



## **WELCOME TO MITCHELL EARLY LEARNING CENTRE**

Mitchell Early Learning Centre is a community based centre, licensed to care for 70 children. We welcome children of Charles Sturt University staff and students, children of distance education students who attend Charles Sturt University residential schools, and the wider community. We currently cater for 22 children per day in the 0-3 age group, 17 children in the 3-4 age group and 20 children in the 4-5 age group. The Centre is staffed by a dedicated team of early childhood educators and we always operate above staff to child ratios.

At Mitchell Early Learning Centre (MELC) we believe a successful orientation process will reduce some of the stress and anxiety that children and families may feel when first beginning in an early learning environment. We encourage families and children to visit and become familiar with our service prior to commencement and we tailor the settling in process to meet the individual needs of each child and family. We seek to ensure the process is as smooth as possible through open, honest communication and constant discussions about how everyone is feeling.

At Mitchell Early Learning Centre we respect the right of each child to be in an early learning environment which is loving, nurturing, stimulating, fun and safe. At MELC we recognise that each child develops at his/her own pace. We ensure each child is treated as an individual and receives as much individual attention as possible. One of the ways we are able to achieve this is through our very high staff to child ratios.

At MELC our experiences and activities are designed to extend children's knowledge and development and are planned using an emergent curriculum approach. An emergent curriculum responds to each individual child's needs, interests, strengths and abilities and includes a "school readiness" program. Studies have shown that children develop a lifelong interest in learning (and learn more!) if they are presented with materials, resources and information they are interested in. Our program is flexible and stimulating and strongly encourages family participation – we believe that relationships are at the core of our work and that "it takes a village to raise a child" (African proverb).

Mitchell Early Learning Centre works within the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, which is a guide developed by the Federal Government for early childhood educators who work with children from birth to five years. The framework has been developed to ensure each child receives quality education programs in their early childhood setting. MELC seeks to be a model of best practice in the early learning community.

All staff, educators and volunteers working at Mitchell Early Learning Centre are required to undergo a Working With Children Check.

### **PRIORITY OF ACCESS**

Mitchell Early Learning Centre complies with the *Priority of Access Guidelines* set by Family Assistance Law and has a transparent waiting list and enrolment process. You are welcome to request a copy of our Priority of Access policy and Enrolment and Orientation policy. Priorities are:

**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.

## **CENTRE HOURS**

Mitchell Early Learning Centre is open Monday to Friday. The Centre opens at 8.00am and closes at 6.00pm. Children and family members are not permitted in the Centre before 8.00am or after 6.00pm. The Centre is open 48 weeks of the year, closing for a four week period over Christmas/New Year.

## **FEES AND CHARGES**

Fees from 1/1/2015 have been set at: \$87.00 - Snugglepot and Cuddlepie Rooms, \$83.00 - Possum and Blue Gum Rooms.

Families are asked to pay their fees fortnightly in advance. For security reasons we ask that fees are paid between 8.00am and 4.00pm Monday – Thursday inclusive and Friday 8.00am - 12 noon. Families can arrange to pay by direct debit and eftpos facilities are available.

1. The minimum daily charge for care/education is based on a minimum 10 hour day.
2. Fees will be charged for public holidays that fall during the year (except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day which fall when the Centre is not operating).
3. Full fees will be payable when a child is absent from the Centre because of illness, holidays or occasional absences. We do appreciate a phone call letting us know if your child will be absent on their booked day.
4. Families who wish to use or hold a place at the Centre must pay full fees from the day the Centre opens in January to the day it closes in December.
5. A \$10 deposit will be required for each child on the waiting list for a place in the Centre. The deposit is non-refundable.
6. At least two week's notice must be given if a child is to be withdrawn permanently; otherwise fees will be charged.
7. Families are eligible to apply for Child Care Benefit through the Family Assistance Office.

## **MEALS**

The Centre provides all meals and drinks for children throughout the day, except for formula for babies which needs to be supplied and prepared by the family. No additional food is to be brought into the Centre as we have children with severe allergies. The Centre caters for special dietary requirements, however if your child does require a special diet we may request you see a dietician/allergy specialist and the written information be shared with the Centre to ensure your child's dietary needs are met while in our care.

## **NAPPIES**

Nappies need to be provided by the family as the Centre does not supply nappies.

## **BREASTFED BABIES**

Mums are always welcome in the Centre to feed their child/ren. As it can be difficult or impossible to contact mums who are away from the Centre, breastfed babies can only be accepted if they will take expressed milk from a bottle that can be administered by an educator if the baby is hungry and distressed.

## **CHILD CARE BENEFIT AND CHILD CARE REBATE**

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment made to families to assist with the costs of childcare.

CCB is calculated on the family's taxable income. Families who wish to claim CCB should apply to the Family Assistance Office prior to or within 28 days of their child starting care.

Child Care Rebate (CCR) assists parents and carers who meet the "work, training, study test" by covering 50 per cent of out-of-pocket expenses for approved child care, up to a maximum amount per child per year. Families are automatically assessed for Child Care Rebate when they lodge a claim for Child Care Benefit for approved child care.

## **MANAGEMENT**

The Centre is self-supporting and running costs are met by fees and recurrent grants from the State Government. The Mitchell Early Learning Centre Inc. is responsible for the management of the Centre. A Management Committee of interested parents/carers and others meets regularly to administer all operations of the Centre. The members of the Management Committee are elected at the Annual General Meeting held in March each year. Families are invited to attend Management Committee meetings, assist with projects and attend social gatherings. The Centre has an open door policy for all families.