

# FAMILY HANDBOOK

## STORY HOUSE EARLY LEARNING

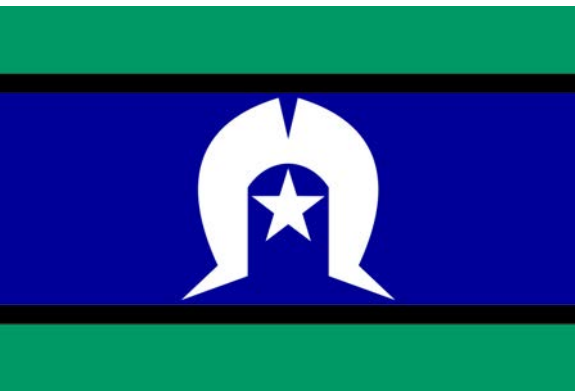




Story House Early Learning would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which our Services are located.



We pay our respects to Elders, both past and present, and extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons present within our Services.



We recognise the significance of their culture, histories, stories and traditions that originated on, around and within this land and its waterways.



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## CEO WELCOME

We are thrilled you have chosen Story House Early Learning to educate and care for your child. Fostering a love of learning and encouraging children to be curious is at the heart of our philosophy.

The first five years of a child's life is when they learn more quickly than at any other stage of their life. Our wonderful educators will guide your child on their learning journey providing them with responsive educational programs that cater to their individual interests and needs.

This Family Handbook will give you an insight into the kinds of experiences your child will have at Story House Early Learning and what to expect along the way. We share lots of great tips, stories and information relating to early childhood learning on our Story House social networks.

We welcome your family to the Story House Early Learning family, and we look forward to getting to know you in this exciting and important stage of your child's early learning journey.

**Paul Cochrane**  
**Chief Executive Officer**





## CHAPTER 1 : A LITTLE ABOUT US



# OUR STORY

Children and families are at the heart of who we are at Story House Early Learning. We believe our valuable teams and beautiful, unique services are the reasons why the Story House brand is known and loved.

We have services located across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria all providing wonderful responsive early learning programs to children.

No two services are the same as we understand that each community has different needs and wants for the care of their children so they are tailored accordingly.

Opening and closing times, extra-curricular activities, inclusions such as nappies and meals are designed to support our families and provide children with the best possible start to their education and care experience.



# OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Story House, every child's story matters to us. We believe that each child is on their own unique journey that shapes the person they are and who they will become. Just like chapters in a book, we understand that each child steps through their story at their own pace and in their own time.

We believe learning is a lifelong journey and that early childhood education and care provides the foundation for learning for life. Children make sense of the world around them through the use of processes such as exploration, collaboration and problem solving across all aspects of the curriculum. They develop dispositions such as curiosity, persistence and creativity and use play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas, follow and extend their own interests. Children develop understandings of themselves and their world through active, hands-on play. A supportive active learning environment and responsive, holistic programs enable children to follow their interests, feel success, thrive and have fun. Our educators are key to supporting children on their journey and we believe that relationships with families and community are key to supporting children to be global citizens and helping them to reach their potential. In early childhood settings children develop a sense of belonging when they feel accepted, develop attachments and trust those that care for them. As children are developing their sense of identity, they explore different aspects of it (physical, social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive), through their play and their relationships. When children feel safe, secure and supported they grow in confidence to explore and learn.

Let your child's learning story begin with us.



# OUR VALUES

**INTEGRITY:** We are true and honest and stand by our word.

**CONNECTEDNESS:** We value relationships and keep these at the core of what we do.

**RESPECT:** We value each other, our children, families and our communities.

**COMMITMENT:** We are dedicated to providing quality early childhood programs that provide children with the foundations for life.

**SAFETY:** Safety in all that we do - regardless of where we are our services are located our children, families and staff deserve to be safe and feel safe.

**GROWTH AND INNOVATION:** We continually improve the way we do things, are open to new ways of thinking and strive to grow our people, our services and our business.





# OUR TEAMS

The Service Manager is the Nominated Supervisor who is responsible for the overall operations at the service, including the education program, staff management, and compliance with regulations, policies and procedures. The 2IC (second-in-charge) provides leadership support for the Service Manager in managing the overall operations. 'Responsible Persons' are members of our teams with appropriate experience and qualifications that can be placed 'in charge' when the Service Manager is absent.

The Educational Leader provides curriculum direction and guidance to all educators and has oversight of the educational programs and practice.

Each service has a dedicated Business Operations Manager who visits each service regularly to support and mentor the education team and to oversee the service provision. They monitor the Service Manager and the service offering, compliance and ensure quality programs and practice are being implemented.

The Education Practice Partner is a manager who provides specific coaching, mentoring and guidance to our services, in meeting the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The Support Office provides specific expertise and is led by the Executive Team. The team provides governance and leadership support and acts as a support hub for our services to ensure they can be the service of choice in each of our communities and can focus on what they do best – providing wonderful early learning and care programs for your child.



## CHAPTER 2 : THE JOURNEY BEGINS



Introducing your child to an early learning service for the first time can be an emotional time for both the child and the family. There are many ways to assist you and your child through this transition.

When possible, take the opportunity to spend some time with us before your child starts. This may be one visit or several visits over a few weeks. Meet your child's educators, explore play areas and observe the program in action. This will support both you and your child to feel more confident on your child's first day.

Understanding your child's needs and providing an environment that meets those needs is crucial. Our educators play an active role in gathering information from you and your family to create a smooth transition between home and the service environment.



# PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY

Here are a few suggestions to help you prepare before the big day arrives:

Prior to your child's first day, an orientation is encouraged to familiarise both you and your child with the service and the educators. The orientation will be tailored to you and your child's needs. It might be a quick drop in the day before or might be a series of short visits leading up the first day. It may also involve shorter days once the child has started to ease them into the routine.

Exchanging information and communicating with the Service Manager and educators about your child's needs, requirements and routines allow us to work in partnership with families to provide a smooth transition.

Bring along your child's comforter, whether this is a teddy, blanket, dummy or even a family photo to help your child feel safe and secure.





# YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DAY

So that your child is happy and comfortable each day they attend, please bring along the following in their bag:

- a change of clothes for wet or messy play and extra clothes if they are learning to toilet
- Comforter such as dummy, teddy or blanket
- Sterilized bottle for milk teats must be covered by a cap.
- Bottles to be made up for formula must contain the correct amount of cooled, boiled water.
- Formula (pre-measured in measured container) or breast milk if required

Please ensure all items are clearly labelled.

Remember to dress your child in comfortable clothes according to the weather.

Non-restrictive clothing that can easily be removed for toileting and is suitable for running, jumping, climbing, painting, playing with sand and water is best. We recommend safe, sturdy, closed toe shoes that can be easily managed by the child to encourage self-help skills.

When you arrive at the centre, you will be greeted by the Service Manager. You will be shown where to sign your child in electronically via our Kiosk and then shown through to your child's classroom where you can put away their belongings.



## CHAPTER 3 : FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES



# ARRIVING AND DEPARTING

Under the legislation that governs all early learning services, you must record your child's attendance by signing in and out using our digital kiosks. This is linked to the 'session of care' you have enrolled in and any Government entitlements you are eligible for.

Your child's sessions of attendance are submitted to the Federal Government each week.

If you arrive and outdoor play is underway, please ensure your child is wearing a SunSmart hat.

Sunscreen is available for you to apply to your child before you take them outdoors to play. Please make sure you always take your child to an educator, so they know you have arrived for the day.

When departing with your child, please ensure you sign your child out, collect their belongings and inform an educator of your departure. This time can also be used to share important information about your child's day.

# AUTHORISED PERSONS TO COLLECT

To ensure the safety of your child, authorised persons will be required to enter their own details in our digital kiosks at drop off and collection times. It is vitally important that you advise the Service Manager of people whom, are authorised to collect your child from our service, and that you keep these details up to date.

Your child will only be allowed to leave our service with authorised persons as identified by you on the enrolment form or by prior notice from you. Our educators will check the authorised person's details against the information contained in the enrolment form. Any person, not known by our educators, arriving to collect children will be asked to produce photo identification. If an unexpected person arrives at our service to collect your child, you will be immediately notified to confirm if you have authorised this.

Persons collecting your child must be over 18, unless they are the parent. Children are not allowed to be released to older siblings, unless they are over 18 years old and documented as authorised persons.

Where custody orders are in place that affect the child, you must provide current court papers to have this enforced at our service. In the case of a non-custodial parent arriving to collect your child, our Service Manager will contact the police and then notify you of the incident. Without a legal court order in place, our educators cannot stop a parent collecting a child.



# FEE RESPONSIBILITIES

To commence your child's enrolment, please pay your first week, plus two weeks in advance. As we don't charge a bond, this provides a fee buffer to ensure fees never fall in arrears. Fees are charged for every booked day, whether your child is in attendance or not. Casual days are offered, and these must be paid for on the day of care needed. Casual days can be cancelled without payment 48 hours prior to the booking. Fees will be charged for any cancellations after this time.

It is our policy that all accounts always remain two weeks in advance and fees are collected through a direct debit system.

Our fees are inclusive, which includes all meals, nappies if needed, and some visiting shows to the services.

Our service cannot operate successfully with ongoing debt. If your direct debit fees are dishonoured regularly, your child's care may be postponed or suspended. If extraordinary circumstances cause you to fall behind, Story House Early Learning, using its absolute discretion, may offer a payment plan to bring your account back to credit.

Outstanding fees after an enrolment has ceased will automatically be referred to an external Debt Collection agency.

# CHANGES TO YOUR BOOKING OR ENDING CARE

**For any changes in bookings, a minimum of two weeks' written notice is required.** This ensures that we can roster according to the changes made and provide the appropriate notice to our teams. If two weeks' notice is not given, regular fees will be applied. If you unfortunately need to end your care arrangements with us, two weeks' notice is needed. If you wish to change from a permanent booking to a casual booking, the same notice period applies.

**Please note, in line with the Australian Government Cessation of Care policy, you child must attend their final day of care, otherwise your Child Care Subsidy entitlements will be ceased, and you will incur full fees on your account. If you have any questions about this government requirement, please speak with your Service Manager.**





# HOLIDAYS

Fees are charged for all gazetted public holidays. We offer all families a holiday discount for when you go away, so that you can be assured your enrolment is safe and there for when you return. Ask your Service Manager for more details about this.

# CHILD CARE SUBSIDY (CCS)

You may be eligible for subsidies to assist in reducing your fees such as the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), which is available at our services.

The percentage of CCS you will receive is calculated according to your estimated annual family income, level of approved activity and type of childcare. To receive the CCS, you must create or update your family account with Centrelink (Department of Human Services) online prior to your child's first day of care. If you do not do this, you will pay full fees for childcare.

In order to receive your entitled CCS, you must sign your child in and out of the service each day at our digital kiosks and confirm any absent days upon return.

Children are entitled to 42 absent days per financial year. The Family Assistance Office outlines exceptions to the 42 allowable absences in a financial year, if your child requires more absent days. Any fees applied to your account due to late collection of your child are not subject to CCS.



## CCS AND IMMUNISATION

In order to receive CCS your child must be up to date with their immunisations according to the National Immunisation Schedule Program.

Your Service Manager will take a copy of your child's immunisation history status letter for our records.

For any subsequent vaccinations your child receives, please inform your Service Manager.





## CHAPTER 4 : KEEPING EVERYONE HEALTHY AND SAFE

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Hygiene Practices

We follow thorough, best practice procedures to ensure a clean, hygienic service is maintained for you and your child. Please support this by always washing yours and your child's hands when you arrive and leave the service, following the pictorial procedures displayed near all hand washing sinks.

Hand sanitiser is available in the foyer and at each room for your use.

Children are encouraged to go to the toilet individually and independently if possible. During the toilet training process, our educators will support all toilet training attempts and positively encourage and praise all efforts made by the child. It is an important part of the toilet training process that children are given regular opportunities to attempt toileting whilst being provided with emotional support, understanding, patience and empathy.

Parents/guardians and educators are encouraged to exchange information in relation to toileting success and toileting attempts and work together to support the child through the process.



## Sun Safety

Sun safety is important, and we ask that your child comes to the service with a legionnaire-style or broad-brimmed hat each day.

Apply sunscreen to your child at home or immediately upon arrival at the service.

Your child will receive a Story House hat as part of their enrolment – this is perfect for keeping your child safe during outdoor play. Please ensure that sleeved shirts or clothing is always worn so that they can be adequately protected from the sun.



## Incidents and Accidents

Our educators take a proactive approach to safety at our services and conduct thorough risk assessments of all play areas so that effective supervision strategies are in place and each child can feel safe and free to explore their environment.

Educators holding Senior First Aid qualifications including asthma and anaphylaxis training are present in the service at all times.

Should an accident occur, educators will comfort the child, administer first aid as appropriate then complete an incident form for you to sign. Any time an incident involves an injury to your child's head or face, we will contact you immediately, and similarly if the injury is of a more serious nature and requires medical attention.

Any serious incident that involves urgent medical attention will be reported to the regulatory authority

If you seek medical attention following an incident at our service, please notify the Service Manager, as we are obliged to report this.



## Illnesses and Medications

We encourage children and educators to practice good personal hygiene at the service to help minimise the spread of illness.

If your child is unwell before they come into care, we ask that you keep them at home until they are well enough to return. For certain illnesses, a medical clearance is required before your child returns.

If your child becomes ill while at the service, you may be contacted to collect your child and seek further medical advice. We will administer first aid and record all the details relating to the child's illness. We'll ask you to sign the record when you collect your child as we are obliged to document these details. If you are contacted to collect your child because of a temperature or suspected illness, our policy states a 24hr exclusion period applies or a medical clearance must be obtained before your child can return to the service.

If your child requires medication to manage a short-term illness or an ongoing medical condition, you will be asked to fill out a medication authorisation form when you bring your child in to care. The information on the form must match that of the dispensing label on the medication.

It is important that you read our medication policy carefully to know the guidelines for educators to administer medication to your child including panadol, prescription and non-prescription medication.



## Healthy Eating

Story House provides delicious and nutritious meals for your child and we aim to develop healthy food attitudes and habits. Weekly menus are displayed for our families so that you can see what your child is eating each day. We cater to individual dietary and cultural requirements so make sure to discuss these with your educator or Service Manager.

## Infant Feeding

Families can bring bottles of breastmilk or dry formula for their children. You can feel reassured that our educators know how to store and prepare breastmilk and formula correctly and will offer your child their bottle at the required times throughout the day.

When your child is ready to move onto solids, feel free to discuss their food experiences with educators who can help you.



## CHAPTER 5 : OUR LEARNING PROGRAM



# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Learning Goals & School Readiness

Through the National Early Years Learning Framework's five learning goals educators will assist your child to develop:

- A strong sense of their identity
- Connections with their world
- A strong sense of wellbeing
- Confidence and involvement in their learning; and
- Effective communication skills

Our service offers a comprehensive Kindergarten Program which includes a focus on school readiness. This is based on the Framework which has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as the most appropriate stimulus for brain development.

We aim to guide your child in becoming an effective learner through creating an environment that is challenging and stimulating. The overall aim of our program is to help your child to develop in all areas necessary for success now and into the future.





## National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework is a Government initiative which sets a National Quality Standard creating greater consistency for early childhood education and care services across Australia.

This initiative aims to improve educator-to-child ratios in services, increase skills and qualifications, national regulations and a quality ratings system which will help you to make informed choices about the education and care you choose for your child.

Our service aims to exceed the national quality standard across all areas and each of our services has a high quality improvement plan (QIP) in place to show what is happening in our centre to achieve this. This looks at areas like educational programs and practice, children's health and safety, physical environment, staffing arrangements, relationships with children and collaborative partnerships with families and communities.

For more information about the National Quality Framework, please speak to your Service Manager or you can also find more information on the website: [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)





## Learning Environments

Children's learning is dynamic and complex, and the service environment is designed for this. Your child can enjoy a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences. Educators provide a range of active and restful experiences and will support your child to make appropriate decisions regarding participation.

Each of our rooms are individual and unique and are tailored to suit the age and development stage of your child, the diversity of the educators, children, families, the wider community and are filled with smiles, fun and educational resources.

As your child grows and develops so will their needs, interests and abilities. To cater for this, your child will gradually transition to the next room in consultation with you. Before we transition your child, we carefully assess them to ensure they are ready for the next step and discuss our plans with you. Then your child will visit their new room a few times to ensure a smooth transition.

## Sustainable Practices

We want to ensure a sustainable future for our children and do this by creating natural environments and providing natural materials as part of our program.

Our program includes initiatives which promote care and respect for our environment and encourages sustainable practices like reducing, reusing, recycling and upcycling.

Your child will be involved in activities like growing plants and herbs, composting, cooking, using recycled materials to build and craft, be waste wise and even look after a pet.

We always encourage participation from families and the wider community.



## Staying Connected

Story House values authentic, open communication with you and your family.

We will share information about the service and your child on a regular basis.

There are lots of ways we communicate with our families including:

- Email
- Social media
- Parent portals
- Face to face
- Phone

Educators are always happy to talk to you about your child. Be aware that mornings and afternoons can be a little rushed so it's often a good idea to make a special time to meet with your child's educator or the Service Manager.



## CHAPTER 6 : WORKING TOGETHER



# PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Working together is the best way to ensure quality education and care for your child. Our service is an extension of your home and we want to ensure that the relationships, culture and activities that are important to your family are recognised and celebrated. We respect you as the primary educator and will work alongside you on your child's learning journey. We encourage you to spend time at the service and share special occasions with your child, contribute to the program and provide feedback. Please speak with your Educator for more information.

Parents are also encouraged to be involved in an advisory and consultative manner. We encourage parents to be involved in the review of our service's philosophy, policies and procedures. These opportunities will be made available through regular communication through Storypark, in the reception area and in your child's room.

Our educators are here to ensure that your child is happy and healthy in their care. If there is a problem that arises that you feel you need to resolve with our educators, then please let us know.

All grievances will be taken seriously, and we will always try our best to resolve any matters of concern. Our grievance policy is available for families to review.





## CONTACT US

For further information, Story House Early Learning encourages families to contact us:

Support Office: (07) 3397 5000

Family Support Team: 1300 786 794

Email: [info@shel.edu.au](mailto:info@shel.edu.au)

Website: [www.shel.edu.au](http://www.shel.edu.au)

