



PATERSONIA

A **LEARNING** ADVENTURE

**Early Learning
Guardian Handbook 2018**

This handbook has been prepared for guardians and families to assist with the transition into Patersonian life and to answer commonly asked questions about our centre and learning environment.

Welcome to Patersonia

Patersonia was established in 2017 as the result of the recognition, by a group of parents, educators and friends, of the need for a different education choice for the youth of the Launceston Region. There are many influences from which we gather our inspiration, but the founding principle is simply to provide a caring, personal and respectful environment in which all children can experience, grow and thrive. Some of us seek a different option for our children, some have experienced the current systems and been left wanting, some remember back to their own experience and seek something less institutional. We all aspire to make this a better world one small step at a time and aim only to be a small part of the change we want to see.

We know that in making a decision to join us you place an important faith in us to develop this learning environment to which we aspire. We thank you for that trust and welcome you to contribute to this journey if you so desire. When naming this venture we choose our tag line “a learning adventure” with the view that it applied to us all. This is a journey and an adventure for each child, parent, leadership team member and community member involved.

We know that together we have the skills, talent, compassion, determination and desire to create a learning environment in which our young people can thrive and in which we can be proud. While our newness and smallness can be seen as weakness, they are also our strengths. We can grow and change rapidly, adopt innovation and research easily, develop a culture without the restrictions of past policies and experiences. We can be lithe and energetic in our new environment, not weighed down by the past. We can take the best of global research and experience and combine it with the beautiful qualities and environment of our homeland.

Welcome to Patersonia. Come on an adventure with us! There are lots of ways to be involved in your child's education and in the life of Patersonia. I welcome any opportunity to be of assistance to you in your Patersonian journey.

Nicole Crook
Chairperson - Patersonia
June 2018



Statement of Philosophy

WHO WE ARE

Patersonia has been started by a small group of Launceston parents and teachers who believe there is a different way forward for the future of education. We come from a range of professional backgrounds and educational experiences, but have a common goal to create a new educational environment which is

- caring, personalised and authentic,
- small, flexible and responsive,
- bases its methodologies on evidence and
- continually reflects upon its processes with the view to continuous improvement.

Patersonia will be a community-based, secular, independent learning environment offering education programs for ages 3-14. Our first priority is to open our 3-5 year old Early Learning Centre.

We adopt a personalised, multi-sensory approach to education where *every* student can be successful. Our smallness is our strength – students' individual interests and passions contribute to their explorations. We provide regular and ongoing access to wild spaces, with wise and skilled educators who understand the power of play and child-directed learning in a natural environment, whilst also providing emergent and inquiry-based learning in a range of community spaces. We value our Tasmanian and Australian context, environment and inheritance, but connect globally – sharing with and learning from other cultures. We learn among nature and the community, rather than separated from it.

Our framework is developed from the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework and is negotiated, emergent and inquiry-based, designed to foster engaged learning across all ages and equip students with enduring skills and resourcefulness that they can apply in their everyday lives, now and as adults.

Our parents/guardians want their children educated in a nurturing environment that enhances their natural talents and wellbeing. They value:

- collaborative, hands on, high tech learning
- nature play and outdoor education
- personalised and negotiated curriculum, and
- compassionate communication.

Our teachers are known as mentors and are excited to be operating in an environment where they can fully engage with each student. They love learning, children, and nature, and get to know each student on a personal level to help them to flourish and be the best that they can be.

Our students thrive in the outdoors, have their right to play, imagination, and a full experience of childhood respected, and have rich opportunities to pursue their own passions within a challenging and engaging curriculum. They formulate their own ideas and are encouraged to question, to take risks and to make and learn from their mistakes.

At Patersonia we...

- strive for each child to achieve their full academic, physical and social potential in a supportive and stimulating learning environment and as a valued member of the community

- respect individuality, foster self-determination and support the emotional well-being of the child
- expect co-operation between children, mentors, community members and parents/carers and involve parents/carers and the community in our day to day work
- develop child-centred and innovative educational programs from an understanding of child development
- allow student participation in the affairs of the centre and encourage involvement in the broader community
- apply the latest findings from education, psychology and related fields to the improvement of our learning
- respect and safeguard the professional status of our mentors and support their emotional well-being
- emphasise active involvement in a wide range of learning situations and stress co-operation rather than competition
- utilise the resources of our bush environment, local and global communities and develop the child's exploration, critical thinking and creative abilities
- are non-denominational, co-educational with small flexible multi age groups and no uniforms
- assess students individually and through evidence based methodologies
- utilise the practices of collaborative problem solving

Our education is progressive:

- emphasising personal relationships in order to build healthy individuals who learn together in a community
- and inclusive and has a celebratory attitude towards the gifts learners bring
- what learners are able to do and know about themselves becomes central to the learning process; it is a learner-directed and/or managed approach
- mentor intervention may be minimal at certain times and in certain areas, and
- teaching is usually in context, using concrete materials and the principles of holistic and conceptual learning, supporting any specific learning the child needs or desires.

Our education is democratic and our learning environment supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy, including a commitment to:

- elected government
- the rule of law
- equal rights for all
- freedom of religion
- freedom of speech and association
- the values of openness and tolerance.

We seek to foster connections:

- with our students, parents, guardians, mentors and staff, and members of our association
- among the wider community and local organisations
- from our youth to the elderly
- with nature and the planet
- and globally.

Our educational approach is inspired by and draws on many sources, which are critically evaluated with our students and our community context in mind – a never-ending journey.

OUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In our learning environment our students:

- receive an education based on Socratic questioning and logical reasoning
- experiences outdoors and in nature
- learn to take care of themselves in everyday life
- have their innate creative ability nurtured and expanded
- have a positive mentor relationship with their teachers
- are able to contribute their ideas for learning activities
- exist and relate in a collaborative and encouraging community
- have ongoing real-life real-world educational experiences
- feel secure in themselves and their environment
- know how to be open and authentic with people from all walks of life
- learn how to make agreements and keep their word
- feel unlimited in their personal choices for future adult life

Guiding Principles

EMERGENT CURRICULUM

Emergent curriculum describes a curriculum that develops from exploring what is relevant, interesting and personally meaningful to the students themselves. It works with the natural inclinations and talents of students, without rigid ideas of outcome and what an “educated” child looks like.

Emergent curriculum is a philosophy of teaching that focuses on being responsive to children’s interests to create meaningful learning experiences. It can be practiced at any grade level. It prioritises active participation, relationship building, flexible and adaptable methods, inquiry, and play based learning.

Curriculum is child-initiated, collaborative and responsive to the children’s needs. Knowledge of the children is the key to the program’s success. Emergent curriculum starts with the observation of the children for insight into their interests. The classroom typically consists of learning centres that expand and facilitate children’s learning and encourage independent learning skills. Emergent curriculum makes children’s learning and teacher’s thinking visible. At our core remains an unshakeable commitment to encouraging all students to progress at their own pace towards their own goals and to be respected as individuals in their own right.

We make a commitment to our students being nurtured and challenged in an atmosphere that inspires creativity and independent thinking in all areas of life. We put kindness, compassion and social relationships at the centre of all endeavours.

CHILD CENTRED, PERSONALISED LEARNING

Children are encouraged to realise their potential in all areas of development. We offer an individualised approach to education where children work at a level which is suitable to their current knowledge and needs. Children are challenged to think, to develop skills and to understand concepts through a child-focused approach to learning. Recognised principles of child development provide the foundation for the curriculum at Patersonia.

Children are introduced to new materials when their pattern of development determines that they are ready. Programs aim to progressively promote each child’s level of skills and understanding and

records are kept to facilitate this process. However there are not rigid age expectations as to when each child's growth will occur.

Children are seen to be central in the learning process. This is provided for through an activity-based approach to all areas. Mentors plan experiences, prepare appropriate materials and guide children in their learning. Through this process children develop independence in themselves and a confidence in their ability to learn.

We are inspired by our experience as parents and educators that each child is an individual that has their own unique set of requirements to maximise their learning potential.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN NATURE AND COMMUNITY

Experiential learning refers to acquiring knowledge through personal experiences. It is fun, engaging and effective. It is a natural way of learning that utilises all the senses. Experiential learning uses real-world applications to enable students to think critically about abstract concepts. This approach to learning is more than just experiencing something; structure and reflection are also essential. This type of learning requires students to *think about thinking*. At Patersonia we learn through experiencing many aspects of life and the world around us, we are connected to the real world through nature and the community.

We cultivate learning in natural settings, where we discover and observe what the world can teach us. Through the cycle of the seasons and the years, knowledge is built gradually and diversity, complexity and sustainability become part of a student's innate understanding of the world as it once was for all humans.

A student's learning environment has a significant impact on how they absorb information. The school's distinctive model of place creates environments in which children can find spaces to play imaginatively - in the bush, a community garden, community libraries, museums and public spaces and on a wild variety of excursions. Students spend extensive time immersed in the outdoors, dialoguing with a diversity of people connected to these places, and exploring the meaning of places in the context of the broader community, its past and future, and local indigenous wisdom.

We are inspired by educators such as Richard Louv (richardlouv.com) and his books including "Last Child in the Woods" and Claire Warden (claire-warden.com).

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

"Play starts at birth and early childhood environments that promote play for all children and allow children to feel motivated, esteemed and appreciated are cause for celebration." (Elspeth Harley 1999) Close observation of children participating in dramatic play shows they are using a wide range of cognitive skills as they plan and implement their play. These skills include divergent thinking, understanding concepts, problem solving, imagining, imitation, visual/spatial discrimination, anticipation, attending behaviours, planning, concentration, reasoning, linking cause and effect, taking the perspective of another, choice and use of resources, testing relationships and adapting responses, classifying and memory recall.

When children initiate and invent pretend play they often become totally absorbed, and can be observed demonstrating skills and behaviours which are more refined and advanced than at other times. The environment, the props and the social interactions serve as scaffolds whereby the child can progress to high levels of development and understanding. Through play experiences children develop self-motivation and the ability to make their own choices. They balance individual freedom

with social co-operation, negotiation and responsibility for the welfare of others. They develop the ability to reflect and learn from their own mistakes with courage and confidence in themselves as learners. Play can be the perfect context for developing these life skills.

As educators we support the development of children's play by:

- allowing children time and space to play
- providing resources and open ended materials that allow children opportunities to manipulate, explore, discover and practice
- respecting and valuing children's sense of ownership, autonomy and control of their own learning and play
- encouraging children to pretend and develop their imaginative play
- valuing play as a process not necessarily with any obvious outcome, but capable of one if the child so desires, and
- reflecting on our observations in order to plan and further extend children's play and development.

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

Inquiry based learning can be defined as 'seeking for truth, knowledge or understanding' and is used in all facets and phases of life. Specific processes of inquiry have become central to knowledge building or truth seeking in a range of learning domains (e.g. scientific method) and professions (e.g. criminal investigations). While teachers may guide the inquiry to various degrees and set parameters for classroom inquiry, true inquiry is internally motivated.

The purpose of inquiry based education "is about curiosity, open-mindedness, and making connections between ideas that previously seemed unrelated, which requires being familiar with and receptive to knowledge in other fields than our own." Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, OECD

The following characteristics serve as hallmarks of inquiry based learning:

- equal emphasis on process (communicating, reflecting, collaborating, analysing) and content
- genuine curiosity, wonderment and questioning (by teachers AND students)
- student 'voice' is evident
- elements of the curriculum / learning are negotiated and student questions are taken seriously and addressed
- prior knowledge is ascertained and built upon
- significant concepts and essential questions are identified which unify knowledge and understandings
- students are actively involved in constructing understanding through hands-on experiences, research, processing and communicating their understandings in various ways
- learning takes place in a social context – students learn from each other, together with others, and from those outside of the classroom context
- there is an assumption that understandings are temporal and are constantly reviewed and refined on the basis of new learning and questions
- metacognition and depth of thought are valued and planned for
- the meaning of 'knowing' shifts from remembering or repeating information to finding and using it.

We will cultivate a spirit of inquiry and are committed to exploring multiple pathways of learning and teaching that engage many different ways of knowing and forms of knowledge. Meaningful, authentic, locally-inspired, individual, group and community projects play an important part in this

process. We are inspired by educators such as Kath Murdoch and her book “The Power of Inquiry” kathmurdoch.com.au.

MULTI-AGE AND COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING

We subscribe to the maxim that it takes a village to raise a child, and we enable students, through excursions and by inviting accomplished seniors to the school, to benefit from learning from many peoples. “Schools need to prepare students for a world in which many people need to collaborate with people of diverse cultural origins, and appreciate different ideas, perspectives, and values; a world in which people need to decide how to trust and collaborate across such differences; and a world in which their lives will be affected by issues that transcend national boundaries.” Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, OECD

We balance the integration of elders into our learning community and educate students in a multi-age setting. Students learn in a process that begins with learning the basics from those slightly more socially, emotionally, and intellectually advanced than themselves, and ends with them mentoring younger students with the skills and knowledge they have learnt. In making multi-age groupings, we are taking inspiration from traditional village life, and also advances in neuroscience. The human mind evolved naturally to observe children at work who were slightly more advanced than the self, and to try to copy them.

We highly value participation by parents, grandparents, and other family members, in fact many members of the local community. We invite interested community members to become members of our association and to volunteer their time contributing in numerous and varied ways to the school. Working with Vulnerable People checks are required.

EVIDENCE BASED CURRICULUM

An evidence based curriculum treats education as a science and makes decisions based on available scientific evidence. It is independent of educational theories, systems and personal philosophies. While proponents of specific approaches seek out evidence to support their views, advocates of evidence based teaching examine all the available research – and they let the evidence fall where it may. As new evidence emerges, advocates of evidence-based education readily let go of past assumptions and embrace new practices. We are not slavishly devoted to particular practices – even the ones we currently preach. Rather, we let ourselves be guided by ongoing research. If new research reveals a better way, we readily follow this new insight.

In the area of literacy, for example, we are guided by the knowledge that the explicit study of phonics and phonemic awareness is supported by ample evidence as achieving real results in literacy for the vast majority of students. We are inspired by the work of Dr Sally Shawitz at the Yale Center for Dyslexia and are guided by the recommendations of Learning Disabilities Australia.

NEUROSCIENCE AND BRAIN BASED LEARNING

Brain-based learning refers to teaching methods, lesson designs, and programs that are based on the latest scientific research about how the brain learns, including such factors as cognitive development—how students learn differently as they age, grow, and mature socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Brain-based learning is motivated by the general belief that learning can be accelerated and improved if educators base how and what they teach on the science of learning, rather than on past educational practices or assumptions about the learning process. For example, it was commonly believed that intelligence is a fixed characteristic that remains largely unchanged throughout a

person's life. However, recent discoveries in cognitive science have revealed that the human brain physically changes when it learns, and that after practicing certain skills it becomes increasingly easier to continue learning and improving those skills. This finding—that learning effectively improves brain functioning, resilience, and working intelligence—has potentially far-reaching implications for educational experiences.

We are inspired by researchers like Janet Nay Zadina and her book “Multiple Pathways to the Human Brain” and Dr. Dan Siegel and his books including “The Whole Brain Child”.



Age

3 to 5 years

Hours of Operation

Centre hours are from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday, a minimum of 48 weeks of the year.

Location

Children's Education Centre
Legana Christian Church
1 Gerrard Close, Legana

Governance

Patersonia Inc. is a not for profit Incorporated Association and adheres to a large range of government regulations including:

- Incorporated Associations Act 1964
- Tasmanian Education Act 2017
- Childcare National Laws and Regulations
- Family Assistance Law
- the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission

The Patersonia Constitution guides the Patersonia Board and the appointment of Board members. Our current Board members are detailed on our website at www.patersonia.org.au.

The Board currently meets ten times each year.

The Board's main function is to provide guidance for the successful operation of the learning environment via Patersonia's Strategic Plan, budgets and policies.

Parents and carers are welcome to become involved in the operations of Patersonia. Volunteers are essential to achieve our goals. We would love to discuss with you how you might find a volunteer role at Patersonia. You may be interested in being involved on our Board or you may wish to share your skills or help on our regular excursions.

The management team are responsible for the day to day operations and delivery of our teaching and learning program. The Management Team at this time include the Business Manager (Nicole Crook), the Early Years Educator (Jocelyn Jones) and the Early Learning Co-ordinator (Niki Abel).

Our policies are available on our website at www.patersonia.org/governance.



The First Weeks

The introduction into long day care can be difficult for children and guardians. Children's welfare and happiness are the priority of our educators when welcoming new children to the Centre and when assisting the family to settle into the centre environment. It is recognised that families needs will vary greatly in the orientation process and individual needs will be met as best also.

The following outlines some helpful hints for guardians on settling their child into care:

- Make sure you familiarise your child with the environment and the people in the environment (children and adults) by coming in for visits before commencing care.
- Ease your child into care with short stays to begin with. An orientation program that is free of charge will be organised when you first enrol.
- Provide a favourite toy, blanket or comforter to support your child when they are separating from you or settling to sleep. This can help your child feel more secure.
- If your child is unsettled, short visits with you helps your child to gain trust with an unfamiliar environment. These visits can be made on a day when your child is not booked to attend.
- Interactions between educators and guardians or educators and other children can produce positive role models and be reassuring. This experience can help to establish trust in an unfamiliar setting.
- Try to talk at home about child care. Mention the names of the educators and other children. Talk about the things the child will be able to do at child care that are fun and enjoyable.
- Talk to the educators about your child, for example, what they like to do; successful ways of settling them to sleep; foods they like and dislike and so on. This helps educators to get to know your child.
- When leaving your child it is best to make sure you say goodbye and then leave. Hesitating and not going after you have said your goodbyes, if a child is upset, only confuses them. Reassure your child that everything is alright and you will return later, this can help them to settle.
- It sometimes helps to establish a routine when leaving. For example, giving your child a cuddle and giving them to an educator or sitting down with them for a short play or reading a book together then leaving.
- At first some children protest strongly while others may take a day or two to realise that you are leaving them and begin to protest after several days. Children soon learn that you do return and in the mean time they are well cared for. It is recognised that families and individual needs will vary greatly in the orientation process and appropriate process will be establish for each child.

The Education Program

The educators at Patersonia are committed to the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education. The Early Years Learning Framework describes the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is the best vehicle for young children's learning providing the most appropriate stimulus for brain development.

The Framework also recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development. Educators and other children can produce positive role models and be reassuring. This experience can help to establish trust in an unfamiliar setting.

Educators aim to create positive learning environments and guide experiences for each child in conjunction with their family. Educators will observe children and facilitate their learning to provide each child with an individualised portfolio by documenting their learning throughout the year. Children and their families will be encouraged to participate in the ongoing process to promote engaged learning.

Guiding Children's Behaviour

Our service, in partnership with guardians, aims to ensure all staff form positive relationships with children that make them feel safe and supported in the service. Educators will encourage positive relationships between children, their peers, staff and volunteers at the service.

Educators follow the Behaviour Support Policy which allows the children to develop self discipline, a respect for others, property and self. The policy aims to:

- Give all children the opportunity to expand their experiences of life in a productive, safe environment that allows individuals the right to safety, tolerance, self expression, cultural identity, dignity and the worth of an individual, and honesty in dealing with peers and caregivers
- Be taught to respect the rights and needs of others by foreseeing the outcome of their behaviour and the consequences of their behaviour
- To encourage the individual social development of each child.

What to bring

- Lunch (morning and afternoon tea will be provided) Unfortunately our kitchen does not meet requirements for providing lunches at this stage.
- A water bottle
- A change of clothing that is weather appropriate. Please ensure all clothes are named.
- A hat – a wide brimmed or legionnaires style
- A security item for rest time (if required).
- Gumboots and a coat in winter.

Guardians are advised to send their children to the Centre in comfortable, inexpensive clothing. The children need to be able to move around during their play period and should be unimpaired by clothing. While paints will come out in the wash, accidents do happen so it is best to send the children along in their “less than good clothes”. Young children enjoy and need “messy” play with paint, clay, sand, water and mud. On days where we are on excursion clothes with bright, easy to see colours are useful for safety.

The Centre will only have a limited supply of spare clothing. Please supply at least one change of clothing and underclothing in case of accidents. Please mark your child’s clothing and replace name tags if they fade in the wash. Ensure clothing is weather appropriate.

Please do not dress your child in clothing with cords e.g. shorts, hats etc. As these have the potential to become caught on equipment and may cause serious harm to your child. Singlet tops and thongs are not permitted in warmer weather.

Please ensure all belongings are clearly labelled such as dummies, clothes etc. Lost property will be displayed for guardian collection in your child’s room. guardian cooperation in labelling assists the Centre in keeping your child’s belongings together.

A soft toy or security item is acceptable for settling and rest time. However, generally it is appreciated if personal possessions are not brought to the Centre e.g. toys etc. Any possessions brought must come entirely at the guardian's own risk with regards to breakage or loss.

Partnering with families

We believe the best way to work with you and your child is by building a partnership of care. To do this we want you to feel that you are given lots of information about what is happening and asked for your views.

Everybody has a different communication style and time for communication. We understand that mornings and afternoons can be a little rushed, and not the best time to discuss your child. We have many types of communication we use for families in the centre just like you.

Information received through written and spoken communication with families will be treated with discretion. At any time if you require a private discussion with our staff please inform us. This can happen face to face or by phone.

Patersonia is adopting KidsXap childcare software. This will enable you to enrol online, update your information and communicate with Patersonia. You can download the Guardian App from <https://www.kidsxap.com.au/guardians-visibility/> or from the Apple Store or Google Play.

The Guardian App allows you to stay involved in all service activities, track events, receive updates and send notes directly to Patersonia. KidsXap allows you to manage bookings and absences on the app or dashboard, as well as to stay informed on your child's daily activities, receive sleep and dietary alerts as well as having the ability to interact with educators and provide feedback to create an enhanced learning experience for your child.

You can track your child's learning progress while they're at care through KidsXap's learning updates, and watch videos and view photos of your child as they play and learn. With KidsXap you can access learning materials online and continue your child's learning at home. KidsXap is free for all Patersonia guardians.

We will be communicating the events of the centre by:

- Face to face verbal interactions at arrival and departure times.
- A notice board where various messages and notices are displayed, advertising current issues and upcoming events.
- Using the Guardian App
- Via email
- A communication book will be available where guardians are able to leave written messages, for the purpose of expressing concerns or providing suggestions and evaluative input. These can be anonymous if so desired.
- Occasionally staff will ask guardians to complete short surveys in order to maintain up-to-date records and seek guardian feedback on various topics.
- If the Guardian App is not suitable, an alternative communication procedure will be established.
- Policies will be regularly reviewed in a variety of ways to enable guardian feedback on centre practices.

Staff will make efforts to communicate effectively with families.

- Staff will inform families promptly and sensitively of any out of the ordinary incidents affecting your child.
- Staff will share with children's families some of the specific interactions they had with the children during the day.
- Information on children's eating and sleeping patterns at the centre will be provided to families through verbal communication and through the room sign-in sheet.
- When families and staff make joint decisions that affect children's progress, interest and experience, this will be recorded in the appropriate form.

Please feel free at any time by phone, email or in person, to discuss your child's progress, relationship, interest and experiences.

Our aim is to provide each child, regardless of their needs and abilities, with a supportive and inclusive environment that allows each child to fully participate in the program. Educators will remain positive, open minded and honest at all times when working with families and external support professionals to most positively meet the additional needs of each child being educated and cared for at the centre.

Guardians must notify the Centre if there are any Court Orders affecting residency of their children and a copy is required for the Centre. Without a Court Order we cannot stop a guardian collecting their child.

Guardian involvement is vital to ensure maintenance of a quality service. Your contribution of ideas, experiences and skills are welcomed and greatly valued. You may be able to share your skills and experiences in music, craft, cooking, nature and storytelling etc, to enhance your child's program at the Centre. Please complete your availability or what you can offer the Centre on the enrolment form.

Guardians are welcome to visit or call the Centre at any time. If you have any talents or hobbies, we welcome and encourage you to please share them with the children.

If you have any concerns, please see the Co-ordinator, Educator or Business Manager. We have a grievance policy and procedure if you would like to formally raise any concerns.

Policies

Patersonia has developed a wide range of policies and procedures in line with the National Quality Standard. The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a key aspect of the National Quality Framework and sets a national benchmark for early childhood education and care services.

The NQS is divided into 7 areas that contribute to the quality of early childhood education and care:

- Educational program and practice
- Children's health and safety
- The physical environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management

Highlights of policies are outlined in this handbook. All Patersonia's policies are available in full at www.patersonia.org/governance and www.patersonia.org/elpolicies. Printed policies are available

on request. Your comments, suggestions and feedback on these policies are welcome and appreciated.

The policies are reviewed regularly in collaboration with all key stakeholders, including staff and families. Your comments are important to us, so please feel free to provide feedback on any of the policies.

Enrolment and Orientation

Patersonia accepts enrolments to the Early Learning Program for children aged 3-5 in accordance with funding priorities and guidelines. An orientation process is in place for children and their families. The purpose of this is to:

- Enable educators/staff to meet and greet children and their families
- Provide essential operational information
- Form the foundation for a successful and caring partnership between home and the service.
- To help children develop a sense of belonging, feel accepted, develop attachments and trust those who care for them.

Eligibility

Access and eligibility will be subject to the Priority of Access Guidelines set down by the Department of Education. These include but are not limited to:

- 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

As well as the above, Patersonia's policy is that children can be enrolled from the time they turn 3, as long as they meet assisted toileting capability criteria.

Provision of places for children with additional needs will be made wherever possible, with a regular review period. Access to care will focus on the needs of the child and the service's ability to meet these needs. Ongoing arrangements will be at the discretion of the Co-ordinator in consultation with guardians and educators.

Staff will work with disability support and inclusion support services, both via correspondence and within the centre, when children need additional support. Changes will be made to the environment whenever possible to support the inclusion of children with additional needs. Staff will facilitate guardian access to relevant services when they need the support.

Enrolment

Enrolments will not be accepted from families without full completion of online registration. A link for online registration will be sent to you. Paper enrolment forms can be obtained on request or an appointment can be made to complete online registration at the Centre. To secure enrolment, guardians are required to authorize a direct debit to pay childcare fees. Information about fees is included in the Fee Policy.

The service's responsibility for the child begins when placed in the staff's care by parent or guardian. If a child is to be absent on a day they are normally booked, the family must notify the service as soon as possible.

If a child who is enrolled with the service, but is not on the Roll for a particular day, arrives at the

service, the Nominated Supervisor, or other relevant staff member will be contacted immediately to see if the child has been booked in for the day. If not the child's acceptance on the day will depend on availability as determined by staffing, number of children in attendance and maintaining child educator ratios.

The family must give two weeks' notice if they wish to cancel a child's enrolment; failure to do so will mean that the fees paid in advance will not be refunded.

Enrolment information will be kept in strict confidence according to the services Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

Orientation

Families who are enrolling their child for the first time will be given a tour of the centre and information about how to access this Guardian Handbook and how to enrol online. Families should read this handbook so that their child is prepared for their first day at the service.

Families will have access to two orientation days free of charge. During this time the parent/guardian will be supported to play with the child and familiarise them with the layout, resources and routine of the centre. During this time children may not be left at the centre, but staff will provide an area for coffee and tea so that a guardian can trial leaving their child/ren without leaving the premises.

On their first day an educator will introduce themselves and guide parents/guardians through the sign-in/out process, check that all relevant forms and authorities have been signed and show them around the Centre.

Educators will facilitate an easy transition by supporting children who struggle with separation using media/books, activities and family photos. The educator will remain with the child until they are settled and comfortable in the new environment. Educators will carefully monitor the child whilst in the service to ensure they are settling in.

Fees

Patersonia's Early Learning Program and Long Day Care is suitable for ages 3-5.

Fees are as follows:

Early Learning	8.00am – 3.00pm	\$75
Long Day Care/ Vacation Care	8.00am – 6pm	\$100

Our service sets fees in accordance with its annual budget in order to meet the income required to develop and maintain a quality service for children and families. We strive to ensure that our service is affordable and accessible to families in our community. The Approved Provider ratifies the budget annually, or as necessary, and monitors it carefully throughout the year.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Patersonia is a Child Care Subsidy Approved Service. This means that families with students at Patersonia Early Learning are able to register for the Child Care Subsidy. Families will need to ensure that they have enrolled to claim Child Care Subsidy through Centrelink. CCS payments can only be back dated 28 days, and all Guardians are liable to pay the full fee for each day that they are

not CCS registered. Instructions on CCS registration can be found by searching “claim ccs” on the internet or at <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy/claiming>.

Bookings and Cancellations

Each family is expected to make bookings in advance for the care sessions required. Bookings will only be accepted when families have completed the Booking Form in full, or completed online registration and provided a completed Online Booking Confirmation form. Educators can provide guardians with login details and links.

Families wishing to cancel their child’s place are required to provide written notification two (2) weeks prior to the final day or they are liable to pay for the booked days in full. Notification may be verbal or written. A period of two weeks is required for any changes to enrolment in order to avoid incurring additional costs.

Absences

Fees are to be paid for the days the child is booked into care, including times when the child is absent due to illness or holidays, or sent home from the service due to illness or dangerous behaviours. Childcare Subsidy (CCS) is paid for 42 days allowable absences per financial year. Additional absences will only receive Child Care Subsidy if they are taken for a reasons defined in the Family Assistance Law.

Public Holidays

Fees will be charged for Public Holidays that fall on a booked day, unless the parent/guardian gives 2 weeks notice and elects an alternative day for care during that week. This excludes public holidays in the Christmas /New Year period, which fall in a 2 week closure during which no fees will be charged.

Payment of Fees

Fees can be paid via a direct debit only which will be established upon enrolment. Frequency of payments are fortnightly. All fees must be paid by Direct Debit from a nominated bank account or Credit card. A fee of 1.8% applies if a Credit Card is used.

Failure to pay unpaid fees may result in debt recovery action being taken and discontinuation of care for the child unless the family has initiated a repayment schedule for the unpaid fees with the coordinator/manager.

Patersonia understands the financial hardship which is experienced from time to time, and will assess the deferred payments on a case by case basis. The business manager is responsible for assessing each individual case for approval.

Late Collection Fee

The service operates for set hours as notified on the Service Details and poster in the foyer of the service. Staff are unable to accept children into the service outside of these hours. Should children be present after the closing time, a late fee of \$2 per minute after 10 minutes past closing time applies. Any students who have not been collected from the preschool by 3:15pm will be charged for the whole day.

Safety Considerations

Arrival and departure of children

It is extremely important you approach one of our staff to let us know your child has arrived or is about to depart for the day. Only parents/guardians and authorised nominees are permitted to collect your child from our early learning program. If you're unable to collect your child, please contact us to provide the name of the person who will be collecting your child. To ensure we release your child into the care of the correct person, this person must be an authorised nominee on your child's enrolment form. Photo identification will be requested from any authorised nominee unknown to us so we can ensure the safety of your child at all times. If your child is not collected from the centre and we're unable to contact you, we will contact the authorised nominee listed on your child's enrolment form.

Rest and Sleep

Rest time routine varies according to individual needs. We aim to make rest time a relaxed, pleasant time for all children. We provide mattresses for children. Your child may wish to bring a security item, pillow or blanket to have at rest time. Please feel free to discuss your child's rest needs with staff.

Food and Nutrition

The convenience of dropping off your child without having to worry about what to pack for lunch, is a benefit to many busy families. All children are provided with nutritious balanced meals, with a focus on fresh, healthy real foods. Our carers prepare a wide variety of fresh meals every day with the children and the children really enjoy them!

Safety Processes

We have developed systems, processes and procedures to ensure that your children are safe at all times. We regularly review these procedures, seek independent advice and further our training in safety and risk management. We maintain a safe and secure environment where children are free to explore and learn more about their world. The approved provider and educators are familiar with regulatory requirements and standards regarding supervision. The education and care service encourages educators to evaluate their supervisory practices and implement plans that increase their awareness of the layout, risk management and supervisory choices within the education and care environment. All educators must hold a current first aid certificate.

Child Protection

Meeting the needs of children and making sure they are safe in the family is a shared responsibility between individuals, the family, the community and the government. When adults caring for children do not follow through with their responsibilities, are abusive or exploit their positions of power, then it is the child protection system that becomes responsible for taking action. As educators, we're part of the system to protect children and will provide notification to the relevant authority in accordance with state legislation when necessary. We work on a continuing improvement basis to develop the latest policies and procedures of a modern child safe organisation.

Medical Conditions

To ensure appropriate identification and management of children with medical conditions, we implement best practice and risk minimisation strategies. This includes the provision of suitable

first aid training for all staff to ensure a rapid response in the event of a medical emergency. If your child has a medical condition, you may be asked to complete a medical management plan to be followed in the event of an incident relating to the specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition.

Evacuation Procedures

In the event that the service needs to be evacuated, we aim to conduct this in a rehearsed, timely, calm and safe manner to secure the safety of each person using the service. The safety and wellbeing of each child, educator and person using the service is paramount above any other consideration in the time of an emergency or evacuation. Any other procedures will be carried out only if it is safe to do so. An evacuation may be necessary in the event of a fire, chemical spill, bomb scare, earthquake, siege, flood etc.

Other safety policies

Patersonia has a range of safety policies to address management of safe sun exposure, water play, nature and bush play, excursions, animal and rest/sleep. All these policies can be found online or provided on request.

Contact Details

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