



Families Information Handbook

Philosophy

As Early Childhood educators we at Little Possums Early Childhood Learning Centre concentrate on facilitating children's learning and development as they participate in everyday life. This holistic view allows children within our Centre to develop their personal interests and construct their own identity and understanding of the world.

Little Possums is a place where children are valued for their ability to complete meaningful tasks, their wonder and curiosity, their perspectives, and ability to play, Where families are valued for their traditions, their commitment to work, home and community, and their dreams for their children, Where staff are valued for their vision, their delight in children, their passion for teaching, their skill, heart, and knowledge, a commitment to families, and an ability to play.

We cherish what we learn from each other.

Children - We see children as unique and capable individuals, who come to our Service with their own interests, talents, skills, and ideas. We as Educators are well trained and passionate. We value, respect and appreciate this uniqueness. We feel children have a right to be active participants in their own learning and must be empowered to express their views and ideas. A child's opinion must be valued for its validity to their perspective and their autonomy and initiative needs to be respected. We as Educators will protect and cherish the innocence of children and thus provide a safe and secure environment. As we unpack the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) we will work alongside your child to actively promote children's learning through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level thinking skills

Family - We acknowledge that family is the most important and influential aspect in the lives of young children and the significance of their relationships cannot be underestimated. We aim to ensure we involve parents and families into all aspects of the programs development and implementation. We strive to develop positive, mutually respectful relationships with each family member, as we work in partnership to achieve the best possible outcomes for all. We believe that working in partnerships with families is central to ensuring continuity and progression in a child's learning, development and future success.

Program - In Early Childhood Education the curriculum is not the focus, the children are. We feel that a meaningful, integrated, emergent curriculum using EYLF as the Framework is the most beneficial to children's learning across all developmental domains. A curriculum in which children are active participants and collaborators allows for a more individualistic and meaningful involvement by the children. We believe children are unique individuals who develop at their own rate, and thus by providing enriching, meaningful and realistic opportunities children will explore, create, discover, and imagine. Our programs reflect planned and spontaneous experiences designed to support children's development in all domains. Through the EYLF, the program will see Educators use intentional teaching, (it's deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful). Educators who engage in intentional teaching recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning. They actively promote children's learning through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level thinking skills (EYLF).

Educators - For the Educators in any early childhood setting, team work and effective communication are essential requirements for positive outcomes across all aspects of the Services' functioning, for 'together everyone achieves more'. Educators are responsive to all children's strengths, abilities and interests. We will value and build on children's strengths, skills and knowledge to ensure their motivation and engagement in learning (EYLF). We aim to create an environment of trust and respect, where we work towards achieving a shared goal. Ongoing education and training is a critical aspect of staff's professional development. It is through accurate evaluation and assessment, which occurs when we critically reflect on our actions, that we are able to identify areas which may be considered a skill and those which may need further development. We recognise Educators/Staff as our Service's most precious resource and aim to provide them with a satisfying and safe working environment. Further we also appreciate the experience and skills of all Educators/Staff. We appreciate their dedication as an integral element of the success of our Service.

Community - We strive to be seen as a Service of Excellence within our community, a Service which values community involvement in all aspects of our program. A Service where community resources are utilised effectively, to enhance the growth and development of individual children, families, and Educators/Staff.

Environment - Children inherit connection to the natural world and, as Educators/Staff, we understand that children often develop their ideas and understandings of the world around them from the information presented to them by the significant adults in their lives. As we are one of these significant adults, we have a responsibility to present a positive approach to the environment. We also embrace diversity within our Service and the wider community, so that children view this diversity with a sense of appreciation and wonder rather than misunderstanding and fear. Through respect, acknowledgement, appreciation and acceptance of diversity within our Community, our Service will embrace, celebrate and share traditions and cultures throughout our program. Learning environments are welcoming spaces when they reflect and enrich the lives and identities of children and families participating in the setting and respond to their interests and needs. Our Service will cater for different capacities and learning styles and invite children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions (EYLF).

Sustainability - The aim of education for environmental sustainability at Little Possum's is to promote a sense of responsibility, respect, empowerment, active participation, enquiry and social change. Our Indoor and outdoor play spaces for the children are designed for sustainable living. Little Possum's has been developed with sustainable design knowledge and skills not only to ensure sustainable operation, but promote modelling of sustainable practice. Sustainable design measures promote resource conservation and healthier living. To inhabit such a play space is to live, work and play sustainably.

Little Possum's includes natural elements that encourage a sense of well being, evoke curiosity and generally provide an environment where adults and children are happy to spend time and explore.

Service Information

Our Service caters for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years. We are open from 7.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday, (50 weeks of the year) and closed on NSW public holidays. Notice will be given in our Newsletters when these days occur. We have 3 classrooms, a 0-2 year old room, 2-3 year old room and a 3-5 year old room. We aim to nurture siblings spending time together and have

allocated times for this along with other segments of the day where children will be separated to allow for more age appropriate experiences and supporting friendships, which will see them through to Big School.

Fees

Our fees are \$79.00 daily or \$85.00 for casual days before CCB or CCR has been applied. Please call us with your CCB percentage and number of eligible hours and we can work out your exact fee. If you don't have a CCB percentages please call the Family Assistance Office (FAO) on 136150. On enrolment we will need your CRN for yourself and your child so we can register attendance and ensure that you are receiving the maximum entitlement.

Make Up days

We have a make-up day policy in place to support families and to help maintain a healthy care environment. To register for a make-up, you must inform the Service that your child will be absent no later than 8am on the effected day. This allows the Service to contact other families on the make-up list to inform them that there is availability that day. If you fail to ring by 8am and your child is absent, no make-up day will be earned for your child. A make up day must be taken in the same week your child is away. If you choose to accept a placement as a make-up and fail to arrive that day, you will be charged at your normal fee rate. This policy is to help minimise illness in the Service. If your child is sent home sick from the Service, no make-up day is allocated.

Service Closing Time and Late Fees

Please be aware Little Possums closes at 6:00pm. A late fee is incurred for children collected after 6.00pm. The fee is \$30 per child for every 15 minutes or part thereof and will be added to your next account. The late fee is strictly adhered to, as two staff members are required to remain at the program until all children are collected. If we are unable to contact either the parent or a person nominated by the parent on the enrolment form to arrange collection of the child/children within an hour of the Service closing, then we will contact Department of Education and Communities and the Police to take responsibility of your child.

Our Team of Educators



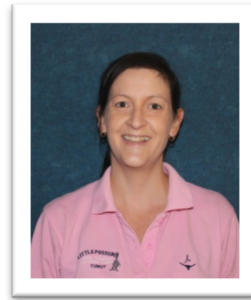
Linda Barratt

Owner Licensee



Anna Hassett

Nominated Supervisor/ Director



Joanne McKinley

Room Leader

Educational Leader/ ECT



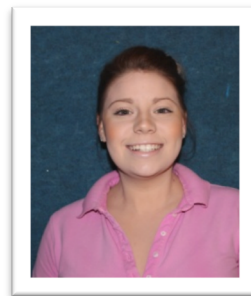
Alana Martin

Room Leader



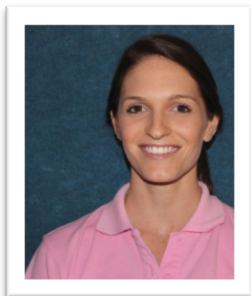
Jessie Gardiner

Room assistant



Gabrielle Thomson

Room assistant



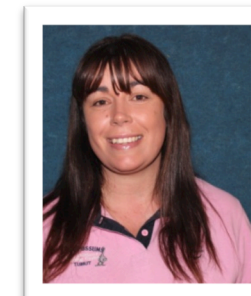
Aimee Coulton

Room assistant



Angela Annetts

Room assistant



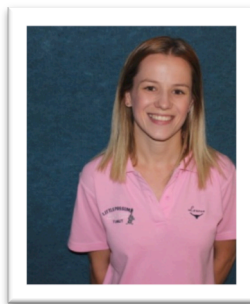
Stephanie Hibbens

Room assistant



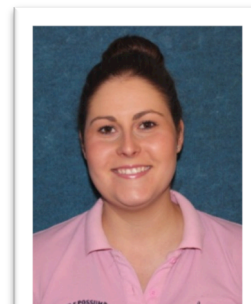
Jordyn Watkins

Room Leader



Lauree Christian

Room Leader



Jessica Hartshorn

Room assistant

Confidentiality

We are committed to protecting your privacy. We support and are bound by privacy laws and strict confidentiality is maintained at all times. In order to plan programs with you we need to collect information from you. This information helps us to assess and plan programs in partnership with you. We do not disclose personal information about you or your child to other people or organisations without your consent, unless we are required to do so by law. We do not ask for personal information about you or your child from other professionals or organisations without your consent. You can look at the information in your child's file at any time, or request a copy of information in the file.

Service Policies and Procedures

Staff members are expected to follow the Service's policies and procedures and to ensure that all stakeholders act in accordance with them. Educators cannot make exceptions for individuals unless the Nominated Supervisor or Management do so on account of serious and unusual circumstances. We hope that you will feel comfortable enough with staff and management to approach us with comments and questions about our service, including complaints. Your involvement helps us to improve our service and may lead us to change our policies and procedures. Copies of all policies are available in the parent library or from the office.

Enrolment Information

It is essential that we have up-to-date information in case of an emergency. It is important that you notify the office staff and your child's Educator of any changes to enrolment information including:

- Address
- Health
- Telephone/mobile numbers
- Contact details
- Family changes
- Emergency contact information details etc.

Ask the educator at any time if you would like to check any details on the enrolment form. It is essential that we have copies of your child's birth certificate and immunisation status. We are also required to have certified copies of any court orders relating to the child.

Goals for your child at our Service

“We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.”

Maria Montessori

The aim of each Educator in our Service is not to fill the child with facts and provide basic, one dimensional activities but rather to act as a vehicle providing access to materials and information that scaffolds on their ideas and create experiences that cultivate their own natural desire to learn, to give them lifelong tools to question, seek and succeed.

Along with you, we will create a list of goals for your child that we will *program to* and *observe on*. The outcomes will be *reflected on, extended and recorded*, all in consultation with you. The broader goals we have for each child are based on the outcomes in the Early Years Learning Framework and include:

- Mutual respect and empathy
- Concern and responsibility for self and others
- A sense of self worth
- Social awareness
- Importance of sustainability
- Self-discipline
- Habits of initiative and persistence
- Creative intelligence and imagination
- Self-confidence as an independent learner
- A love of learning

We strongly encourage communication between the Service and home to ensure continuity in what we are delivering to your child and acknowledge that the role of the Educator is to work in partnership with families; *children's first and most influential educators*.

Programming

Through our curriculum, The Early Years Learning Framework, we have a focus of Belonging, which is integral to a child's sense of self. It acknowledges belonging to a family, community and culture. It is the foundation of relationships and acceptance. Along with Belonging we have Being. Being is allowing the children to be in the present - to concentrate on the here and now. It's allowing them time to investigate, attach to people, environments and experiences. They are able to meet challenges with confidence that they have the time and support to work through and overcome any obstacles in their own time. Being sees the Educators develop and support an environment that is child focused, *not for the convenience of routine or the Educators*. Lastly, we have Becoming. Becoming acknowledges change and there is no time in one's life that has more rapid change than in the years of early childhood. Becoming recognises the skills that are necessary to thrive through change and how experiences and circumstances create skills, expectations, understandings and

relationships. It allows flexibility for a child to learn and grow. On this foundation we observe each child for outcomes that we can support in the program. The 5 outcomes are:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators.

Each day your child is observed with relevant information documented. Along with the goals that are developed for each individual child, the observation is reflected on and followed up with extended experiences to support the child in expanding their knowledge, concepts and skills related to their interest. Families are given the opportunity to also reflect on the observations and add their input which Educators will then incorporate into the program.

We know that children learn effectively through play and this is supported by Educators who are diligent in their responsiveness to each child. Applying strong intentional teaching practices will provide the children with an authentic and meaningful learning environment which challenges, supports and nurtures a child's development.

Child Carers 'Online'

Every child will have a personal, confidential child carers page consisting of;

- Child profile sheet
- Goals from families and Educators
- Observations
- Objectives for further development
- Work samples
- Checklists
- news feed
- Other relevant data

Child Carers is to be maintained and used as a direct tool for evaluation and future planning within the Service's program. This makes the program reflect the value of individuality and is not be used as a means of comparison between peers or stereotypes. You will be given your child's log in details at the beginning of their time at Little Possums.

How can you be involved?

The Service has an *Open Door Policy* and actively seeks and encourages families to be as involved in the Service as they wish. This can range from evaluating and adding input to your child's program and observations, volunteering within the Service and sharing skills & experiences that the children and the program will benefit from.

You can be involved with the Parent Body Representative. Your involvement can be as formal or active as you like and as time permits. We respect that time is limited for most families and we ask that you inform us as to your preferred way of communication. We can arrange meetings with your child's Educator at a time that suits you throughout the year and offer email, Child Carers, Facebook, Newsletters, and pride ourselves on strong verbal communication on a daily basis. We seek input from families on all aspects of the Service but in particular, your child's goals, observations and program.

If, for any reason you question or do not understand any aspect of the Service or your child's experience we have a Grievance Policy that supports all stakeholders in our community and like all policies, is available for families to consult and implement at any time. Copies of our policies are available in the parent library. You are welcome to take a copy home and review at your leisure.

How to prepare your child for our environment

Orientation is an important start for your child and family to connect to our service. We encourage each child to attend the Service in the company of a family member before they start the day with us. This gives you and your child the opportunity to gain an understanding of our program, the layout of the room, where to find things, provide Educators with additional information about your child and how we can best support their transition and settling period.

If your child is reluctant to attend, please discuss this with their assigned Educator so that they can develop strategies with you to support the transition from home to the Service. You are welcome to take photos of your child in our environment to show and discuss at home.

Communication between home and the service must be open and happen often to best support your child during this time. There may be tears and extra tight hugs when saying goodbye for the first few weeks but there are always cuddles, reassurance and genuine care from Educators for both the children and their families. Sometimes this experience is upsetting more so for the family, not the child. We understand this and offer support through phone calls during the day, photos and open communication.

Saying goodbye

Ideally, your child will be settled at an activity before you leave, however some children find it hard to settle until their parents have gone. What works best is a set routine so try to establish the day routine from the orientation process. Being well organised and avoiding a rush usually results in a calm start to the day.

Most children will want to have a look around first to see who else has arrived and to look at what activities are available. Please tell your child when you are leaving as they may become upset if they haven't had the opportunity to say goodbye. This gains trust from the child, not only in you but in the Educator who is reassuring your child about their day and when you will return. Rest assured that we will ring you if your child is distressed.

What to bring to the Service

Bag or Backpack

For independence, we work towards all children being able to recognise and open their own bag (unless they are babies of course). Please ensure it is large enough to hold all their belongings.

Clothing

It is helpful to your child if they are dressed in non- restrictive, serviceable, easy to wash clothes so that they feel free to join in all the activities and to develop independence. Shoes also, need to allow children freedom to run, climb, hop & jump as well as being easy for the child to take off and put on by him or herself. Unsuitable shoes are thongs and we prefer that these are NOT worn to the Service. Lace up joggers, crocs, gumboots or sandals are appropriate. Also, please consider clothing that enables the child to move around easily and allows children to be independent in dressing. Clothing such as long dresses, overalls, braces, belts and stiff buttons can prove a problem for children who need to go to the toilet. We require all t-shirts to have sleeves.

Spare clothes: Every now and then accidents occur and it may be necessary for your child to get changed into a fresh set. Please include a complete change of clothes every day which can stay in your child's bag...just in case!

Sunhat: A sun protective hat must be worn every day when playing outside for protection against the sun. Please do not send your child in with a cap hat as Little Possums will provide each child with their own sun protective broad brim hat.

Toys

The Service has an abundance of toys and we ask that children do not bring in toys from home. This eliminates toys getting lost, broken, disappointment for other children and responsibility on Educators to track numerous toys throughout the day.

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations: It is very exciting for a child to be having a birthday. families are more than welcome to bring in a birthday cake. A simple butter/chocolate cake is enough or small patty cakes. Just remember the cake should NEVER contain NUTS.

Sun Smart

Children and Educators will wear hats and appropriate clothing when outside. Staff will encourage children, including by way of modelling behaviour, to avoid excessive exposure to the sun and to wear suitable sunscreen (at least SPF 15+), which is reapplied according to the manufacturers recommendations. We ask that children come to the Service with sunscreen already applied so they are able to participate in outdoor play immediately and not have to wait the 20 minutes after application.

Breast Feeding

This service supports breastfeeding. Mothers who are breastfeeding should speak to one of our Nursery staff to be aware of our policies on storing and serving breast milk. Families that are formula feeding should also consult our Nursery Staff to be aware on how we need the formula prepared and stored.

When should I NOT send my child to the Service?

Our Service is not equipped to care for sick children; however we will do everything we can to comfort a child who has become sick whilst in our care. To try and prevent the spread of disease, please monitor your child's health and watch for:

- A runny, green nose
- High temperature
- Diarrhoea
- Red, swollen or discharging eyes
- Vomiting
- Rashes
- Irritability, unusually tired or lethargic

Please do not bring your child to the Service if they display any of the above symptoms. If a child becomes ill whilst at the Service the child's parents or person responsible for the child will be contacted to organise collection of the child. If the child is unable to be collected, that child will be kept away from other children and given the opportunity to rest or play with a quiet washable activity whilst remaining within adult supervision.

When the child is collected, the family will have the following information made available to them to present to their doctor: symptoms, date of onset, general behaviour of the child leading up to the illness and any action taken.

Your child should not attend the Service if they have had Panadol or Neurofen within 24 hours. It is extremely important that staff members are aware if a child has had either medication so we do not re-administer and potentially overdose. The other consideration is that medication of any type should not be added to a child's bottle. Children who are on antibiotics are to be kept away from the Service for the first 24 hours to allow the child to rest and the risk of spreading the infection to decrease.

A Doctors certificate may be required prior to returning to the Service. If your child has been away due to illness, please check with the Service as to whether or not you will need a certificate before your child returns.

Please remember that Make-up Days are only applicable when the Service has been informed of the child being away by 8am on the day - not if they are sent home during the day.

Infectious Diseases

The following information has been supplied by the National Health and Medical Research Council re: exclusion from the Service of a child suffering with the following diseases/ailments. Please inform staff if your child has any of the following so that we can let families know if something is going around and avoid an epidemic. (Confidentiality maintained of course).

Condition	Exclusion
Hand, foot and mouth disease	Until all blisters have dried.
Hib	Exclude until medical certificate of recovery is received.
Hepatitis A	Exclude until a medical certificate of recovery is received, but not before 7 days after the onset of jaundice or illness.
Herpes – cold sores	Young children unable to comply with good hygiene practices should be excluded while the lesion is weeping. Lesions to be covered by dressing, where possible.
Influenza and flu-like illnesses	Exclude until well.
Measles	Exclude for at least 4 days after onset of rash.
Meningitis (bacterial)	Exclude until well.
Meningococcal infection	Exclude until adequate carrier eradication therapy has been completed.
Mumps	Exclude for 9 days or until swelling goes down (whichever is sooner).
Poliomyelitis	Exclude for at least 14 days from onset. Readmit after receiving medical certificate of recovery.
Rubella (German measles)	Exclude until fully recovered or for at least 4 days after the onset of rash.
Salmonella, Shigella	Exclude until diarrhoea ceases.
Streptococcal infection (including Scarlet Fever)	Exclude until the child has received antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours and the child feels well.
Tuberculosis	Exclude until a medical certificate from an appropriate health authority is received.
Whooping Cough	Exclude the child for 5 days after starting antibiotic treatment.
Worms (intestinal)	Exclude if diarrhoea present.

If your child is UNIMMUNISED according to our records, then they will be excluded until the threat has passed.

NHMRC Recommended Immunisation Schedule (0-5yrs) from January 1, 2006

Age	Disease
Birth	Hepatitis B
2 months	Diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis; Polio; Hib; Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal
4 months	Diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis; Polio; Hib; Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal
6 months	Diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis; Polio; Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal
12 months	Measles, mumps & rubella; Hib; Meningococcal c
18 months	Chickenpox (Varicella)
Prior to school entry 4-5 years	Diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis; Poliomyelitis, MMR

Medication

Educators can only administer medication prescribed by a doctor. They cannot administer non-prescription drugs or dietary supplements unless the service is provided with written authorisation by a doctor. Medication can only be administered to a child by Educators from its original packaging. (Complete with pharmacy instruction sticker).

On arrival at the Service families must give medication to Educators for safe storage and complete a medication authorisation form. Under no circumstances should medication be left in children's bags.

Allergies or Asthma

Please submit any allergies or asthma on the Enrolment Form and also bring it to the notice of our Director on enrolment or as it is diagnosed by your Doctor. The Service has a procedure the staff follow to minimise allergic reactions.

The Service requires an Action Plan filled in by your Doctor to assist in managing your child's needs. The Action Plan is to be updated every 6 months.