

Playgroup Handbook for Members



Promoting positive childhoods



MeerilingaTM
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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO COUNTRY.....	2
WELCOME TO MEERILINGA.....	2
ABOUT PLAYGROUPS.....	3
What happens at playgroup?.....	3
The benefits of playgroup.....	3
How do you participate?.....	3
OUR PROGRAM.....	4
Illness and Infectious disease.....	4
Safety and Incidents.....	5
Medical Conditions.....	5
Sun Protection.....	6
Behaviour Guidance.....	6
Child Safe Environment.....	6
Pet friendly Centre.....	6
Privacy.....	7
Fees and payments.....	7
How to enrol.....	7
Cancellation.....	7
Compliments and Complaints.....	7
Disclaimer.....	7

ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO COUNTRY

Meerilinga acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Ballardung, Wadjuk, Noongar Country, where Meerilinga's main offices are located, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to their cultures and to Elders past, present and future in the spirit of reconciliation.

WELCOME TO MEERILINGA

Meerilinga is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that works to improve the well-being of children, members and communities within Western Australia. The organisation works collaboratively to facilitate a wide range of services, programs and activities.

Meerilinga Children and Family Centres are guided by a key set of values. These include:

- Respect for each other, the community and environment
- Empathy for the challenges faced by children and members and acknowledgement of capacity to reach their potential
- Creation of a genuinely welcoming environment that nurtures a sense of belonging for everyone
- Recognition and valuing of diversity
- Advocacy for children, members and those who work with them and continuously finding helpful ways to speak up about issues that matter to these communities.

A playgroup is a group of parents, caregivers and extended family who come together with their babies and young children in a relaxed and friendly environment to learn together through play.

Playgroup WA, 2020

ABOUT PLAYGROUPS

No child is too young for playgroup. All children from birth-5 years, love new experiences and benefit from developing sensory, social and communication skills through activities at playgroup.

Playgroups vary from one session a week made up of three or more members to multiple sessions over the week. Session times are informed from the group from time to time.

Our playgroups coincide with the School term. Please visit the education dept website or contact the service for these dates. <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/future-term-dates>

At playgroup generally members and caregivers attend with their children and retain responsibility for their wellbeing and supervision at all times.

What happens at playgroup?

First and foremost - PLAY! Playgroup sessions are flexible and offer a combination of free play and planned activities including:

- Indoor and outdoor play
- Physical play
- Arts and craft
- Music and movement
- Story time and nursery rhymes
- Messy play - for example finger painting and water play
- Conversation and support
- Food, drinks and refreshments brought in from home.

We will have a continued focus on playgroups that engage with members and caregivers and a continuing emphasis on culturally specific groups.

The benefits of playgroup

Playgroups benefit children, members and the wider community. Whilst it is true children can play anywhere, playgroup has an added benefit of providing opportunities for playing with other children and practising important social skills.

Importantly, playgroup also provides mutual benefit where members and children can play together, which is critical to family bonding, children's optimum development and building strong social connections. By creating a space where members have the opportunity to spend time with their children, playgroups can enrich relationships through play.

How do you participate?

One of the joys of playgroup is that it brings together people from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds, all sharing the common objective of having fun with their children. All members have something to offer, whether it's from their management and organisational skills, or their practical and creative skills. A little thought in the playgroup's planning ensures that all members feel welcome, valued and belong.



Each week when you come to playgroup, please bring:

- A hat for your child, broad brimmed or legionnaires style. Don't forget adults model the behaviours we want children to learn so please bring your hat too.
- Spare clothes.
- A piece of fruit or a healthy snack. Foods to limit are known as 'discretionary choices', these foods are high in kilojoules, saturated fat, added sugar and salt. Discretionary foods are not an essential or necessary part of our dietary pattern such as, sweet biscuits, cake, fried foods, crisps etc. Meerilinga does not allow popcorn to be consumed by children attending our centre due to the increased risk of choking for children under 5 yrs.
- Nappies, wipes & other baby requirements
- Water bottle/formula - heating & refrigeration facilities are provided.

OUR PROGRAM

Our Educators plan the program to focus on the value of a Child's Right to Play. We acknowledge that children have a right to play under the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989).

Research tells us that children who learn through play are more courageous, creative and rigorous thinkers in adulthood. How do we support 'Play with Purpose'? Firstly, we provide opportunities for children to learn about themselves and construct their own identity through positive experiences with educators, members and others who they trust and make them feel safe and confident.



Illness and Infectious disease

Meerilinga is committed to protecting the health and wellbeing of children, members and staff by minimising the risk of the spread of infections at our centres.

If your child is unwell at home, members are not permitted to participant at the centre. Excluding sick and unwell children will reduce the risk of infecting others and the impact that this has on other members.

If children are showing any of the following signs, members are well advised to keep them at home:

- General lethargy and feeling unwell
- Fever over 38°C
- Vomiting within the last 24hrs
- Diarrhoea within the last 24 hours
- Heavy continuous nasal discharge – thick, green or bloody
- Severe or prolonged coughing
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- Undiagnosed rashes

When in doubt, we ask that you give us a call to determine whether your child should attend. Our centre follows the guidelines from the Department of Health and 'Staying Healthy in Child Care' published by the National Health and Medical Research Council. You can find this document at www.nhmrc.gov.au.

Safety and Incidents

In an emergency if an ambulance is called or additional medical assistance is required the member will reimburse any necessary expenses incurred by Meerilinga.

Emergency and evacuation plans are to be followed as per the services plan, which are located at each building exit. Please ensure you are aware of this plan and the evacuation point during induction.

Meerilinga provides a community kitchen and will offer our members tea and coffee throughout the playgroup session, please note hot drinks are not permitted into the play areas without a keep cup where children are present.

Please feel free to use the community kitchen to store food or prepare food for your child. Children are not permitted into the kitchen area.

We maintain a formal record of all incidents that occur within our service. Children and families who experience an incident must advise the playgroup facilitator and/or Director as soon as reasonably possible to ensure we have supported your health and wellbeing and our reporting processes have been followed.

Medications or other dangerous items must not be accessible to children – please advise your playgroup facilitator or centre Director if you would like us to store these in a safe place.

Medical Conditions

Children living with specific healthcare needs, including diagnosed medical conditions such as anaphylaxis, asthma, allergy, illness, disability etc are supported in our playgroups.

To ensure we take every reasonable precaution to protect children in the day to day management of their conditions and dealing with emergency situations as they arise, we request members provide our staff with information regarding your child's Medical Management Plan before the child commences at our service.

Sun Protection

Our children and Family centres are registered as a SunSmart service with the Cancer Council WA and our practice is guided by their recommendations.

To ensure that all children are protected from skin damage caused by the sun we provide sunscreen for all children. Sunscreen needs to be applied 20 minutes prior to going outside, we recommend this is done before your child attends the playgroup. Sunscreen is available at the sign in table. A family may choose to provide their own sunscreen if their child reacts to some creams.

Members are asked to dress children in clothing that covers as much skin as possible, particularly the shoulders. A top with sleeves is required. Please provide a wide brimmed or legionnaire style hat for your child. For SunSmart information please speak to staff or go to https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/How-to-be-SunSmart

Behaviour Guidance

Educators facilitating our playgroups practice positive guidance techniques. Limits to behaviour will be clearly expressed in positive terms and reinforced consistently in a developmentally appropriate way. Children will be encouraged to settle their differences in a peaceful manner. We encourage members to support their child to solve conflicts encountered in play. With the help of a supportive adult the children will develop empathy towards others, an understanding and awareness of emotions and problem-solving skills.

Meerilinga aims to provide children with a positive and enriching educational environment that promotes their social, physical and emotional development. We are committed to safeguarding children and ensuring that they feel and are safe. Therefore, we expect that all members respect children and ensure they are heard, treated fairly and without prejudice or discrimination.

Child Safe Environment

Children and young people have a right to be safe and protected at all times, including when accessing services in the community. Meerilinga believes that the interests of the children have to be held above all others.

To support this right the relevant workers will follow the procedures as guided by the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support

Pet friendly Centre

At Meerilinga, we believe that involving pets in our early learning programs provides many valuable learning experiences for children. Pets support children through observing, interacting with and learning how to care for animals. This can be a valuable part of a child's education and care experience. Enriching children's learning by encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals, can help children build empathy, patience and improve their communication skills.



Please be aware that at some of our centres we have resident animals. If you have any further questions regarding these pets, please speak with your Centre Director.

Privacy

Meerilinga is committed to ensuring that your personal information is kept private. We will handle your personal and sensitive information in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Act (1988).

When attending playgroup please ensure the privacy of other children and members is maintained and respected by not taking photos or video images of them without permission. To view our complete Privacy Statement, visit: <https://www.meerilinga.org.au/website-privacy-statement/>

Fees and payments

Fees are paid on enrolment by direct debt, and thereafter invoiced per term.

Single child family \$30 per term | **Multiple child family \$35 per term**

Membership fees are due at the commencement of each term and are non-refundable. Upon initial online Enrolment you will be directed to our Online Payment. Alternatively, if you are unable to make a payment this way, we will issue you an invoice with our Bank details to make a Direct Deposit.

We will issue you an invoice for subsequent terms and payment can be made by Direct Deposit or online with your Credit Card or PayPal account via Make a Payment

Online: <https://www.meerilinga.org.au/invoice-payment/>

Fees are a standard price for membership. Where unable to pay please contact finance on 9489 4079 to discuss fee waiver on grounds of severe financial hardship.

How to enrol

Playgroup Membership is for the current year you will need to enrol each year as your family's details may have changed. Please enrol through the Meerilinga website:

<https://www.meerilinga.org.au/children-family-centres/meerilinga-playgroups/>

Cancellation

To cancel your membership, please notify the Centre Director either in writing. Once membership has been paid for the Term, all fees are non-refundable. Playgroup memberships are ongoing, with invoices issued at the start of each Term. This will continue until Meerilinga is notified of cancellation.

Compliments and Complaints

We invite your feedback on any aspect of our services. We welcome feedback, complaints, comments or compliments about the service we provide to you can be made either in writing, verbally or by phone to the Centre Director.

If you would like to leave anonymous feedback, you can contact the CEO directly by emailing mycf@meerilinga.org.au

Disclaimer

The information in this handbook is correct at the time of publishing. Please see our website for our complete Terms & Conditions: <https://www.meerilinga.org.au/terms-conditions/>, Privacy Policy & Disclaimer: <https://www.meerilinga.org.au/website-privacy-statement/>