

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

All rights reserved

Complete policies and forms are available to read on Storypark and on request

2024

Updated February 2024

There are just four early learning centres that belong to the small, family owned and operated Making a Difference group:

- Making a Difference at Frenchs Forest (in Frenchs Forest Public School grounds)
Operating Hours: 7:30am-6pm, 50 weeks per year (closed over Christmas)
- Making a Difference for Babies at Frenchs Forest (in Frenchs Forest Public School grounds)
Operating Hours: 7:30am-6pm, 50 weeks per year (closed over Christmas)
- Making a Difference at Beacon Hill (in Beacon Hill Public School grounds)
Operating Hours: 7:00am-6pm, 50 weeks per year (closed over Christmas)
- Making a Difference at Narraweena (next to the community centre)
Operating Hours: 7:30am-6pm, 50 weeks per year (closed over Christmas)

Handbook Contents

1.	Our People - The faces of Making a Difference
2.	Our Philosophy - What we stand for and what we believe
3.	What to bring and what to expect on your first day
4.	Tips for making sure your child settles in easily with us
5.	Our routine and service inclusions
6.	Child Care Subsidy Information
7.	Our Nutritional Menu
8.	Our educational program and curriculum information
9.	Storypark and how to use it to support your child's development
10.	A summary of our key policies to make your time with us a success including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What to do/expect when your child is unwell or becomes unwell while with us➤ How to go about giving feedback/making a complaint➤ What to expect when your child is injured or there is an incident at the centre➤ What our process is for medication for children while they are with us➤ Our fee payment structure and our photography policy

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 the Approved provider of the services since 2000. Carolyn and John have two wonderful adult children, and three delightful little grandchildren! Both Carolyn and John believe in providing quality care for children and making a real difference to the lives of all the children and families that are part of our community.

You may see both Carolyn and John from time to time around the centres as they participate in the programs, engage with staff, families and children or improvements to the facilities.

Accounts Manager: Annette Cook is our accounts manager. Annette has three grown up children and has worked with Making A Difference for many years. Annette's role is to manage payments, resolve account issues and your Child Care Subsidy. If you ever need support with your account, you can email her at annette.cook@madchildcare.com.au for help.

Centre Directors: Natalie, Lily and Lavinia are the Centre Directors for Making a Difference. They are committed to upholding the values of the Making a Difference business and each bring their own strengths, passion and drive to their roles leading the services.

Educational Leader: At each service we employ an exceptional Educational Leader. Each does a wonderful job of leading practice and guiding our program and educational decision-making at the centre. This role is to support the team to get the most out of their teaching. We can provide more information about the Educational Leader for your child's specific service at any time.

Our Team of Educators: We employ a wonderful team of dedicated professionals here at Making a Difference. Our Room leaders are all qualified with a minimum of a Diploma of Children's Education and Care and are supported by Certificate 3 qualified educators and trainees. We have a number of staff also studying towards a Bachelor of Education. All of our staff are passionate about children and treat each and every one of them as their own.

Centre Maintenance: On Fridays, you might see our facilities manager, Bret. He works with our centres each week to fix things, maintain our grounds and furniture and help with projects in the classroom and playground from time to time. He is very handy, and the children love to see him with his power tools and watch him work.

We are committed to providing a **nurturing** and **secure** environment, as we believe each **individual** child has the right to **thrive**.

We treat all children as **respected & valued citizens** of our **community**, encouraging them to lead their own unique journey.

We believe as Early Childhood **advocates**, we play an **important** role in the success of future generations.

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.

3.

What to bring on your first day (and every day!)

- Bring your child in comfortable, sun safe, but not precious clothing. *(We do a lot of messy play, paint, mud and glue especially, so save the fancy outfits for other things!).*
- Bring a spare change of clothes, *(and more if toilet training).*
- Depending on toileting, either enough undies for the day, or enough nappies (and pants).
- A labelled drink bottle your child can manage themselves, & a wide brimmed or bucket hat.
- A fitted cot sheet & top sheet for resting.
- Comfortable shoes and a jumper (weather dependant).
- For an infant, enough clean bottles and milk (breast/formula) for the whole day.
- Any comforters your child usually has, a dummy, blanket, teddy etc. *(Starting in a new environment is not the best time to wean children off these things).*
- Please avoid bringing toys or special items as they may get lost or shared and cause distress.
- Any prescribed medication your child needs, please discuss this with your Director.
- All items must be clearly labelled with your child's name please.

4.

What to expect on your first day.

- When you arrive at the centre, you'll be greeted by your Director, or your room leader.
- They will show you how to use your XPLOR App to sign your child in for their first day.
- Then they will show you where to store your child's belongings for the day and where to leave any nappies, bottles or comforters you have brought along for the day.
- After all your things are organised, we recommend spending a bit of time to find an activity your child likes to do and get it started with them. The Educators will have something ready.

- It's usually best to spend a little bit of time, but not too much time hanging around. This is absolutely up to you, and you're the best judge of what's right, but it can make it harder to say goodbye if your child expects you to stay all day.
- Once you are ready to go, say your goodbye, reassure them when you'll be back, and make your exit. We know it's tough but lingering after you've said goodbye can make it harder.
- Your child's educator will spend as much time as your child needs one on one with them, sometimes this is a 5 minute- and sometimes it is all day-cuddles.
- If at any time we think your child is distressed, we will call you and let you know.
- We will write a "My First Day" story on Storypark for you, our online learning app, for you to see in the afternoon. There will be photos of what your child did today. If they had a hard time on their first day and didn't participate in much, that's ok, new things can be hard. We will be honest about this and we know they will have a better day tomorrow.
- Give the educators a good idea of what time you'll pick up, it makes it easier for us to manage children's expectations in the afternoon as other parents begin to arrive.
- Make sure you sign your child out using XPLOR every day.

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, call us if you think it will be different so we can ensure your child is not distressed.
- Greet your child, talk about their day.
- Stay as long as you can / want to (and 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.
- Sign out on the iPad.
- Leave with your child, ensuring the gate closes behind you (and no other child leaves too😊).

NB: only people authorised can collect your child.

We know that the move into a new care setting can be hard, meeting new faces, learning new routines, meeting other children, and sometimes having to share for the first time is a lot!

- Firstly, don't expect everything to be perfect straight away, building relationships takes some time. Our educators work hard to build trusting, loving relationships, but your child may still cry on drop off for a little while. This is totally normal.
- Most children settle in really quickly, and find something to do and be engaged in. If your child doesn't, we will try lots of things to support them to be comfortable, or they can just sit on our lap & be cuddled if that's what helps. If they are distressed, we will call you.
- Talk to your child about the positive things, before you come, when you pick up and when you are at home. Remind them of the games/activities we offer and what the fun things are. This will help them build a positive picture.
- Try not to let your child feel your anxiety. You may be feeling sad, stressed or unsure about leaving them, this is normal. Your child may feel your worry, so try to stay positive around them!
- Be honest with them about when you'll come back, don't just say "soon". We find it helps if you give a more detailed timeframe. E.g., "after work when you've finished your afternoon tea". Older children may understand "5pm" and the educators can support them to read the clock.
- Never sneak out on your child. Goodbyes might be hard, but the feeling of abandonment is worse, tell them you are leaving and that you'll be back.

- Bring the comforter. A new setting is NOT the time to begin weaning a comfort item. Once they are happy with us, we can support you to wean the dummy. Let them have it while they adjust.
- Communicate with us as much as you need to, phone us during the day, and check in on them whenever you need to in order to feel comfortable. Please let us know how your child is feeling.
- Come and spend time with us on non-attendance days. Just pop in for a short visit and play.

5.	Our Routine and Centre Inclusions
-----------	--

Each classroom routine is unique, and teachers make decisions on a regular basis about how to best support your children and the class. Your teacher will share any particular class routines as they change, however the below structure is a good guide.

- From opening to 8 am: Breakfast is served. Children are grouped together at this time, as families are greeted and the playgrounds are set up for the day.
- Children separate out into their own classrooms and have activities until morning tea. Sometimes this is indoors, sometimes this is outdoors, sometimes both!
- Morning Tea is about 10am. This may be slightly earlier or later depending on the age group and the daily plans. We respond to the needs of the children.
- Morning Program – 10 am - 12 pm is a planned and implemented program.
- 12 - 2pm Rest time or sleep time; this depends on the age group and the time of the year - we usually transition out of rest time at the end of the year for our school leavers. Appropriate safe sleep practices are implemented for each age group.
- Afternoon Tea - Anytime between 2 and 3 pm
- Afternoon Program 3 pm onwards - this may be indoors or outdoors, or both!

For our nursery children, the routines are much more individual. Sleep times, mealtimes and activity times will depend on the routine provided by parents and guardians and will be discussed with the educators daily to ensure the child’s needs are being met. For example, if your child woke up very early and will need an early sleep, please let us know and we will adjust our routine to match.

6.	Child Care Subsidy Information
-----------	---------------------------------------

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is the main way the Government assists families with their childcare fees. The CCS replaced the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate with a single, means-tested subsidy. The first step is to contact Centrelink and inform them that you have a child starting childcare, and that you need to be assessed for Child Care Subsidy. You can also do this through the myGov App.

After you have been assessed by Centrelink for CCS you need to give us your details, specifically: Customer Reference Numbers (CRN) and dates of birth for your child and the parent who was assessed for childcare payments. This is included in our enrolment form. Failure to provide this information will result in full fees being paid. It is important that you keep your income/activity up to date so that your CCS is accurate.

Childcare Subsidy, once approved, will be paid directly to us by the Government as a portion of your fee. On a weekly basis, we submit your child’s attendances to the government, which is why it’s important that you always sign them in and out correctly using XPLOr.

The government will then process your child's attendance and make a payment against it for your entitled amount, up to the total hours you are eligible for. Your fee payment is the GAP fee. You can keep an eye on this on your fortnightly statement.

For more information you can visit:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>

7.	Our nutritional menu
----	-----------------------------

Our menu is seasonal and reviewed several times a year. It is submitted for approval to the NSW Government to ensure all children receive the recommended amounts of each food group. We have alternative meals for dietary needs, and each child will be catered for regardless of intolerances, religious requirements, allergies and family choices. Children who dislike a particular food will be first encouraged to try it, and then provided an alternative; no child will be hungry.

The centre menu is shared on Storypark, and also documented daily for your reference. The menu item is the same for all age groups, however, will be made manageable depending on the child's ability, for example, fruit and main meals may be mashed or pureed for younger babies.

- 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.
- **No Nuts or nut products are served at any time.**
- Making A Difference Early Childhood Education and Care Centres are NUT Free Centres. We do not knowingly use nuts or nut products in our cooking or craft activities. We do not knowingly have or allow nut products anywhere in the Centres.
- **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) which can help make your child's day special. This is the only exception to our Bring No Food Policy. It is essential that any product with nuts is not brought to the centre. *Please discuss the ingredients beforehand with your centre Director.*

Introducing new foods to infants:

As your baby begins to eat solids and experience different foods, we ask that you continually update us with the foods your child is eating. We will never introduce a new food to your child for the first time. Once they have successfully eaten a new food at home, we are happy to include it to your child's menu with us.

Food allergies and Intolerances

Children with 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. 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 classroom & 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 & procedures will be clear & 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.

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. Permission may be given for parents to bring in food if their child has special dietary needs, provided it does not contain nut products. Parents must first discuss this with the Director. Parents are requested and reminded via the newsletter and strategically placed notes that **No Nuts** applies also to cakes, biscuits, etc. brought to open days, morning or afternoon teas, special events, etc. held at the Centre.

8.	Our Educational Program
-----------	--------------------------------

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 against which each service is rated.

1) Educational Program and Practice, 2) Children's Health and Safety, 3) Physical Environment, 4) Staffing arrangements, 5) Relationships with children, 6) Collaborative partnerships with families and communities, 7) Governance and Leadership. www.acecqa.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 affect 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 interests 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 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 through discussion (yarning circles for example) and questions. 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, Preschool Program, Skills based program, outdoor program and through excursions and engagement with a range of people in the community (e.g. drummer man, story tellers, DOG Keep Safe Show, police car, fire engine visits, Healthy Harold).

Educators use a variety of methods to record children's learning e.g., learning stories, observations and achievement chart lists. We encourage families to share their stories and interests from home with us. This information is optimised as a springboard for children's learning. The All About Me form on Storypark is a great tool for this.

We encourage children to bring their favourite picture books to share with us. This instils a love of and understanding of literacy, 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 these by reading a story, playing with related toys or sharing our life experiences.

Children's learning is observed in our photos which are displayed on Storypark (our online closed digital community) 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 they are unaware that they are learning or developing new skills or interests.

- ☆ A routine of your child's day is available in the classroom, these are flexible and change depending on children's needs and interests throughout the year.

9.

Storypark- How to use it to support your child's development

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

- Direct communication with staff
- Write a note to your educator in Storypark
- Writing in the daily diary: parent feedback area
- Written communication, email
- Input into policies and procedures
- Attendance at parent meetings and social gatherings
- Questionnaires
- General feedback whenever it's possible

10.	Summary of Key Policies
------------	--------------------------------

Policies

All policies mentioned in this handbook are key points only. We encourage you to read the Centre's Policy documents in full as required, they are accessed on the Storypark app in the program documents and can be emailed by your Director on request.

Policy	Key Points
POL- 01- Infections Diseases Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children who are unwell should not attend. ➤ For 48 hours following vomiting or diarrhoea please keep children home. ➤ You must inform us of absences for illness, so we can manage any outbreaks. ➤ If your child becomes ill at the centre, you must arrange collection promptly. ➤ They may be isolated from other children until collected, depending on illness. ➤ You receive CCS for 42 absent days, after that you need a Dr Certificate.
POL- 03- Incident, Injury & Trauma (Inc Hospitalisation & Death Procedure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We assess and manage risk to reduce the likelihood of injury or incident. ➤ If your child is hurt while in our care, you will receive an incident report upon collection to read and sign. ➤ For more serious injuries, and all head injuries, we will call you immediately. ➤ We will call an ambulance for your child at any time we deem necessary. ➤ You need to let us know if you go to the Dr after an incident.
POL-24- Administration of Medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If your child needs to take medication while with us, it must be prescription. ➤ The medication must be signed in and left with the Director, not in child's bag. ➤ A child will not be given new medication at the centre until 24 hours has passed since the first dose, this is to avoid adverse reactions in our care. ➤ Paracetamol will only be administered as a single dose in an emergency. ➤ If ongoing pain relief is needed, the child is considered too unwell to attend.
POL-07- Grievance Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ First, raise the grievance with the person concerned, and then escalate as appropriate. Staff Member>Director>Group Manager>ACEQCA. ➤ Please communicate respectfully, we are here to help resolve concerns.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Raise any grievance involving suspected or actual unlawful activity directly with Approved Provider (Carolyn Leis). ➤ Grievances regarding children’s health or wellbeing must be reported (by us) to the regulatory authority, if you believe we have not acted appropriately, you can contact them directly by calling 1800 619 113.
POL-22- Fee Payment Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2 weeks Bond and your first 2 weeks’ full fees are payable on commencement. ➤ Fees are payable through our gateway in XPLOR fortnightly in advance. ➤ Accounts which fall in arrears and do not meet our fee policy may result in care being withdrawn. ➤ 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, or change to, your booked days 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 are not included in the notice period. ➤ Bonds are adjusted up or down during a child’s placement whenever a permanent booking is changed and whenever a room rate changes. Bonds are calculated using the <u>current</u> room rate and your child’s <u>current</u> booked days.
POL- 02- Immunisation and Disease Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is mandated that all children in an early childhood centre be immunised against infectious diseases. ➤ On enrolment, we require proof of your child’s immunisation by way of you providing the <i>Immunisation History Statement</i> from the Medicare website. ➤ Information on 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. See https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/publications/nsw-immunisation-schedule.pdf
Late collection:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Centre is only licensed and insured to provide childcare until 6.00 pm. Failure to collect your child by 6.00 pm is unacceptable and may require us to leave your child in the care of Child Protection Services or the local Police. To meet associated costs, a late fee of \$15 per 15 minutes <i>or part thereof per child</i> will be charged to the parent. If you are ever running late, please contact the service to inform them of your estimated arrival time as soon as possible to avoid this cost.

We look forward to *making a difference* to your child’s world,

Thank you for joining our community!