre shall establish a family fee account for any family enrolling for its services. All fees for services booked by the family shall be debited to the family fee account, all subsidies received on behalf of the family shall be credited to the account, and the account balance is to be paid up to date at all times.
- (2) On enrolment for long day care and before and after school care, a bond of three weeks fees in advance must be paid. The bond shall be calculated on the basis of the child’s normal enrolment and on the net fee payable by the parent after CCS. This amount will be held separately from normal fee payments. When notice of cancellation of enrolment is given, the bond shall be transferred as a credit to the family fee account. If the fee account is up to date, then the bond becomes refundable.
- (3) Each week, the centre will also download data about enrolment and attendance to the CCMS and upload entitlements re CCS entitlements to ensure family fee account balances are up to date.
- (4) Where families have an entitlement to third party fee payments, the centre shall request confirmation in writing from the funding body on enrolment. Once confirmation of the third party fee payment has been received, the relevant amounts shall be credited to family fee accounts and the centre shall invoice the funding body on a regular, at least quarterly, basis.
- (5) The centre will maintain an account of the net fees payable by the family and the fees paid and the account balance and make that information available to the parents as and when requested and/or in writing upon request. Families will be given monthly accounts statements as required by CCMS.
- (6) All family fee account records will be kept confidential and stored appropriately.

vi) Payment of fee amounts

- (1) At the start of each week, parents are required to view their account statements showing the amount required to be paid up to the end of the previous week. That amount is payable by Friday. Account statements are available on the third party software website for perusal by families.
- (2) Fees must be paid each week for the previous week’s enrolment and must be received by 11am each Friday at the latest. A receipt shall be provided to parents.
- (3) The centre will ask that all payments be made either by bank deposit, internet banking or by EFTPOS. While cheque payments will be accepted, cash is not normally accepted. The centre will discourage payment by cheque and cash to minimise banking and cash handling issues and minimise security issues for staff in handling and carrying cash

vii) Overdue Fees

- (1) If the account is not paid each week, centre staff will contact the parent to ask that payment be made, and the parent should pay the arrears and the current week’s account at that time.

- (2) If parents have any difficulty in ensuring fees remain up to date, they are encouraged to discuss any difficulties that they may have with the Director or Fee Administrator who will discuss and make suitable arrangements for payment of fees if necessary. If an arrangement is made by the centre in good faith which allows late payment of fees, the family must maintain that arrangement or it will lapse.
- (3) Where families qualify under CCMS, Additional CCS (ACCS) may be claimable. Under ACCS, CCMS covers the full centre early childhood education and care fee and so no gap is payable by the family. ACCS is payable in special circumstances, when the family situation is such that payment of normal early childhood education and care fees is not possible. ACCS is normally restricted to a maximum number of 6 weeks initially and then for a further 13 weeks if eligible each financial year, although in exceptional circumstances ACCS may be extended.
- (4) Some families may also qualify for other subsidies (e.g. Brighter Futures, Community Services) and should inform the centre if that is the case so the correct claim can be made.
- (5) If parents are unable to pay fees and are not eligible for ACCS or other subsidies they may request the Committee, at its absolute discretion, to make a reduction in fees payable.
- (6) If early childhood education and care fees become two weeks overdue, the centre will again contact the parent and notify them in writing that the account is overdue. That letter will also remind them of the opportunity to discuss any problems they may have in paying fees and will inform them that their child's place may be cancelled if suitable arrangements are not made within seven days to pay the fees.
- (7) If fees remain unpaid after that, and no arrangement has been made with the Director, the child's enrolment may be cancelled, the bond transferred to the account and the parent given a final account.
- (8) While any fees remain owing to the centre, the child will not be permitted to attend. In the longer term, the family will not be entitled to enrol any child at the centre.
- (9) If the outstanding fee amount is paid, re enrolment of the child or the enrolment of a sibling will be permitted. Once the full amount is paid, the child's enrolment can be reinstated and the bond will need to be repaid before the child can start attending again.
- (10) If any family is excluded from the centre twice for non-payment of fees, then no future enrolment of a child from that family will be permitted, even if all outstanding fee amounts are paid.

8) Communication with families

- a) **Explanation** It is essential the centre communicates with families in a way which respects their opinions, needs, feelings and beliefs. Families need to know how communication channels within the organisation operate. As well those communication systems should encourage all to treat each other with respect, courtesy and understanding and create a comfortable and supportive environment for communication.
- b) **Implementation**
 - i) Staff will ensure all parents are greeted and farewelled daily. They should inform parents personally about anything relating to their children as an on-going process.

Information about their child's day should be made available to parents by staff. If requested staff will provide more detailed information or assist the person to identify another staff person who can provide more detailed information.

- ii) Staff will discuss each child's interests or activities and any parental expectations, wishes and suggestions with the parents.
- iii) Daily communication will be maintained with parents about the program by a variety of written and verbal means and feedback will be sought from families about the effectiveness of that communication.
- iv) Regular communication of more general information about each child's development and about the centre program will also be maintained and brought to the attention of families.
- v) A developmental record of each child at the centre will be maintained by staff and will be made available to parents on an ongoing basis.
- vi) Staff will not under any circumstances be judgemental towards any parent and will respect their need to use the services provided by Rainbow. Staff will respect and consider each parent's individual differences, cultural perspectives and personal requests in all issues.
- vii) Staff will ensure parents are fully aware of all lines of communication, and assist them if necessary to access information.
- viii) Staff will be aware of their personal limitations in relation to each parent's needs and requests and ensure they are referred to the appropriate person when required.

9) Grievance procedures

a) Explanation We believe that parents have a right to raise concerns about any aspect of the centre's operations. By having measures in place to ensure parents have an opportunity to comment on the service, we have an opportunity to improve the quality of the services we offer at Rainbow. Parents should feel free to communicate any concerns they have in relation to the centre, staff, management, programs and policies and to be confident that their input will be treated with respect and their issues acted upon. A grievance can be informal or formal. It can be anything which a parent thinks is unfair or which makes them feel unhappy with the service. As well, families must know they can raise issues without fearing negative consequences for themselves or their child.

b) Implementation

- i) To ensure families understand their right to raise grievances, clear written guidelines detailing the grievance procedure will be made available to families, and will be included in the parent handbook.
- ii) If a parent has a comment or complaint about the service, they will be encouraged to raise the matter with the staff member caring for their child. This should ensure that the discussion is both personal and specific to the needs of the family.
- iii) A parent who wishes to discuss a matter may approach the Director who will make a suitable time and place available to discuss the concern or complaint.
- iv) The person/s making the complaint or raising a grievance will be assured that there are no negative consequences or retribution for any person raising a grievance. As well they will be assured that we welcome and support their participation in the compliant handling process and will work with them to identify a desired goal or outcome of their action.

- v) If the complaint is not handled to the person's satisfaction at this level the Director should provide an opportunity for the parent to discuss the issue with the President or liaison person of the Management Committee, either in writing or verbally.
- vi) The Management Committee member may discuss the issue with the Director and jointly develop a strategy for resolving the grievance.
- vii) The parent may also, if desired, be provided with an opportunity to raise the matter with the full Committee.
- viii) The parent's complaint is to be recorded and dated indicating the issue of concern and how it was resolved.
- ix) If any complaint cannot be resolved internally within Rainbow to the parent's satisfaction, the parent should be made aware of external grievance procedures. In the event of the grievance concerning
 - (1) The quality of education and care provided to children and the administration of the centre - the parent will be referred to the NSW Dept Education & Communities Early Childhood Education & Care Directorate which approves the centre or to the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority.
 - (2) Attendance records and early childhood education and care fees and the provision of Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate - the parent should be referred to Centrelink which operates the Child Care Management System.
 - (3) The operation of The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc. as an Association - the parent should be referred to Fair Trading, NSW.
 - (4) The quality or availability of services for children with disabilities or additional needs – the parent should be referred to Ageing Disability & Home Care, NSW.
- x) A copy of the procedures associated with this policy will be posted in suitable locations accessible to all families so they may easily determine the procedure to be followed when they wish to raise a grievance.
- xi) The Association shall maintain a register of any grievances raised and shall report the grievances as required by Legislation or Regulation.

10) Sustainability

- a) **Explanation** As a responsible member of the Australian and the Ballina community, Rainbow recognises the need for all organisations, including Rainbow, to operate in a sustainable manner. Given our role as educators we are doubly responsible since children see how we operate and we should emphasise sustainability as a responsible member of the community.
- b) **Implementation** In all reviews and considerations of the operations of Rainbow, the nature of our procedures and practices should be considered in light of sustainability principles. While it may not be that all operations will occur in the most sustainable way, given circumstances which may require other priorities, sustainable alternatives should at least be considered in regard to all matters. When reports are provided to the Committee about any review of practices, procedures and purchases, there should be a section in each report considering the sustainability of the practice and whether any more practical, affordable, sustainable alternatives exist.

11) Ballina Early Intervention Exit Policy (endorsed Sept 14)

- a) **Explanation** Children enrolled at Ballina Early Intervention will move on from the service at some time, although they will still require intervention services after that time. Children will mostly move on from BEI as they reach the age at which they go to school, although some children will continue with the service until the age of 8 years

based on current ADHC funding. Some children may move from the area and BEI will no longer be convenient. Some families may refuse services or also may seek to request alternative or additional services and BEI should support that parental choice. It is important any move from BEI is planned and coordinated with the family where possible. They may want records of the child's care and education to be passed on to other agencies and the family has the right to control what information will be released.

It has been recognised that the transition from early intervention services to other support services, such as those within the school system or specific agencies may be difficult for families. It is likely that once the child starts school, the family may need to seek and establish links with a range of new service providers. This can be a difficult process and BEI is committed to assisting families and children as well as it can within funding constraints.

BEI has a strong commitment that once a child and family are enrolled at BEI service will continue until the time of exit is determined by the family or is designated by relevant funding. In the event that a child commences at BEI and the child's developmental progress is such that the child becomes no longer eligible for services under relevant funding guidelines, the family will still need to be supported in exiting BEI.

b) Implementation

- i) The timing and implementation of exit from BEI will usually be determined by the family,
- ii) Some children may become ineligible for BEI services:
 - (1) If the family is moving out of the designated area for BEI services the family will no longer be eligible for BEI services. The family will be informed about the termination of BEI services and assisted to access the new relevant EI agency.
 - (2) If the child's developmental progress takes them outside funding guidelines, the family will no longer be eligible for BEI services. The family will be informed about the termination of BEI services and assisted to access any other relevant agency.
 - (3) In the event that BEI considers exceptional circumstances exist, BEI services may continue for cases as outlined in a) and b) above.
 - (4) Where a child is going to school and hence will no longer be eligible for BEI services after starting school, the teacher shall develop a transition to school plan with the family and include the relevant schools personnel if the parents approve.
- iii) When a family informs the service that the child will finish at BEI or when circumstances such as those set out in 2) above occur, the child's Key Worker shall develop a plan with the family to support that exit and set out available choices for continued services for the child and family after leaving BEI.
- iv) The plan developed with the Key Worker will make recommendations to the family to assist them in making choices and will allow families the opportunity to discuss other services and choices BEI staff know are or may be available to the child and family.
- v) Parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to access and receive copies of any information contained in the child's file prior to exit.
- vi) If the parent/guardian has approved contact with other agencies, the Key Worker shall contact the other agency and make arrangements to send or share copies of relevant information to the new agency.

- vii) On exit each family will be given an opportunity to complete a BEI service evaluation form.