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Welcome to our service

Thank you for taking the time to read our parent handbook, whether you are an established family, newly enrolled or just wanting to know more about our service.

Throughout this handbook we will be provide you with a wealth of information in regards to Echidna Children's Centre and the services that we provide and pride ourselves on.

We have listed below some commonly asked questions and answers:

Who owns Echidna Children's centre?

David Flanders is our Licensee and ensures that Echidna Children's centre is a reputable privately owned and run service. David is an active participant in the service and as such takes on a co-director role.

How many children per day are at the service and what are their ages?

To provide quality care we operate at 29 children per day, with 8 children in the puggle room and 21 in the combined Joey and Echidna room.

We cater to children as young as 6 weeks old, all the way to 6 years old.

How many educators do we have at the service?

We pride ourselves on ensuring that ratio requirements set out from the department are met at all times. To ensure this, Echidna operates above ratio throughout the majority of the day.

In the Puggle room (0-3yrs) the regulatory ratios are as followed:

0-2 years old: 1 educator to 4 children

2-3 years old: 1 educator to 5 children.

In the puggle room we have a maximum of 8 children a day. We have two permanent staff and one floater throughout the majority of the day to ensure that children are provided with quality one on one care and support as needed.

In the combined Joey and echidna room the regulatory ratios are as followed:

2-3 years old: 1 educators to 5 children

3-5 years old: 1 educator to 10 children.

As stated above there is a maximum of 20 children in the combined Joey and Echidna room each day. To promote best practice we have 2 permanent staff, 1 trainee, and a floater in the room each day. on top of this we are funded for a support worker who is also an Early Childhood Educator who assist the service in providing effective hands on quality care for not on the Joey and Echidna room but the whole service , reflecting our holistic approach to care and education.

What are the services operational hours? Do they close at all?

Echidna Children's Centre is operational from 7am until 6pm, Monday to Friday. This means that before and after these hours we are legally not permitted to have children in the service under our care.

We are closed all public holidays and close for one week over the Christmas period. As the exact dates change each year, the director will inform you in October as to when the exact dates are, however if needed we encourage families to converse with the director before October.

What is a Philosophy?

All Services abide by their own Philosophy that guides and directs their professional practices. Each Philosophy is unique and is a vital indicator as to whether or not a service or care facility will suit you and your family's needs.

At Echidna Children's Centre we have ensured that we have taken a holistic approach to compiling and establishing our philosophy. This is evident as we have ensured that all families, educators, and children have had the opportunity to assist in creating our philosophy to ensure that it is a true reflection of our unique service.

Please take a minute to read our philosophy below:

Echidna Children's Centre Philosophy

At Echidna Children's Centre we pride ourselves on our ability to provide and project a centre that incorporates a home like feel combined with high quality education. At Echidna Children's Centre we strive to be **RESPECTFUL**, **RESOURCEFUL** and **REFLECTIVE** in order to provide and maintaining the highest quality of care and education possible.

Our focus is on providing a play based style of programming and learning which is progressive and **RELLECTS** the children's needs and interest in order to **RESPECTFULLY** engage and promote the children's learning and development. We believe in not only working alongside families and the greater community in regards to each child's learning and development, but also acknowledge that children are capable and competent learners. We focus on learning **WITH** the children in order to enable each child has the opportunity to strive towards and reach their full potential.

"Every time we set out to teach a child something we prevent them from making their own discoveries"

Paiget 1952'

In regards to families and communities we value ourselves on being able to offer, facilitate and **RESOURCE RESPECTFUL** personal and authentic **RELATIONSHIPS** and partnerships. We have embedded in our centre the belief, **RESPECT** and knowledge that families are the children's first educators and as such we strive to foster positive, **RESPECTUFL**, **RECIPROCAL** and collaborative **RELATIONSHIPS** with not only immediate but also extended families. Here at Echidna Children's Centre we provide a warm and welcoming environment and endeavour to effectively communicate and personally converse with each and every family as well as seek out any feedback from any and all families. This feedback is vital in enabling the centre to provide individualised and **RELLECTIVE** programs for each child to further engage and promote their individual learning and capabilities.

We endeavour to keep each and every family up to date in regards to centre development as a whole as well as each child's individual holistic development and needs through a diverse range of ways. This includes but is not limited to:

Portfolios, fortnightly newsletters, daily reflections, individual informative day sheets, face to face interactions and discussions, Facebook updates as well as uploading relevant information onto the Echidna Children's Centre application.

We understand that each individual family has a range of needs and commitments in their home life and we **REFLECT** this by ensuring that all children's information, development and learning is up to date, relevant and easily accessible.

At Echidna Children's Centre we strive to acknowledge, involve and engage with the community and believe that we have a vital part to play and as a centre have a valuable place in the community. We believe that by empowering children with the foundation to promote their skills, knowledge and learning abilities, we are ultimately assisting each child to develop a sense of belonging to their community and enabling their future selves to hopefully become positive and active citizens in their community.

In regards to children we strive to incorporate all aspects of the Early Years Learning framework into each and every element of the day. We pride ourselves on being able to facilitate the children's ability to feel a sense of:

Belonging – knowing where and with whom they belong

Being – recognising the significance of the here and now, building and maintaining relationships, engaging with life's joys and complications and meeting challenges in everyday life.

Becoming – children are shaped by many different events and circumstances. Becoming **REFLECTS** this rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow.

We believe that play is essentially work for children and so is intrinsic in enabling children to develop and grow. At Echidna Children's Centre we believe no matter what type of play (Structured, unstructured, open-ended, outcome focused or spontaneous) it needs to be fun, exciting, creative, investigative, stimulating, hands on and challenging. Play provides opportunities for children to physically develop their cognitive skills as they try out their hypothesis and problem solve through play, express ideas, socially engage, discover, create, imagine and explore. We believe that in order for children to **REACH** their own potential and to be the best version of themselves we must treat the learning environment as the 3rd teacher and as such provide a programmed learning environment that incorporates children interest and individual developmental needs. We strive to promote each child's natural curiosity about their world and as such celebrate children's play, discovery and learning which is evident through our critical **REFLECTION**, meaningful documentation and programming as well as our group learning stories.

In regards to staff we are committed to learning and we continually **REFLECT** on our practice in order to provide the best care possible **REFLECTING** the needs and rights of the children, families, communities and staff as a whole. The staff at Echidna Children's centre strive to maintain and project a professional, well-groomed cohesive team that focuses on enhancing, acknowledging and promoting each individual's needs and capabilities. We strive to display and promote our professionalism in every aspect of our day and as such believe that we need to gain the trust and **RESPECT** of one another, each child, families and the greater community, enabling each staff member to expand on their learning and ability to provide quality care and education for each individual child and family. We believe that partaking in professional development is vital in ensuring that we continually strive to be better and do better. We expect all staff to critically reflect on their own practice and stay up to date with any and all changes in the field of early years care in order to maintain the highest possible care and commitment towards children and their learning.

* The Philosophy is updated yearly to ensure it truly reflects our service through all our growth and changes.

What do we provide you and your child?

At our service we provide 3 nutritious meals a day. We cater for all children's dietary needs including any and all allergies. We happily provide meals for children just starting to eat, including a vast range of fresh purees and mash foods, reflecting our commitment to ensure we are inclusive of all children's needs.

On top of our 3 meals a day, which cater to 80% of a child's daily dietary needs, we also provide fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the day, encouraging the children to further promote their physical wellbeing as they indulge in a range of delicious fruits and vegetables during morning and afternoon tea.

We provide all drinking needs (excluding formula) and pride ourselves on being a "water and milk" service. This term means that the children are provided with both water and milk throughout the day as we further foster and enhance positive nutrition as well as eating and drinking habits with all the children in our care. Liquids such as juice and cordial are considered as "sometimes" drinks and as such we ensure all children are given the knowledge and power to make informed healthy decisions.

We provide a secure environment that ensures that children are safe at all times through the use of security and code access entry points as well as alarms and lockable door systems. All our educators have extensive training in and understanding of child protection, which is updated when needed. On top of this we also ensure all educators are competent and have relevant and up to date first aid as well as asthma and anaphylaxis training.

We provide all primary caregivers with documented insight into your child's day, learning, as well as their cycle of growth through planned and spontaneous moments, experiences and activities through our innovative online program "kinder M8".

We provide high quality care which are above ratio requirements, ensuring that each child feels safe, secure and supported in our care while growing and learning.

We provide a documented school readiness routine that is reflective of the Department of Education's learning program.

We provide a holistic researched based routine that focuses on routine and consistency, encapsulating the needs and interest of children both individually and as a group.

We provide a connection to the living environment and enriching experiences through the use of our Service pets and visitors.

We provide a range of rich and meaningful incursions which reflect the children's needs and interest as well as community's celebrations and events.

We ensure all educators are continually enhancing their learning through mentoring and course opportunities.

We provide a fun and enriching learning environment that reflects our unique service and focus on a play based learning approach.

What is Kinder M8? Why do we use it?

Kinder M8 is an innovative online system catering to both the services, families and greater communities needs as it provides a unique online profile for the service enabling parents to view, comment and gain information about their child's day in our service at their own time and pace.

As of 2017 Echidna Children's Service is proud to be an affiliate with Kinder M8 and as such now provide parents with a new unique way of documenting their child's day, growth and learning in an easy to use app which can be accessed from any device. This simple to use app gives parents all the information they may need in one easy step.

This service coincides with our sustainability goals as we aim to be greener and think smarter about our usage and wastage. With this system we are able to cut our printing usage by more than half as well as our paper usage, in turn reducing our carbon input on this earth.

To promote a sense of feeling safe, secure and supported each family is provided with unique log in codes and in turn only have the ability to view their own child's profile. In each profile you will have access to a range of information including daily running such as what and how much they ate throughout the day, how much your child sleep and when they had their nappy changed or went to the toilet.

Parents are then also able to view and sign for medication forms, as well as accident and incident forms pertaining to their child.

During the day each family is also able to view our daily story as it gets updated, along with a range of different photos about your child's day and learning opportunities that have occurred. On top of this your child will also have individual learning observations, which once published to the app, parents can view at any time. One of the best attributes about this online observation is that parents are able to actively be a part of the documenting and learning as they can immediately comment and provide information and feedback about the observation, further assisting educators in providing a unique program aimed solely at your child's individual learning needs and contributes to an effective cycle of planning.

Another wonderful feature that Kinder M8 provides is the ability for parents/caregivers and educators to instantly communicate to one another through our online instant message system, allowing parents to get text like messages and immediately respond. This ensures that if a family forgets to bring something to care, or educators have any question or visa versa, they can just hop up on the app and message a specific educator or parent straight away, getting a notification when they receive a reply.

As of April 2017 Kinder M8 offers more ways to go green through a unique online sign in system where parents/ caregivers can sign online rather than on paper when signing their child in and out each day.

All information through Kinder M8 is secured in our services as well as a locked server which ensures there is no breach of access, ensuring that all vital information is able to be kept for an extended period of time. This gives parents the power to view and track their child's learning, sleep patterns, nappy/toilet patterns as well food intake patterns over not just weeks, but years. Kinder M8 goes above and beyond to provide this information in an easy to read format as well as a vibrant graph for parents to easily observe and track.

Administrative information

DAILY RATE: - As of February 2018 Echidna Children's Centre charges a daily rate of \$105

Our daily rate can be partially subsidised through childcare rebate (CCB) and Childcare rebate (CCR) as well as Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JET). If you would like more information or to apply for any of these subsidies please ring or visit your local Centrelink service, as they are the service that can assist you in applying for these subsidies.

BOND: - All new enrolments are required to pay \$100 bond. This security deposit ensures that your child's spot is secured before commencing care.

FEE PAYMENT: - Our fee payment structure is as followed:

We do not accept cash payments, due to short administrative hours and as such all enrolments are given an Ezi debit form before commencing in order to set up online payments.

Before starting at our service, new enrolments are required to pay 2 weeks in advance before starting care. This assists all families in case of extenuating services that might happen with fee paying and as such ensures families do not get behind on payments.

OWING FEES – if for some reason or another, fee payments become late and families end up owing money, management reserves the right to charge families a fee of \$20 per day until their fees are up to date or a repayment plan is organised with management.

LATE FEE – as stated above, we are legally allowed to be responsible for the care of your child between the hours of 7am until 6pm, we are NOT licensed to have children in the service unattended by their parents before or after these hours. Therefore, if a family is late in picking up a child and does not arrive inside the service doors before 6pm they will be charged a fee of **\$5 per minute until they leave the service**, not when they sign out their child. We are closed at 6pm, which means that educators as well as families have to be out of the service at 6pm.

We ask all families arrive at least 15 minutes before close so that our educators have enough time to do a thorough child and information handover before closing hours.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: we are not open on public holidays, however families are still required to pay for public holidays if it falls on their child's day of care. This is to cover the cost of your child's spot at the service as well as cover educator's costs. To ensure a more honourable systems we provide the use of makeup days for those families.

MAKE UP DAYS (MUD) – MUD days are ONLY given for public holidays. This means if you and your family goes on holidays, the enrolled child is absent due to being unwell, or your child does not attend on their giving day for any other reason, you will not be eligible for a MUD.

We encourage families to understand that due to the unique service and the quality we provide, we are at capacity and as such MUD cannot occur on any given date as we have to adhere to a strict child capacity. Management will work closely with families in order to assist them in securing a MUD

as soon as is possible, keeping in mind that we acknowledge priority of care and as such will work the MUD accordingly.

LEAVING THE SERVICE – at Echidna Children’s Centre we require a minimum of 2 weeks written notice (email is an acceptable for), management will work with families to establish an end date of care and bond repayment.

Everything you need to know about the puggle room

As stated previously, our puggle room consists of only 8 children with 2 permanent staff and one floater. The ages in the puggle room range from 6 weeks to 3yrs.

DAILY ROUTINE - Our puggle room daily routine is on display and is reflective of the children’s needs and interest. In line with evidence based research we ensure that our daily routine is consistent and effective. We also promote individual routines in that we strive to ensure that while in care, a child’s routine is somewhat reflective of their home routine. Our routines are seasonal in conjunction with weather patterns and is always subject to change due a range of circumstances and needs.

BOTTLES - In regards to bottles we kindly ask that families provide bottles with water only and bringing the formula in a separate segregated container (with the correct scoops in each section). This is to ensure there is minimal margin for error and that the formula is freshly made when required.

In line with SIDS we CANNOT give a child a bottle while in the cot, however to counteract this we gladly comfort the child by holding and giving a bottle before placing gently into the cot.

WHAT TO PACK IN A PUGGLES BAG EACH DAY: - We kindly ask all families to bring in both fitted and a flat cot sheet, drink bottle, at least 5 nappies, a hat (which can be left until their last day of care for the week), a dummy (if needed), bottles, formula and a few spare changes of clothes that include a jumper and pants, shorts, t-shirts, socks and singlets.

We strive to ensure all items are returned to the correct owner at the end of the day, however if each and every item is not labelled, educators are unable to be as effective in this pursuit as they would like to be. To assist educators please ensure that every item brought to Echidna is clearly labelled.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS: We strive to ensure each child in the puggle room feels a sense of belonging to our service at as such we strive to establish and maintain strong and secure educator and child bonds and in turn a sense of security. We further promote and extend this sense of belonging with our interactive family wall. We kindly request all families to please bring in a family photo so we can display it in the puggle room and further foster a sense of belonging to our environment.

We further encourage family connections through family involvement and feedback in our routines and weekly program. Our educators love a good chat and love knowing about each puggles home life and what they are learning or getting up to while not in our care. In line with national quality standards we have a strong focus on forging relationships and inclusion with not only children but also their families.

OUR PROGRAM: We have an extensive holistic indoor/outdoor program in the puggle room that covers all developmental domains. Our program aims to promote learning and developmental needs through a continual cycle of planning. Our educators enhance children’s learning and development through interest based play learning, in that we cater children’s learning by involving their interest in individual and small group play based learning.

We encourage creativity and free thought through a range of different mediums, not just craft experiences, which in turn foster fine and gross motor as well as cognitive skills.

We also have a strong focus on physical wellbeing here in the puggle room, ensuring that each child's physical development and capabilities are met and extended upon each day, this in turn enhancing each puggles independence and growth.

Everything you need to know about the Echidna room:

In the combined Joey and Echidna room there is a maximum of 20 children per day with 2 permanent educators, a floater, a school readiness educator as well as a support worker. The Joey and Echidna room caters for children 2-6 years of age.

DAILY ROUTINE: The Joey and Echidna room takes a family grouping approach to learning, in that children learn best when grouped with a mix of ages as they further foster and enhance their development. This is reflecting of the primary school system which works in stages, and not years as they group a variety of ages together in the one class.

The daily routine is reflective of children's needs and interest and aims to further foster and promote children's holistic learning. As in the puggle room, the daily routine is subject to change due to a range of circumstances and is flexible in its delivery.

WHAT TO PACK EACH DAY FOR CARE: It is imperative that each child brings a water bottle and hat each day to ensure that they are able to enjoy our outdoor environment while staying effective hydrated. These items can be left at the service until their last day of attendance for the week.

We also ask that each child packs a range of spare clothes (even if fully toilet trained), with several change of clothes for a range of different weather outcomes.

If your child is in nappies, please provide at least 5 nappies per day

If your child sleeps or rests during the day we ask that you bring in a fitted and flat sheet.

please ensure that each and every item brought in is CLEARLY Labelled. Our educators try hard to ensure that all items brought in are returned, however if they are not labelled it is near impossible for educators to effectively execute this task.

SLEEP ROUTINES: In our service we strive to cater to all children's sleep and rest needs and as such ensure that we give children the ability to regulate their bodies by inviting them to rest and sleep when required. Working in conjunction with families, we strive to ensure that children follow the same sleep patterns as homes as effectively as possible.

Through reflection we have obtained that children who do not require sleep are usually of an older age and so it is practical to engage in school readiness based activities during the hours of 12-2 while the younger children require a peaceful rest or sleep period.

OUR PROGRAM: The program in the Joey and Echidna room is similar to the puggle as in that it takes a holistic approach to learning and covers all developmental domains. The room works on a two program systems, with an ongoing weekly indoor/outdoor program as well as a weekly school readiness program. Both programs are on display to promote visible learning and are effective in enhancing and promoting learning. These programs are most effective when used in conjunction with family input and engagement and as such educators strive to promote strong connections with not only children but families alike.

With our school readiness program, our school readiness educator works closely alongside a range of external services to ensure a high quality and effective program is delivered and maintained at all

times. Our school readiness educator eagerly converses with families encouraging weekly input and feedback.

Please keep in mind that learning does not happen at set times and for set periods throughout the day, here at Echidna we pride ourselves on ensuring that learning is continual and that at any time of the day is a an opportunity for learning, growth and development whether it be conscious or subconscious active discovering and learning.

