



Stepping Stones
Children's Services
"we're sharing the care"

Long Day Care

Family Information Booklet

Stepping Stones Head Office: 1300 665 699

Email: tarryn@sharingthecare.com.au

Post: Po Box 70, Ulverstone Tas 7315

Long Day Care

Full Day, Morning and Afternoon Care

Part-time, Full-time, Permanent and Casual Care (when available)

Sessions vary at each Service, and can be confirmed on initial enquiry.

Child Care Subsidy Available



Welcome

Stepping Stones Children's Services extends a warm welcome to all children, parents and extended family members.

At Stepping Stones we believe that the first 5 years of a child's life are the most impressionable and formative. As many children will spend long hours with us, we ensure that they are at all times provided with a safe, secure and happy environment in which to grow. We aim to work with parents and families to help make the most of these years and see your child enter their formal school years with ease and confidence.

Our Centres are privately run child care centres which are individual enough to meet the needs of local parents who require work related, respite and social care for their children.

Our centres are staffed with qualified Educators, who all have safety screens/Working with children Checks, current first Aid, CPR, Anaphylaxis and EAM. We are open Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year and close only for gazetted public holidays.

Our Centres provide care for children aged between 6 weeks and 5 years. Please enquire at our Support Office the specific details of your preferred centre.



Our Philosophy

‘Every Child is a unique and precious gift’

Children

We believe that the individual child is the central focus to everything we do.

We value and respect the rights and unique qualities of each child.

The essence of childhood is play.

We value the importance of middle childhood.

Staff

Our vision of a caring staff member is one who remembers what it is to be a child, respects the diverse values of each child and will willingly join the children on their journey of learning and discovery.

Environment

We believe in providing a safe and secure environment that allows children to be free to discover, explore and express themselves.

Our environment stimulates all of the senses creating momentum for exploration, freedom of expression and discovery of self.

Family Partnership

We value the role of the family as the most important influence in a child’s life.

We believe in working in a cooperative spirit with families to enable each child to developmentally reach their full potential.

We value the contribution families make towards the vision and direction of our service.

Community

We reflect the community in which we live and place value on positive partnerships that will enhance the lives of children.

Goals of the Service

Children

- Every child is special and important and is warmly welcomed into our care.
- Importance is placed on the value of play as it inspires life long learning through exploration and discovery.
- Information is collected from a range of sources that guides the care provided to individual children.
- Our programs are designed and implemented to meet the individual child's needs and interests within the group setting.
- The development and learning of the individual child is reflected and evaluated to gauge the effectiveness of the care and experiences provided.
- All aspects of learning and development are documented.
- To create a sense of continuity between home and care.
- Challenges are provided to allow children to feel powerful within their own bodies.

Staff

- Positive relationships are encouraged by working collaboratively with children.
- Staff encourage children to explore their emotions in a safe, secure, trusting environment.
- Staff are understanding and compassionate.
- Staff view the environment through the eyes of a child.
- Everything we do is relevant and real to a child.
- We support and reflect the diverse values of individuals within the service.
- Our staff continually strive to increase their knowledge to provide better care for children.

Environment

- Our environment reflects the needs and rights of children.
- Our environment provides security while providing challenges and connections to the real world.
- Our environment encourages competence, provides comfort and accepts individuality.
- We provide a sensory rich environment.

Family Partnerships

- To provide continuity of care we work collaboratively with families.
- Information provided to families meets their individual needs.
- Families are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the service.

Community

- Establish networks with community groups and individuals.
- Harness the resources, skills and knowledge of members of the community to enrich our environment.
- Create a connection with our community.
- Respect the individual's sense of community.

Centre Staffing

We pride ourselves in having a professional, warm and friendly team of Educators and staff.

Our team consists of qualified Educators and administration staff. Each educator works on a rotating shift roster to ensure that the children are fully supervised at all times. Each room has a Senior Educator responsible for creating the weekly educational programme designed with and for the children.

From time to time throughout the year, our staff will be attending workshops, conferences and the like in order that they may sustain and expand their care skills. At such times, you may notice relief staff taking their place. We endeavour to use the same relief staff each time to provide your child with consistency and a feeling of security.

All staff, both permanent and relief, are screened and hold a current Safety Screening/Working with children check prior to taking up any position within the Centre.

Enrolment Process:

Stepping Stones uses an online enrolment form, through our software provider Xplor. These forms once completed will automatically come to our Head Office where we can finalise your enrolment. This can only be completed by the person who has lawful authority of the child/children.

Enrolment links can be accessed by either emailing Head Office at tarryn@sharingthecare.com.au or via our website www.sharingthecare.com.au. Once the enrolment has been received we will send you details as to how to access Xplor on both an app and online.

You will be required to create a password to enable you to complete your Ezi Debit details through the auto debit setup tab and your Childcare Subsidy if you are entitled before care can commence.

Depending on the days of care required, we may be able to confirm your bookings immediately or place your request on the appropriate waiting list.

Should your child have any medical conditions which require an action plan, we will provide you with details as to how to provide that information. The plan must be completed before care can commence.

To claim Child Care Subsidy to help reduce your fees, simply call the Family Assistance Office on **13 61 50** to ensure that you are eligible for Child Care Subsidy and to obtain your and your child's Customer Reference Number (CRN). You then need to provide us with both CRNs and dates of birth for both you and your child which allows us to claim Child Care Subsidy on your behalf, thereby reducing your fees. Should your child commence care before this has been arranged, you will be charged at the maximum daily or sessional fee until you have registered.

All child care services must allocate places to those families with the greatest need for child care support.

The Australian Government has Priority of Access Guidelines for allocating places in these circumstances. They set out the following three levels of priority, which child care services must follow when filling vacant places:

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

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

- children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- children in families which include a disabled person
- children in families on low incomes
- children in families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children in socially isolated families
- children of single parents.

All categories are covered by Childcare Subsidy, according to the relevant means test.

We employ a policy of non-discriminatory access. All children who are eligible for childcare will be treated equally and consideration will be given to special needs regardless of racial or religious affiliation or disability.

Lawful Authority

All parents have powers and responsibilities in relations to their children that can only be changed by a court order. The National regulations refer to these

powers and responsibilities as “Lawful Authority”. It is not affected by the relationship between the parents, as such as whether or not they have lived together or married. A court order such as under the family Law Act, may take away the authority of the parent to do something, or give it to another person.

Guardian

A guardian of a child also has lawful authority/parental responsibilities. A legal guardian is given lawful authority by a court order. The definition of “guardian” under the children’ Services Act 1996 also covers situations where a child does not live with his or her parents and there are no court orders. In these cases the guardian is the person the child lives with who has day-to-day care and control of the child/children

Orientation

For children entering care for the first time, there are many new things that they will encounter. Some children will cope better than others.

To help each child cope with this new situation, we ask parents to involve their child in our free orientation program, which allows children and parents to gain an understanding of what we do and to help facilitate a gentle and smooth transition into the care environment.

The children and their families are invited to visit the Centre to familiarise themselves with our Educators, routine and facilities.

We advise that you visit the service and stay with your child for a short period of time, so that your child can get used to the care environment and our staff. We also encourage you to leave your child for a short period of time, to allow them to form an understanding that although their families leave, they will most certainly return for them. Please speak with the Director/PIC or Senior Educator in your room to arrange a suitable time.

Usually one or two orientations are sufficient, however we reserve the right to extend orientations if we find the child is not coping/settling well. Only after successful orientations will an enrolment be accepted.

Please feel free to contact the Centre at any time to monitor your child’s progress. To help in settling children we aim to ensure that siblings at the centre have an opportunity to interact with each other every day. The care rooms blend to a family group at the beginning and end of every day, where the older and younger children will have a chance to interact, play and learn together.

What to Bring to Care

Please bring the following everyday that your child is in care:

- A bag with your child's name on it
- A lunchbox (for morning and full day care)
- Drink bottle with your child's name clearly marked on them.
- A nutritious lunch
- A full change of clothes
- Nappies, if necessary
- A hat with your child's name clearly marked on it. (Legionnaire style or broad brimmed in summer and warm beanie in winter).
- Any security toy or object that your child may need.

Feel free to leave your child's hat at the Centre permanently to avoid leaving it at home. All hats in the Hat boxes are washed weekly so please send a hat which will stand up to a hot wash.

Sun Protection

All children need to have their own hat supplied for outside play in the warmer months, and it would be appreciated if the hat could be left at the service. We are a Sun Smart service and we have a No Hat, No Play rule and have only limited spare hats. All hats are washed weekly and hats are not shared amongst children.

During the winter months it is appropriate to supply a warm beanie for outside play as this is an important part of child development to play outdoors all year round.

We also provide sunscreen for your child and ask that they apply it 20 minutes before going outside to play. Should your child be sensitive to any sunscreen products, please let staff know, and provide an alternative.

Children's Clothing

We believe that children are creative explorers. Our natural outdoor play area will almost guarantee that our children will get messy!

Please dress your child in practical, comfortable clothing to enable them to actively participate in the day's program. Children need to feel that it is okay to get dirty while exploring and playing.

The resources such as paint and glue that are used in the Centre are non-toxic and are designed to wash out.

Please also dress your child according to the weather.

We respect the individual cultures of all of our families and understand that some cultures may have clothing preferences for their children.

Arrival and Departure

It is a mandatory requirement for parents/guardians are to sign their children in and out of the Centre each day on the sign in sheets provided in the children's rooms. These records are a legal requirement for the continued administration of child care benefit/ child care rebate. Sign in sheets are relied upon in the unlikely event of an emergency, where role call is checked during an evacuation and parent signatures verify a child's attendance.

Please place your child's lunchbox and drink container in the relevant box provided in their care room.

Parents are permitted to leave only when their child has been received by one of their Educators.

We ask you to take great thought when completing the "emergency contact" and "permission to collect" sections of your child's enrolment form. Please be aware that emergency contacts will be permitted to collect your child only where they have also been noted as a person with "permission to collect".

We are very strict in adhering to the list you provide us with. Your child's safety is paramount and we **WILL NOT** allow your child to leave with a person not listed on their enrolment form unless previously advised by the parent or guardian. Any person listed but unknown to staff will be asked to provide photo identification prior to collecting the child. (i.e. driver's license)

Where a custody order is in place or where there is a person who is restricted by law to have access to a child, please inform us immediately so that we are fully aware of any problems that may arise.

All information provided by parents is held in the strictest confidence.

Nutrition Issues

Lunch:

One of the best things that we can do for our children is to help them form healthy eating habits. From the outset, we would like to ensure that all children are provided with a healthy lunch. We suggest foods such as sandwiches, rolls or wraps, salads, fruits, yoghurts, vegetables, home-made leftovers and savoury biscuits with hard cheese etc.

Should children arrive with any lollies, chips, dairy desserts and so on, they will be removed from their lunchboxes and returned to their bag at the end of the day. If this is necessary, we will ensure that your child is given adequate food as a replacement.

We are a nut aware centre.

Drinks:

Drinks are an extremely important part of a child's daily needs. Water is readily available for the children. We advise parents that the best choices are watered down fruit juices, milk and of course, water.

Fizzy drinks are not acceptable as they contain a large amount of sugar and preservatives and these can sometimes be a contributing factor to behavioural problems.

Morning and afternoon tea:

We have a varied morning and afternoon tea menu which is displayed daily that utilises seasonal fruit and vegetables, toast and the children's own cooking. Water is accessible for children throughout the day and preferred in your child's drink bottle.

If your child has any food allergies, please ensure that full details of the food and the reaction caused are noted on your child's enrolment form.

We will at all times aim to ensure that your child's food preferences are respected and any special requirements including cultural aspects of eating, drinking and food handling are met. Please let an educator know if your child has any particular food likes or dislikes. We will ensure that food and drinks are made accessible to children as they need it between regular meal times. We also will offer children who remain in care after 4.30pm a late afternoon snack.

Health Issues

Child Immunisations:

Stepping Stones Children's Services encourages full childhood immunisations. As from April 1998, it is required by law that proof of immunisation or a doctor's letter stating that you have a conscientious objection to immunisation be provided prior to a child being admitted into care.

Many childhood infectious illnesses spread rapidly once in the environment. Please ensure that your child's immunisations are kept up to date and provide reception with a copy of your child's updated record when a new immunisation is

given. When a vaccine preventable disease is present or suspected at the centre, children whom the centre does not have complete immunisation record may be treated as unimmunised and requested to stay at home until further notice.

To view a copy of the centre's exclusion policy and suggested immunisation schedule, please see the service Director/PIC.

Emergencies:

In the case of an accident or serious illness which requires immediate medical attention (either occurring or noticed at the Centre) we reserve the right to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to contact parents/guardians and gain access to the appropriate medical services as soon as possible.

On your child's enrolment form we ask for your lawful authorisation (written permission) to access such services. Where necessary, an ambulance will be called and the child will be transported to the nearest hospital.

Administration of Medication

Medication for children is a very serious matter, whether it is medicine bought by prescription or an over the counter product. This includes products for Nappy Rash.

Whilst medication will be administered by staff, it will be done so under very strict guidelines.

For any medication to be administered, parents MUST complete a medication authorisation form. This is available from Senior Carers and must be completed BEFORE any medication can be administered. This will take a couple of minutes so please ensure that you allow for this time when dropping your child off.

The parent must sign the form at the end of the child's session / day to acknowledge that the medicine has been administered.

Labelling on prescription medicine must contain the following:

- The name of the child
- The correct dosage
- The times / frequency to be administered
- Method of administration

Medication will not be administered if it is not stored in the original labelled container. Over the counter medication will only be given according to the age appropriate instructions on the bottle / tube / packet.

Medical conditions

If your child has a known ongoing medical condition (Allergies, Asthma, diabetes, epilepsy etc) a medical action plan and a Risk minimisation/communication plan must be completed and returned with the enrolment form before care can commence. We reserve the right to refuse an enrolment if the required mandatory paperwork is not correctly filled in, as it poses a very real risk to the child and to our staff if we do not have all the correct information necessary to treat a child should the need arise. For further clarification please refer to the Medical conditions Policy included with your enrolment form.

Rest Time

Each day, all children will be given the opportunity to rest. This will be after lunch. Some children will choose to sleep, others to play quietly or read. If your child requires a comforter (e.g. a dummy or special toy) which will help them to settle into sleep, please ensure that it is bought to the centre.

Excursions

Excursions can consist of short walks or may take up a major part of the day. They provide children with first hand experiences and observations. A child's concepts are broadened through experiences and this helps to reinforce what is learned at the Centre.

When trips are planned, a permission slip will provide full details of to where and when the trip will be, how the children will be transported and any cost associated with the outing. Due to the need for increased supervision, there may be times when we ask for parent help to ensure adequate adult to child ratios.

Children may also participate in local routine excursions. We ask for your permission for your child to participate in such excursions in the permissions section of the enrolment form. These excursions are all within walking distance of the centre.

Policy and Procedures:

The Centre has many varied written policies and procedures on issues related to childcare. A copy of these policies can be found at reception and is available for access to all families.

We welcome any feedback or suggestions on any of our policies, especially when we have our annual policy review. Policies will be on display inviting families to have an input, please speak to your Director/PIC for further clarification.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

Throughout the day there may be little disputes between children or behaviour that is not acceptable. We fully understand the frustration that comes with childhood for reasons including limited speech, short attention spans, and the “I want it now!” syndrome!

At Stepping Stones we aim to provide the children with suitable strategies to use when solving their own problems with other children or staff.

Sometimes, however, an upset or angry child may need a quiet talk, positive reinforcement or some “time out” for a short period of time. We find that after a little rest and time to think, they return happy and refreshed and ready to participate again.

If you have any concerns about your child’s behaviour, please speak with the senior educator in your child’s room, who can assist on the best strategy to deal with the situation. Our staff will always actively seek information and support from families to assist them in responding appropriately to children’s behaviour.

Unacceptable Behaviour

The Centre has a policy regarding unacceptable and dangerous behaviour of children. If after consulting with parents, specialists and support services, we feel that the behaviour of a child is upsetting, distracting and a danger to other children, we reserve the right to ask parents to withdraw the child from care.

Educational Program

At Stepping Stones, our staff provide planned programmes based on children’s interest’s strengths and needs, underpinned by an approved early years learning framework.

They are developmentally appropriate for each child in our care, and are specifically designed to help children engage independently and confidently in a stimulating and secure environment. The programmes incorporate all aspects of development as well as balancing indoor and outdoor, quiet and active, structure and unstructured activities. All of these activities are designed to promote each child’s social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs. Our programmes cater for whole group, small group and individual learning experiences.

Within each programme, opportunities are provided for children to use such skills as independence, self-help, co-operation, taking turns and sharing. All children are encouraged to express ideas, opinions, make decisions and solve problems.

During daily activities, staff will make individual observations, conduct checklists and evaluate each child’s development. The outcomes from these observations

will be incorporated into the programming session to maximise and extend children's learning opportunities.

If at any time there is any area of concern regarding your child's development, we will discuss the matter with you.



Sharing Information

Events in family life can be a major concern for young children and may affect their behaviour. It is important for you to share information with Stepping Stones that may affect your child. We will also share information with you that may affect your child's behaviour at home. We would appreciate that you report any information of this nature to your child's Senior Educator or the Centre Director/PIC.

Please feel free to approach any staff member with any concerns that you may have as all information is strictly confidential.

Toilet Training

It is our aim to ensure that all children have the opportunity to be toilet trained in a positive atmosphere in a developmentally appropriate manner. We ensure that each child is given a consistent approach that reflects their family routines.

If your child is ready to be toilet trained please speak with a staff member in your child's room.

Communication Methods

We have a noticeboard in reception which displays information, interesting topics and messages. The board features any upcoming events and happenings. Please allow yourself the time to check the board every now and then.

Any issues that require immediate notification will be posted on the front door (i.e. reminders of public holidays etc.)

The educators in each room contribute to the Stepping Stones monthly newsletter. This will also feature the birthday list, welcome list, parent's committee updates and any other information that we wish to share with our families. Please feel free to contribute to either the notice board or newsletter.

In each room there is a programming board which displays the program for that week and other relevant information that you may require. Please take

the time to look at the board and provide feedback on the program through the parent feedback sheet located next to the sign in sheet or through the parent suggestion box located in the sign in area.

All children have a development portfolio in which information about their learning and time at Stepping Stones is kept. Parents are able to view this documentation at any time.

For working parents, new parents or those who wish to check on a child's health during the day, please feel free to contact us at any time.

Parent Participation

We invite all family members to be part of our daily programme. If you have any special skills or ideas that you would like your child to experience, please feel free to speak with their Senior Educator. All parents and extended family members are welcome to spend as much time as they like at the Centre. Talk to your child's educator to arrange a suitable time.

We also welcome parents or grandparents to come in and have lunch with the children. Please ask a carer for the time that lunch is served in your child's room.

Note: a current safety screen/Working with children check is required for anyone who comes into contact with children in our care environments.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to any breast feeding mothers who would like to come in and feed their baby.

Parent Complaints and Grievances

We would like parents to feel that they can communicate any problems that they are experiencing with the service openly and freely with the staff or the Centre Director. All complaints and grievances will be dealt with in accordance to the Centres policy which can be viewed by asking the Director/PIC.

Family Statements

Accounts are accessible 24/7 via your own personal Xplor account you will create before care commences.

Fees and Accounts

Childcare fees are subject to reduction where families are entitled to Childcare Subsidy (CCS).

All fees are to be paid using Ezi-Debit direct payments on either a weekly or fortnightly basis. Ezi-Debit allows for direct debit of fees from your chosen bank account. Fees are calculated at the beginning of each week and each child's account will be emailed to parents. The amount due on the account will already have had any Childcare Subsidy deducted from it.

Fees in Arrears

Where fees are more than two weeks in arrears your child's place at the Centre will be cancelled automatically. Should you at any time experience difficulty in paying your child care fees, please speak with Head Office or the Director at the earliest possible time so that payment arrangements can be made.

Sick Days and Absences

Should your child be unwell or absent for any reason, the full normal fee will apply. Each child is eligible to receive CCB for an initial 42 days of absences per financial year.

Late Fees

Children must be collected on time at the end of their session or day.

Failure to do so will result in a charge of \$1 per minute to your account. This is to cover the cost of paying staff overtime to care for your child.

Whilst we appreciate that emergencies do occur, frequent lateness is unfair to both your child and staff. If at the end of the day a child is more than 15 minutes late for collection after closing time without parental notification, the lost/abandoned child policy will be used and police may be informed.

Public Holidays

All gazetted public holidays which require us to close the centre will be charged for as a normal day of attendance. Centrelink will still pay Child Care Benefit for those days and they will still be calculated under the Child Care Tax Rebate.

Reduction or Cancellation of Care

Should you wish to permanently reduce the number of sessions required for your child or cancel their placement outright, a minimum of 2 weeks notice must be provided to reception or Stepping Stones head office, **not your child's educator.**

Where you and your family are going to be away for a short period (including holidays) your place will be held for you with a 50% holding fee. You will still be able to claim Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate on such absences. Should 2 weeks notice not be provided then fees will be charged as usual.

Failure to attend during the notice period will result in full fees being applied from the child's last physical day in attendance at the service as per Government Regulations.

Child Protection

We take our commitment to the protection of our children very seriously. We work to protect our children from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect. Tasmanian law requires us to report any suspected abuse to the Child Protection Team. Under Victorian law, mandatory reporting is not required, however our staff have a duty of care to report any suspected abuse to Management at Head Office located in Tasmania who will then advise on what course of action should be taken. Should you require further information in relation to child protection, or you would like to contact the child protection services, please see the policy folder which is available to all families

Child Protection Advice and Referral Service (CPAARS)

Tasmania 1300 737 639

Child Protection Crisis Line

Victoria 131-278



If you would like to provide any feedback, comments or suggestions on the enrolment process please speak with the Director, Or call Head Office on 1300 665 699

We look forward to caring for your child.



Stepping Stones

Children's Services

"we're sharing the care"

Thank you for reading our Family Information Booklet.
All feedback is welcome

We look forward to sharing the care with you.