



HUNTER EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE
Partner of Hunter Women's Centre

Parent Handbook 2020



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Hunter Early Childhood Centre



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OUR OBJECTIVE

Creating a respectful and holistic environment which creates the foundations for endless exploration and development. Inspiring tomorrow's leaders.

Our core foundations:

Respectful partnerships with Families

Children are at the heart of everything we do

Relationships with the wider community

Empowering our educators

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Our centre values the natural, calming environment which replicates our homes. Our play spaces are designed to develop a sense of belonging with our children, families and staff and their individuality. Supported by the National Quality Framework, our indoor and outdoor areas are a flexible environment allowing our educators to be able to tailor the learning spaces to suit the interests of the children.

Developing positive and respectful relationships with others is such an important skill to develop for later years. Our educators start to develop the building blocks with each child on their very first day. Families are greeted each and every morning by our educators and this is followed on with the children. We believe in open and transparent communication and value our families' feedback. Parents are asked to be open with any feedback they may have to our educators.

To foster close connection with our educators and families, we allow for lower ratios, enabling each educator to have the time to be able to connect with each child and their family and build strong, reciprocal relationships with one another. This also allows our educators to be able to better supervise and actively engage with the children during the day.

Orientation

We understand that starting at a new centre can be daunting for both children and their parents and we encourage everyone to come to the service as many times as needed prior to commencing their first day. Our parents are invited to an orientation session where they will have time to get to know the educators their child will be connecting with, ask questions and create a seamless transition.



EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Hunter Early Childhood Centre is licenced for 46 children per day and has three age groups. Whilst all rooms focus on a play-based learning structure each room has individual, age appropriate goals which we endeavour to achieve with our children in positive learning experiences.

Explorers Room

0-2 years

Our 0-2 years room implements a flexible environment and is a child's first connection with an early education service. We promote individualised programs and encourage our families to keep us informed so that we can follow on with what our families are doing at home. Our free flow environment allows children to explore their environment and grow their social and emotional skills while creating close relationships with educators and peers.

"My boys have been attending HECC for 4 years & 1 year respectively & I am always excited to see and hear what adventures they have participated in that day. The educators are warm and attentive and give plenty of feedback & I trust my boys are in the best care."

Dewar Family

Discoverers Room

2-3 years

Our 2-3 years room follows on each child's natural curiosity through investigation and exploration within their environments. Our educators work closely with each child and their families to develop and extend on their evolving interests whilst maintaining a flexible environment. Self help skills are a predominant focus in the Discoverer's Room as we partner with families to support children becoming independent.

Inventors Room

3-5 years

Our 3-5 room is our more structured room across the centre. Whilst our school readiness commences from your child's first day at Hunter Early Childhood Centre, it is in our Rainbow Room that these skills are further developed. We prepare children for school by providing a variety of programs and resources to develop their holistic development and create friendships for life!

"Hunter Early Childhood Centre is incredible and NON FOR PROFIT! Dedicated to enriching every child's development - socially and emotionally. The communication between educators and parents is remarkable, nothing is too much trouble or too small of an issue. I would not be happier that my little miss has been able to attend such an amazing early education service."

Williams Family

WHAT TO BRING

Each day we ask you to pack your child's bag with everything they will need for a great day at school.

Your child will need:

- Water Bottle
- Cot Sheets
- Sun Hat
- Spare Clothes (including underwear if your child is toilet training)
- Any Comforters

We ask that all your child's belongings are clearly labelled so our educators can clearly identify your child's belongings.

Clothing and Footwear

Your child will be exploring and learning in a variety of ways at Hunter Early Childhood Centre, so we ask that when choosing your child's clothing and footwear for their day that you keep in mind that they will be investigating with a variety of materials, meaning they will most likely get dirty or messy. Clothing must be comfortable to move in and provide sun protection for our outdoor program. Clothing should allow for your child to grow in also, if your child is toilet training it is a good idea to provide clothing that can be easily removed. We value each child's right to choose whether they wear footwear whilst at the centre, please send your child in footwear that is comfortable and that they will be happy to run, jump and play in.

Personal Items

We ask that all toys or valuables be kept at home. This is to ensure that no precious belongings get lost or broken whilst your child is at the centre. Hunter Early Childhood Centre takes no responsibility for any items brought to the centre that are lost or damaged in any way.



INSPIRING TOMORROWS LEADERS

"Our daughter joined Hunter Early Childhood Centre in August 2016. After the first week, we knew we had made the right decision. Our daughter is in the best hands ever, she loves going there and has learned so much from her teachers and peers. Everything about HECC is beyond incredible and I would recommend it to any parent. Thank you Team HECC for taking such good care of our daughter."

Sotiropoulis Family

Mayfield Aged Care Centre

Giving back to the community is a core value at Hunter Early Childhood Centre. We have developed strong community connections with Mayfield Aged Care Centre and our preschool children visit the centre each year. The residents of Mayfield Aged Care Centre love having our children visit and spend time playing games, singing songs and chatting with our children.

Sustainability

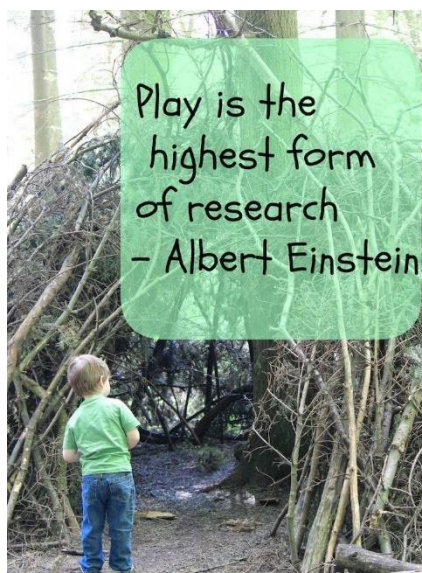
Being environmentally aware is so important for now and into the future. We understand that these skills can be developed from a young age so we encourage our children, families and staff to be aware of their environmental impact.

Garden to Shelf

Getting involved in the garden, planting seeds observing their growth and picking fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers is an important life skill. The produce of our garden is utilised within cooking experiences and packaged up to sell to the community, with all profits being used to buy provisions for the garden and cooking and enable the projects to become self-funded. We have also connected the concepts of maths, literacy, science, technology and art with these experiences, providing us with greater learning opportunities to introduce and extend on this important knowledge within a play based environment.



FOUNDATIONS FOR A LOVE OF LEARNING!



Imagination, creativity and wonder is something we are all born with and these skills are most present when we're young. Children love to explore and investigate new surroundings, different concepts and seek meaning through experiences they are involved in. This gives us the tools to be able to develop these skills in a fun, relaxed and play based environment.

Our indoor and outdoor environments are flexible and open ended, allowing them to be changed when needed to meet children's interest. We incorporate natural resources and are often using our natural environment around us to find more resources to use.

Our educational environments:

- Are developed from children's interests
 - Are open ended and flexible
- Allow for creativity and imaginative play
- Encourage child to be actively involved
- Allow children to discover and learn at their own pace
 - Encourage autonomy and independence
 - Develop literacy skills through phonemic awareness
- Encourage enquiry and investigation through science and math experiments

"All of the educators at HECC are worth their weight in gold. They are all committed, dedicated and extremely knowledgeable. The educators have implemented the most wonderful curriculum and learning plans, all while understanding the individual needs and strengths of each child."

Upton Family

Curriculum and Reflection

Each learning space has their own program and curriculum, developed in partnership with children, families and educators. The programs are flexible and change at a moment's notice depending on the child's interests. Our educator's display what's happening in the room via displays and parents are also given updates daily through their online OWNA app.

Hunter Early Childhood Centre

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Each child needs good nutritional food each and every day as their bodies are growing rapidly. Children consume 50% to 75% of their daily food intake when they are at a child care centre. So it's so vital to fuel them with the right food!

Hunter Early Childhood Centre supports each child to develop healthy eating habits for their very first day. In order to do this, we serve 3 nutritional meals delivered to us each morning by Kids Gourmet Food. Based off a 6 week rotational menu, each meal is planned and cooked by nutritionist and qualified chefs using seasonal ingredients then snap chilled to ensure the highest food handling conditions then delivered to us to serve to the children. Supporting this menu is our service provided breakfast and late snack to round out the day.



Our staff will chat to the children during meal times and throughout the daily program to educate and instil these core values and identify with the children how important a healthy lifestyle is for now and into the future.





TOGETHER WE CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS

At Hunter Early Childhood Centre we believe our strong connections with our families and staff and the wider community is what it takes to provide such a high level of education and care in a child-centre approach that values each individual for who they are.

Open Door Policy

Hunter Early Childhood Centre encourages an open door policy where our families have the opportunity to communicate with their child's educators as much as they like throughout their child's day. We understand that your babies are your most valued treasures and we encourage our families to call or drop in as much as they would like to reassure that their child is having a great day!

We encourage our families to be part of our everyday at Hunter Early Childhood Centre. We encourage you to discuss your child's day with them, get to know your child's educators and provide input into our programs. We encourage you to let us know if your child has a new interest or if there is something happening at home that is exciting or even that you may just want us to be aware of. Our parents receive monthly newsletters from us to let them know what we are focusing on here at the centre and also any reminders that parents may need to be aware of.

"I wanted to thank you all for your love, support and encouragement you have given to Mia and Olivia. Being a working mum comes with a lot of guilt and being part of HECC has made it that much easier knowing my children are in such a happy, safe and fun environment.

There are no words to describe how grateful we are for you all and what you have done for us!"

Haslem Family

COMMUNICATION

Here at Hunter Early Childhood Centre we believe in open, honest and transparent communication with our children, families and staff. This comes in many forms and varies from situation to situation.

XPLOR – Administration Portal

XPLOR is our online platform we use to manage our day to day operations at the centre. Parents use Xplor Hub to sign their child in and out of the service, view their parent accounts and manage their banking details and view their child's daily happenings.

OWNA – Parent Portal

Our staff log daily program updates, food and water intake, nappy changes and sleep times throughout the day so parents are able to see in real time what their child is involved with. Our weekly program, reflections and your child's individual experiences are logged using the app and this allows parents to be able to access their child's important information at any time, day or night!

Drop Off and Pick Up

Each morning and afternoon our educators will discuss with you about your child and provide updates and discuss concerns if they arise. Our aim is that we have a constant flow of communication between your family and our staff. We encourage our families to provide updates about their child's routine as they happen so that we can ensure that each child's routine is continued on at the centre, this is especially important in our Explorer's Room.

Individual Learning and development

In addition to our daily updates and program walls, our educators complete a weekly jotting for each child from an experience that child has been involved with. Families also receive a monthly observation for their child which is a more in depth reflection including links to the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Framework. At the end of each year our educators will complete a summary of learning for each child including the developmental goals each child has achieved throughout the year. All programming and documentation is uploaded to OWNA for parents to view.



CENTRE POLICIES

Enrolment and Orientation

When a parent expresses interest in enrolling their child at Hunter Early Childhood Centre, the family will be invited to attend a tour and will be forwarded an enrolment link to complete online. Parents will need to return the completed forms along with their child's immunisation record from their MyGov account before their child can commence their first day.

Families will also be invited to attend an orientation session with the educators in the room their child will be attending. This time is flexible and gives each family the space to be able to ask questions, communicate with our educators about their child and discuss any goals they would like their child to achieve.

Priority of Access

The guidelines apply to Child Care Subsidy approved child care services and must be used when there is a waiting list for a service and a number of parents are applying for a limited number of vacant places, or if the service is full and a Priority 1 or 2 child requires child care.

Priorities

- **Priority 1:** a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- **Priority 2:** a child of a single parent or parents who satisfy the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the 'A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999'
- **Priority 3:** any other child.

Within these main categories, priority should also be given to the following children:

- children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- children in families which include a disabled person
- children in families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold of \$45,114 for 2017-18, or who or whose partner is on income support
- children in families from a non-English speaking background
 - children in socially isolated families
 - children of single parents.

A child care service may require a Priority 3 child to vacate a place to make room for a child in a higher priority group. They can only do so if the parents are:

- notified when their child first entered care that the service follows this policy
- given at least 14 days notice of the need for their child to vacate.

Child Care Subsidy

The Commonwealth Government has implemented the Child Care Subsidy scheme to help families with the cost of childcare. Each family must complete an eligibility test which is made up of an activity and income assessment completed through the Department of Human Services.

The Child Care Subsidy is paid directly to services to reduce the out of pocket expenses for families.

Dependent on the eligibility test outcome parents will be informed of what percentage and the amount of hours they will be able to have subsidised for their child.

This must be completed by each family prior to their child commences care with us to avoid paying full fees.

Fees

Our current fee structure includes a security deposit of 2 weeks FULL FEES which are to be paid on enrolment.

Parents will be asked to make adjustments to their security deposit in the event that they change their child's days of attendance.

Current fees are \$105 per day across the centre. All parent accounts are required to be a week in advance and all parent billing information must be kept up to date on the parent Xplor app. These debits usually occur on a Thursday and parents are able to allocate a payment schedule of weekly or fortnightly.

Holidays

Parents are asked to inform us when their child will be absent from the centre so our staff are aware. All fees are still applicable for any days missed due to a holiday. If your child's booked days fall on a public holiday, fees are still applicable for that day and must be paid in order to keep your child's position.

Collection of Children

At Hunter Early Childhood Centre, our children's safety and security is our highest priority. On enrolment parents are asked to identify a minimum of 2 emergency contacts who you give authorisation to collect your child from the service.

Every child must be collected by a person known to the educators, in the event that you require another person to collect your child, we ask that you inform our staff prior to that person coming to the centre and remind them to bring photo ID so that we can check your child's enrolment form to confirm their authority to collect.

All children must be signed out of the service via the HUB portal located on the IPAD in the foyer.

Medication

In the event your child requires a prescribed medication whilst at the centre, we require a medication form to be filled out and given to our staff. Medication must come in its original packaging with your child's name, doctor's label and administration information on it. This medication is to be handed in person to your child's educators in the morning so that we can store the medication appropriately and confirm all details. If your child falls ill whilst at the service and requires emergency medication the Director/Nominated Supervisor or Team Leader of your child's room will make contact with you to gain your authorisation. If medication is given to your child, you will be required to come and collect your child from the centre as much as soon as possible.

Immunisation

An up to date immunisation history record must be supplied by uploading to Xplor or emailing through to the Director/Nominated Supervisor on enrolment. If this is not received your child will not be able to commence care. When there are updates to this record it is a requirement that you forward an updated version to the service as soon as possible.

Illness

At Hunter Early Childhood Centre, our practices are in line with the Government Health Department and follow their guidelines around infectious illness exclusion. If your child is not well we do ask that you keep them at home to rest until they are better and are free of symptoms. If your child has become sick we will require a doctor's clearance before they can return to the centre to ensure that the spread of germs is limited. The Director/Nominated Supervisor will inform families if there are any confirmed cases of an infectious illness within the centre and identify any exclusion period applicable. If your child has been administered with Panadol at the centre, we will ask you to keep them home for at least 24 hours to ensure they are well enough to come back to the centre and participate in daily experiences.

Accidents and Incidents

While supervision is our priority, accidents do occur as our children explore and investigate. Our educators will provide first aid where required and will complete an incident form for you to acknowledge and sign at the end of the day.

In the event that the injury is of the head, neck and shoulders our Director/Nominated Supervisor or Room Team Leaders will contact you to inform you. We will identify to you if your child is fine to remain at the centre or if they will need to be collected and taken to the doctor.

If your child does require medical attention we ask that you inform our Director/Nominated Supervisor so the necessary paperwork can be completed and we can provide the support you need.

Emergency Evacuations

It is so important to be well prepared for an emergency. Our educators will practice these drills with the children every quarter to make sure, if the event arose, we would be ready to evacuate.

We will inform you when these drills are happening before they occur to make sure you are aware.