



# Family Handbook

*Making A Difference Early Childhood Education and Care Centres Family Handbook.*

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Centre Policies must be read in conjunction with this booklet.

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# Welcome to Making A Difference Early Learning Centres!

We are a small group of early childhood education and centres on the Northern Beaches who make our name become a reality by making a difference to the lives of all families who enrol at our Centres, and within this work practice, we encourage you to discuss anything contained in this booklet or any further information you may require with the Centre Director here at your child care centre.

## **The Group of Centres**

There are four (4) early learning centres that belong to the Making A Difference group, and these are:

- Making A Difference at Frenchs Forest (in the ground of the Frenchs Forest Public School)
- Making A Difference for Babies at Frenchs Forest (in the ground of the Frenchs Forest Public School)
- Making A Difference at Beacon Hill (in the grounds of the Beacon Hill Public School)
- Making A Difference at Oceana (at Narraweena)

## **Management**

Making A Difference Early Learning Centres are owned by Carolyn and John Leis.

### ➤ Approved Provider:

Carolyn Leis is the Approved Provider and co-owner whose responsibility it is to ensure the Centres meet and adhere to the requirements of all relevant legislation.

Carolyn has been a child care centre Approved Provider for more than 15 years and director for more than 9; her previous background being in administration, management and adult education.

### ➤ Group Manager - Early Learning Centres:

Annie Sturley is the Group Manager of the early education and care centres. Annie is responsible for the overall management, staffing, operations and training across the Centres. Annie is a very experienced early childhood professional who has worked as a Director and centre owner for many years.

### ➤ Facilities Manager:

John Leis is the co-owner and facilities manager whose responsibility it is to ensure each facility is well-maintained and in a state of good repair, paying particular attention to the safety and well-being of children and staff.

The NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, **Department of Education and Communities** (DECs) (formerly the Department of Community Services (DoCS)) is the licensing body who monitors early learning centres against the Education and Care Services National Regulations and Children's Services Regulation 2004, 2010 and 2012.

Please contact the NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, Department of Education and Communities on 1800 619 113 (toll free) should you wish to lodge a grievance or obtain any further regulatory information.

**Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)** implements and administers our accreditation system. We consistently aim for the highest accreditation rating.

As we manage accredited early learning centres, **Child Care Benefit** is available to eligible families who use our Centres. Please contact the Centrelink's Families and Parent's Line on **13 61 50** for further information. Refer to our "Fees" information on page 8 of this document.

## **Vision - Values - Mission**

### **Our Vision:**

*Enriching our children's lives today and for all their tomorrows.*

### **Our Values:**

<i>Integrity:</i>	Honesty, Truth, Ethical, Authenticity
<i>Partnership:</i>	Family, Teamwork, Commitment
<i>Caring:</i>	Respect, Empathy, Social Justice, Hope
<i>Learning:</i>	Wonder, Inquisitiveness, Growing
<i>Play:</i>	Fun, Discovery, Time
<i>Common Sense:</i>	Intelligence, Informed Decisions, Initiative
<i>Enthusiasm:</i>	Passion, Diligence, Positive,

### **Our Mission:**

*Making A Difference is to be a place of enrichment where we have a positive impact on children's ongoing learning.*

## **Policies**

All policies detailed in this handbook are extracts only. We encourage you to read the Centre's Policy document, specific to your child care Centre, which is available via your Centre's office.

The 'Making A Difference' philosophy is informed by the *National Quality Framework* and *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* documents. These focus on the crucial role of early childhood professionals. This is to bring their theoretical and practical knowledge of children together with their knowledge of the Centre's parents and families and work collaboratively in the creation of the most beneficial programs possible for young children. (For further information, see [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au) and search for EYLF.)

## **Philosophy**

Each Centre develops a Centre-specific philosophy that reflects the local community, the children and their families enrolled at the Centre and the staff employed to care for your children.

For this reason, each Centre philosophy is unique and reflective of the organisational vision, values and mission.

Each Centre philosophy is reviewed regularly to ensure currency of both early childhood practice and the specific needs of the wider community of families and staff.

Your Centre will have their philosophy displayed within the Centre and you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with it, reflect on its content, meaning and relevance and provide the Director and educators with feedback when asked and/or when you see fit.

## **Early Childhood Australia (ECA), Code of Ethics**

Making A Difference Early Learning and Care Centres subscribe to the ECA Code of Ethics - a National document that considers the following values and processes central to the Code of Ethics:

Respect

Democracy

Honesty

Integrity

Justice

Courage

Inclusivity

Social & Cultural Responsiveness

Education

## **Hours of Operation**

Making A Difference Early Learning Centres are open between 7.30am and 6.00pm.

In line with our commitment to an 'open-door approach', the parents may have access to the Centre at any time there are staff on the premises during opening hours.

Parents are, however, NOT to leave their children prior to 7.30am or after 6.00pm.

This is for legal reasons - Making A Difference Early Learning Centres are not licensed to be providing a service outside of these hours, and staff are required to use the 15 minute 'window' either side of the licensed hours to set up and pack away the environment. A late fee per child applies if children are picked up late. Children left at the Centre after hours may be placed in the care of Community Services.

## **Children and Groups**

Making A Difference Early Learning Centres are licensed as follows:

- Making A Difference at Frenchs Forest: 56 children 2-5 yrs
- Making A Difference for Babies at FF: 32 children 0-3 yrs
- Making A Difference at Oceana: 43 children 0-6 yrs
- Making A Difference at Beacon Hill: 40 children 0-6yrs

The children are 'grouped' in the way that best meets their individual needs, which isn't always chronological age. Our focus is to ensure that the program provided in any one room at any one time is responsive to and reflective of the children in that group at that time (see information on programs). We have a minimum of 2 days attendance per week.

## **Staff and ratios of staff to children (staff:child ratios)**

The Children's Services Regulation 2012 requires that all child care services provide a minimum staff:child ration of:

- 0-2 year old children = 1 staff member : 4 children
- 2-3 year old children = 1 staff member : 5 children
- 3-5 year old children = 1 staff member : 10 children

Within our ethos of making a difference, and acknowledging that staffing costs account for more than 60% of operational overheads, we provide staff:child ratios that often exceed this minimum requirement, and more qualified staff than is required by the Regulation. Senior First Aid qualifications are also held by almost all staff.

At each *Making A Difference Early Learning Centre*, our aim is to employ at least:

- Director - early childhood trained and experienced in centre management
- Early Childhood Teachers (minimum 4-year university qualified)
- Advanced Diploma Qualified Educators (minimum 2-year TAFE qualified)
- Qualified Child Care Educators (minimum 1 year Certificate 3 in child care)
- Trainees (currently studying a Certificate III in child care)
- Cook and/or Kitchen Hand (part-time) to prepare 50% of your child's RDIs.

*These staff are employed in both full-time and part-time capacities, our main aim being to provide continuity of high quality staff to educate and care for your children.*

### **Enrolment and Orientation**

The process of enrolment and orientation starts from the time you accept a position for your child at your Making A Difference Centre - the place you have accepted was determined by best matching your needs with the current availability of places and our Priority of Access guidelines. (Note our 2 day minimum enrolment per week policy).

You will be invited to attend an enrolment interview and orientation session (these may be group or individual), where you and your child will meet the Director and educators who will look after your child. You are welcome to spend as much time in the Centre as you wish, understanding that the staff have to continue with the program for the rest of the children in their care - please join in and be sure to remain with your child, maintaining responsibility for them during your visit.

You will receive an enrolment and information pack at this time and your child's commencement date will be confirmed. Between this session and your child's first day, you are welcome to visit the Centre as often as you choose, remembering that the more comfortable you are with us and leaving your child in our care, the more comfortable s/he will also be. A phone call to let us know when to expect you also helps as we can then be ready to warmly welcoming him/her.

### **Priority of Access**

The Australian Government has "Priority of Access Guidelines" which the Centre must follow when filling vacancies. These are:

1. A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

2. A child of a single parent/guardian who satisfies, or of parents/guardians who both satisfy the work/training/study test under Section 14 of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*.
3. Any other child.

Within these three categories priority is also given to the following children:

- Children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- Children in families which include a disabled person.
- Children in families on low income (see [www.education.gov.au](http://www.education.gov.au) for more details)
- Children in families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Children in socially isolated families.
- Children of single parents/guardian.
- Siblings

Upon enrolment families will be notified of their priority and advised that if there are no vacancies and their child's position is a priority 3 under the Priority of Access Guidelines, it may be required that their child leave or reduce their days in order to make a place for a higher priority child.

### **Fees and Invoicing**

Within our commitment to making a difference, we are mindful of the need to make child care as affordable and accessible to as many children as possible, which we do, given the parameters in which we have to work. Fees are therefore kept as low as possible and are reviewed throughout the year.

- 2 weeks Bond and your first two weeks full fees is payable on commencement.
- Fees are payable a month in advance or fortnightly in advance by special arrangement only.
- Fees are to be paid by Direct Debit from your nominated bank account or credit card. All rejected attempts to withdraw fees are charged our Bank Fees and a \$40 Reprocessing Fee.
- Fees are due on the first of every calendar month for that month's enrolled days. Late and Administration Fees apply to unpaid fees on 8<sup>th</sup> of each month.
- Casual Days are available at a significantly reduced rate where there are vacancies. These one off fees appear on your account at the end of each week. Keep this in mind (and add to your bill) if you have a Casual Day after your monthly statement has been issued.
- Statements are distributed via email.

- Statements are distributed between 20<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> of every month for payment the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of next month.
- Fees are payable for all days your child is booked in to attend - this includes holidays, sick days, public holidays.
- Fees are payable 50 weeks/year (and not payable during the 2 week Christmas shutdown).
- Cancellation of your placement requires 4 weeks written notice. In lieu of this notice your bond and additional fees will be charged to your account.  
**N.B. The two weeks we are closed over the closed Christmas period do not count for the notice period.**
- Bonds are adjusted during a child's placement whenever a permanent booking is changed and whenever a room rate changes. Bonds are calculated using the current room rate and your child's current booking.

### **Government Paid Fee Assistance**

To help make the fees more affordable and child care more accessible Childcare Benefits (CCB) and Childcare Rebates (CCR) are available and administered by the Federal Government through the Department of Human Services (DHS). Centrelink is part of DHS.

Applications for CCB/CCR assessment must be lodged with Centrelink who will then assess your combined family income and notify us of the appropriate information via the government's Computerised Childcare Management System (CCMS) which will then calculate your child care fees.

After you have been assessed by Centrelink for Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate you need to give us your details. The details you need to provide are the Customer Reference Numbers (CRN) and dates of birth for your child and the parent who was assessed for child care payments. We will report attendance information for your child each week. If eligible DHS will then report to us the calculation and payment of both CCB and CCR, or pay you directly.

If you do not supply us with the appropriate details we cannot access your CCB/CCR data and DHS cannot access your weekly attendance data for any CCB and/or CCR calculations and payments.

Please note if a child's Immunisations are not kept up to date CCB may be cancelled by the Government and full fees apply.



### **Child Care Benefit (CCB)**

This is a means-tested benefit to eligible families using child care for work-related or study purposes.

Applications for CCB must be lodged through Centrelink who will then assess your combined family income and update your account automatically through CCMS.

We advise you to lodge your application with Centrelink before your child starts child care to ensure your reduced fee is applicable from their commencement. Alternatively, the full fee will be charged until confirmation of your correct CCB is received from DHS. Depending on the length of time this takes your adjusted fees may not be effective retrospectively.

### **Child Care Rebate (CCR)**

Child Care Rebate is **not income tested**. However, you must be eligible for Child Care Benefit (CCB) and pass the Work, Study and Training Test. To pass the test you must have a work, study or training related commitment at some time during the week. There is no minimum number of hours required. If you and your partner are working, looking for work, training, studying or doing voluntary work to improve work skills you may be eligible. For more information about the work test for CCR contact Centrelink.

If you haven't already done so, contact Centrelink to claim Child Care Benefit. Even if you are not eligible to receive any CCB payments because your family income is too high you may still be able to receive CCR payments. You may be assessed as a zero rate customer for CCB but still be eligible to receive CCR.

The Child Care Rebate payment is up to half of your out-of-pocket child care costs. Currently, you may receive up to \$7,500 per child per financial year.

There are various options you can elect with Centrelink for your CCR payment.

#### **CCR paid to your service.**

This allows us to reduce your child care fees and means the amount you need to pay to us (the gap fee) will be less. CCR payments will be made to us weekly after we submit an attendance report with the details of the care we provided to your child that week. We will allocate CCR credits to your account only after DHS has actually paid us.

**CCR paid to your bank account** is weekly or fortnightly, quarterly or as a lump sum after the financial year.

Please contact Centrelink to change your payment method. If you would like to change your payment option for the next financial year you must do it before the annual cutoff date of 30 June each year.

### **Payment of Fees**

Please complete the Direct Debit authority in your enrolment pack.

Fees are paid by Direct Debit from your nominated bank account or credit card. Please ensure the funds are available on the required drawing dates or all rejected attempts to withdraw fees are charged our Bank Fees and a \$40 Reprocessing Fee.

Late Fees incur a penalty of 1.2% plus a \$40 administration fee on the 8<sup>th</sup> of each month- we reserve the right to terminate your child's place when payment is not forthcoming.

### **Children's absences**

We appreciate the pressures that a sick child brings, but equally, to avoid us being concerned about your child's whereabouts, please notify us as early as possible when your child will not be attending the Centre for any reason.

Your child may be absent from the Centre for 42 days in a financial year for any reason. After that, CCB will only be paid in limited circumstances according to DHS guidelines.

### **Centre Closure**

Making A Difference Early Learning and Care Centres operate for 50 weeks every year, closing for two (2) weeks over the Christmas period. As Christmas falls on a different day each year, you will be notified of the closure dates in approximately September each year. Fees are not charged during the Christmas shutdown time.

### **Withdrawing your child from the Centre**

As much notice as possible is appreciated at the time you choose to withdraw your child from the Centre. We do, however, require at least four (4) weeks written notice and failure to give such notice will result in forfeiture of your two 2 week bond and an additional two (2) weeks fees being charged.

N.B. The two weeks we are closed for business over the Christmas period DO NOT count as part of the four weeks' notice period.

### **PENALTY for late collection of children**

As mentioned, the Centre is only licensed to provide childcare until 6.00pm.

Failure to collect your child by 6.00pm is unacceptable and may require us to leave your child in the care of Community Services or the local Police. To meet associated costs, a late fee of \$15 per 15 minutes *or part thereof per child* will be charged to the parent.

### **What to Bring**

- hat - legionnaire or broad-brimmed, every day (no cords unless elastic);
- a complete set of spare clothes, suitable to the current climate;
- labelled nappies (enough for one day at a time);
- a beanie or warm hat in colder weather;
- a spare jumper / jacket to be worn when outside;
- a 'cuddly', comforter or dummy if it will help your child settle into the Centre (something familiar from their home environment often makes the transition easier).
- sheets (appropriate for the stretcher beds) to allow your child to sleep/rest during the day - *for all except children under 2 years*.
- Clean water bottle with fresh water daily (clearly labelled).

*NB: everything must be clearly labelled with your child's name.*

### **What to wear**

Simple, comfortable clothing that doesn't restrict movement and makes toileting and resting easy for your child:

- tops that cover shoulders (for sun safety);
- 'layers' to enable meeting all weather conditions;
- no thongs or back-less shoes;
- no inflexible soles on shoes.

### **What NOT to bring**

- Toys - bringing toys from home makes 'keeping track of them' impossible and makes 'sharing' harder than it has to be.
- Food - we have a high number of children not only with food intolerances, but some who may have life-threatening anaphylactic reactions. Please check with staff if you need to bring food of any type onsite as we have a "BRING NO FOOD" policy

### **Arrival at the Centre**

Any time from 7.30am:

- Walk in gate with child, ensuring gate closes behind you.
- Complete the sign-in sheet for that day (arrival time and signature).
- Indicate who will be collecting your child if someone other than their parents (this person also has to appear in the Authorised Persons to Collect information in the Enrolment Form).
- Place your child's belongings in their locker / on their hook.
- Stay and 'play' as long as you want to / can.

- Say 'goodbye' to your child (do not sneak out) and if they are distressed, leave them with a member of staff, reassuring them when you will be returning (only say 'goodbye' once and then follow-through).

### **Collection of your child**

Any time up until 6.00pm:

- If they are expecting you at a time, be as close to that time as possible.
- Greet your child, talk about their day.
- Stay as long as you can / want to (leaving the Centre by 6pm).
- Chat to the staff about your child's day (staff's priority is, however the children, so please excuse the educators if they do not 'chat' for long).
- Clear your child's Parent Information pocket.
- Collect your child's bag, belongings and craft.
- Complete the sign-out sheet for that day (departure time and signature).
- Leave with your child, ensuring the gate closes behind you (and no other child leaves too 😊).

NB: only people authorised on the Enrolment Form can collect your child.

### **Code Word**

On our Enrolment Forms, you are asked to fill out a *CODE WORD*, which is confidential between staff and parents. This code word is used for "temporary authorised pickup" in cases when parents/custodian cannot pickup their child. You must tell the person the code word and tell them to bring their driver's licence and then you must ring us to advise there is a change of person collecting your child. On calling the Centre to tell staff of change of pickup, parents will be asked if they remember the *CODE WORD*.

If there is no Code Word, **THERE IS NO PICK UP!!**

Also, the temporary pick-up person will be asked to present their driver's licence (which we will copy) as a check of their identity.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are important to young children. We encourage you to send along something that can be shared with the children from your child's group (e.g. cake, balloons) and that we can use to make your child's day special.

If bringing any food along for this celebration please be sure to check before hand with the teachers regarding any children with food allergies and/or anything that isn't permitted onsite.

## **Our Program**

All our learning is based around the National Quality Framework (NQF) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The National Quality Framework includes the National Quality Standards (NQS) which consist of seven quality areas in which each service is rated.

1) Educational Program, 2) Children's Health and Safety, 3) Physical Environment, 4) Staffing arrangements, 5) Relationships with children, 6) Collaborative partnerships with families and communities, 7) Leadership and service management. ([www.acequa.gov.au](http://www.acequa.gov.au))

The EYLF consists of the Being, Belong and Becoming document which helps to guide our teaching by making us look at learning outcomes, principles and practices that will effect children's learning.

## **Learning Outcomes**

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of well being
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

Our Centre Philosophy is the foundation for our learning with children as we acknowledge each child as an individual who brings their knowledge and interests into our service. We provide opportunities for the child to contribute to their learning by asking them questions, observing their play. Providing situations in which to support their interest and giving them situations to pursue as individuals or in small groups. We encourage all children to be active participants in their learning, by imparting their ideas, making decisions and choices with their educators relating to their play.

Our Curriculum is flexible so as to provide for children with different levels of ability so that each child's individual goals and interests are catered for, our program assists children in becoming curious, questioning, successful learners.

Children's individual interests and group experiences are extended and explored within our program by questioning the children and furthering their knowledge. We provide challenging and interesting extensions to challenge the children's thinking and further develop their curiosity and interests. We aim to provide a learning environment in which children can explore, create, construct and solve

problems in a familiar and secure setting where they have positive and productive relationships with their friends and educators.

The children enjoy engaging in open ended learning centres, quiet independent working time and teacher directed literacy and numeracy groups. We strive to provide a balance between child led, child initiated and educator supported activities and opportunities. Our program is flexible depending on the interests of the children. We provide opportunities for the children to work together in small groups, independently or one on one with an educator in a variety of meaningful, developmental and age appropriate experiences during quiet or active times throughout the day.

Within our curriculum sheet we record our learning via our Munch and Move program, social skills programs (PALS), Preschool Program, Skills based program, outdoor program and through excursions and engagement with a range of people in the community (e.g. drum man, story tellers, Ditto Keep Safe Show, police car, fire engine visits).

Educators use a variety of methods to record children's learning e.g. learning stories, observations and achievement chart lists. These are kept in each child's individual portfolio which parents can view at any time.

We encourage families to share their stories and interests from home with us. This information is optimised as a springboard for children's learning.

We encourage children to bring their favourite picture books to share with us. This instils a love of and understanding of literacy in the children, as we talk about the author, illustrator and the theme of the story.

Intentional teaching is occurring all the time, when we ask children questions to find out their interests. We can then extend or expand on them by reading a story, playing with related toys or sharing our life experiences.

Children's learning is observed in our photos which are displayed in the curriculum sheet and also in our daily write ups and our learning journeys.

Play is a fantastic way for children to learn. Children are usually having so much fun interacting with their friends and educators that they are generally unaware that they are learning or developing new skills or interests.

## The flow of a typical day

Each day has a number of variants that determine it's 'flow', some of those variants being the children, the staff, the weather, what's 'of interest', etc..... exact times are unpredictable.

7:30	Centre opens and breakfast is served until 8:00am All children are in one room in a family grouping.
8:30	Groups separate. Room specific program. See individual room program and routines. .
9:30 - 10:00	Progressive Morning Tea.
10:00 - 12:00	Room specific program. See individual room program and routines
12:00 - 12:30	Lunch
12:30 - 2:00	Quiet time.
2.30 - 3:00	Progressive afternoon tea.
3:00 - 5:00	Room specific program. See individual room program and routines.
5:00	All children are in one room in a family grouping.
5.15	Late snack offered
6:00 p.m.	Centre closes.

- ☆ Children's interests, the weather, teacher's observations and parental input all determine what's provided at any time for the children across all areas.
- ☆ Children have access to drinking water throughout every day.
- ☆ Children have access to the toilet throughout every day and toileting assistance/nappy changing meets the needs of the individual child.
- ☆ A MORE DETAILED ROUTINE IS UPDATED REGULARLY AND DISPLAYED IN YOUR CHILD'S ROOM

## Parent Involvement

An early learning and care centre is a place where all the people who educate and care for the children enrolled come together to ensure that those children are receiving the best opportunities possible at any one time. As a direct result of this belief, parents and family are welcome in our Centres at any time, whether it's to spend time with your child and their friends, to share a meal or share an interest/skill.

Your involvement bridges the gap between home and the Centre; helps to provide continuity of care for your child while helping the staff get a more 'holistic' picture of your child, enabling them to develop deeper relationships.

Management decisions about Making A Difference Early Learning Centres are made by the management team, and whilst your input is valued, the final operational decisions rest with the Approved Provider/Owner.

We value any input or suggestions you may have about how to provide your child with the best opportunity, what their interests, skills and areas of need are. Such contributions can be made by:

- Direct communication with staff
- Writing in the daily diary: parent feedback area
- Written communication
- Input into policies and procedures
- Attendance at parent meetings and social gatherings
- Questionnaires
- General feedback whenever it's possible

### **Grievance Procedure**

Communication is always the best way to minimise and avoid potential problems. Should a problem arise, addressing it as close as possible to the original source of the problem is usually the most effective.

Choosing an appropriate time to address any concern is always important as we do discourage raising any concerns in front of the children or with a staff member who is still 'on duty' with the children.

Parents are asked to be clear in the requests they make and in expressing any areas they would like handled differently.

Staff will be helpful, encouraging and positive.

Both parties need to practice 'active listening', aiming for mutual understanding of the messages communicated.

Staff will document all complaints in the Client Feedback Register, which will immediately be brought to the attention of the Director.

Staff will actively work for a solution.

If parents feel that the issues raised have not been addressed to their satisfaction, raising the issues with, firstly the Centre Director, and then Carolyn Leis, the owner and Approved Provider are the next steps.

At each stage, the aim will be to facilitate a mutually satisfactory outcome to the situation. All complaints will be fully recorded.

If parents still feel dissatisfied, parents may ring NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate, Department of Education and Communities on 1800 619 113 (toll free).



### **Parent Library**

Parent libraries are available at each Centre. Here, valuable resources are available for you to access or borrow - just speak to the staff about the borrowing system and please, borrow whatever helps or interests you. Topics may include: general parenting advice & ideas; nutrition; sibling rivalry; school readiness; road safety; etc. Videos and the latest early childhood publications (and lists thereof) are also accessible.

### **Newsletter / Parent Communication**

*Newsletters* are published regularly - these aim to keep you up-to-date with what's happening at your Centre, any special events that need to be included on your calendar and any information we feel you'd benefit from us sharing. These will be emailed to you and a copy placed on the family noticeboard. Spare copies are available from the office.

*Parent Meetings* will be held throughout the year at varying times, depending on what needs to be communicated and discussed. These give you a face-to-face opportunity to hear, comment on and discuss Making A Difference Early Learning Centres without your child present (this is an adult-only forum).

*Daily conversations* are clearly a necessity - we just ask that you remain aware of staff's responsibility to the duty of care of all children whilst on duty themselves - this limits how much time they can dedicate to conversing with you at drop-off and pick-up times, and if this time is not adequate, please make an appointment so your discussion can be uninterrupted.

### **Birth Certificate**

Your child's *original* birth certificate must be brought to the Centre on enrolment so that it can be sighted and copied. The copy is to be kept with your child's Enrolment Papers.

### **Immunisation**

It is recommended by the Department of Health that all children be immunised against infectious diseases. On enrolment, we require proof of your child's immunisation by way of you providing your child's *immunisation schedule* downloaded from the Medicare website.

If your child is not immunised for a specific disease, and we have an outbreak of that disease, your child will be excluded from attending the Centre until the outbreak is over. This policy is in line with Dept. of Health regulations governing child care centres. Fees are still payable during this time.

Please keep your child at home if suffering from a heavy cold, anything infectious, or if s/he requires 1:1 care, and please observe the prescribed quarantine periods, which are set by the Dept. of Health.

Information on some infectious diseases of children and their symptoms and exclusion times published by NSW Department of Health is available on the Department of Health's web site, which is also the site for the current National Immunisation Program Routine schedule of vaccines. ([www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au))

### **Sick children**

Early learning centres are no place for unwell children because:

- unwell children need to be closely monitored cuddled and pampered, and even with the best staff:child ratios, the 1:1 that they need isn't possible.
- childhood illnesses are generally highly contagious, and together with children's immature immune systems, one unwell child can turn an otherwise healthy Centre into an unhealthy one very quickly.

We do realise that alternate care is sometimes difficult to find, but in the interest of your child and all the others, please keep unwell children away from child care.

### **Medication**

Please observe our policy that requires a child to be absent from the Centre for at least 24 hours from the commencement of antibiotics.

After that time period, and if your child is on health professional-prescribed medication, we are more than happy to continue to administer any doses due in their time at child care. Our medication policy, however, must be observed and the necessary forms completed that give us the authority to administer such medication as per your request.

Paracetamol may be given with parental consent when temperature reaches 38.5 degrees Celsius and when the parent is coming to collect the child straight away.

*NB: medication must be within date, in its original container, prescribed by a health professional, labelled with the child's name and required dosage, handed to a member of staff and accompanied with a completed medication authority form.*

### **Sunscreen**

Please ensure that you apply 30+ sunscreen to your child before they leave home - we assume that this has occurred and will reapply to children prior to them going outside throughout the day. Please refer to our sun safe policy and procedure for more detail of our sun-safe practices.

## **Babysitting**

Although we do not prohibit staff from babysitting, we do discourage staff from babysitting for children who attend our Centres due to the potential conflict of interest that may arise. It must be noted that in the event that staff do offer their services as babysitters after hours, we do not necessarily promote or recommend them as 1:1 babysitters just because they work well here in a team environment.

Staff are employed under strict Confidentiality and No Gossip guidelines and are not permitted to discuss Making A Difference Early Learning Centres, its staff, customers or policies, occurrences, etc. with anyone not from Making A Difference. If confidentiality is breached a warning will be given as to the status of employment. We ask parents and staff to sign a letter of understanding which clearly states the Centre has no out of hour's duty of care and is not a party to any such arrangement.

All arrangements are to be made out of the Centre and no phone calls are to be taken in regards to babysitting during work hours. Staff are not permitted to collect children or drop children off at Making A Difference Centres.

## **Food allergies and Intolerances**

Children suffering from allergies or intolerances will be provided with the best allergy free environment staff can offer. We believe all children should be able to participate in daily activities without the risk of being exposed to their allergy reactant(s) and we seek to provide that environment as much as we possibly can. At each Centre, we aim for all to be formally trained in managing Asthma and Anaphylaxis and the use of an EpiPen.

Children with allergies and intolerances inform the Centre via the Enrolment Form of any conditions affecting the child. Parents are required to complete certain forms so that staff are fully informed of the condition, symptoms and treatment required, e.g. Asthma Student Record, Allergy Alert Form, Long Term Procedure Form and Individual Care Plan.

Lists of children with allergies are located in each class room and kitchen. Prior parental permission to display this information is given on the Enrolment Form. Allergy alerts and treatment plans with photos are located in each classroom, the staff room, the Allergies & Asthma Folder in the office, and with the child's medication for children with severe allergies or life threatening conditions. Treatment plans and procedures will be clear and without the need for further interpretation. Concerns or complaints from staff or parents as a direct result of environment modification to avoid allergens must be directed to the Director.

## **No Peanuts**

Making A Difference Early Childhood Education and Care Centres are Peanut Free Centres. We do not knowingly use peanuts or peanut products in our cooking or craft activities. We do not knowingly have or allow peanut products anywhere in the Centres.

Parents are informed via the Family Handbook and a sign on the front door/gates. Parents are reminded not to bring any food into the Centre e.g. their own child finishing off breakfast, snacks in their bag. However, permission will be given for parents to bring in food if their child has special dietary needs, provided it does not contain peanut products. Parents must first discuss this with the Director. Parents are requested and reminded via the newsletter and strategically placed notes that **No Peanuts** applies also to cakes, biscuits, etc brought to open days, morning or afternoon teas, special events, etc. held at the Centre.

We look forward to *making a difference* to your child's world!

*Thankyou for joining our community!*