



Family Welcome Guide

Early Education & Care



Gowrie NSW Vision

Contributing to a **sustainable society** through being at the **forefront** of **early and middle childhood education and care** to **empower** and **support** children, families and professional educators.

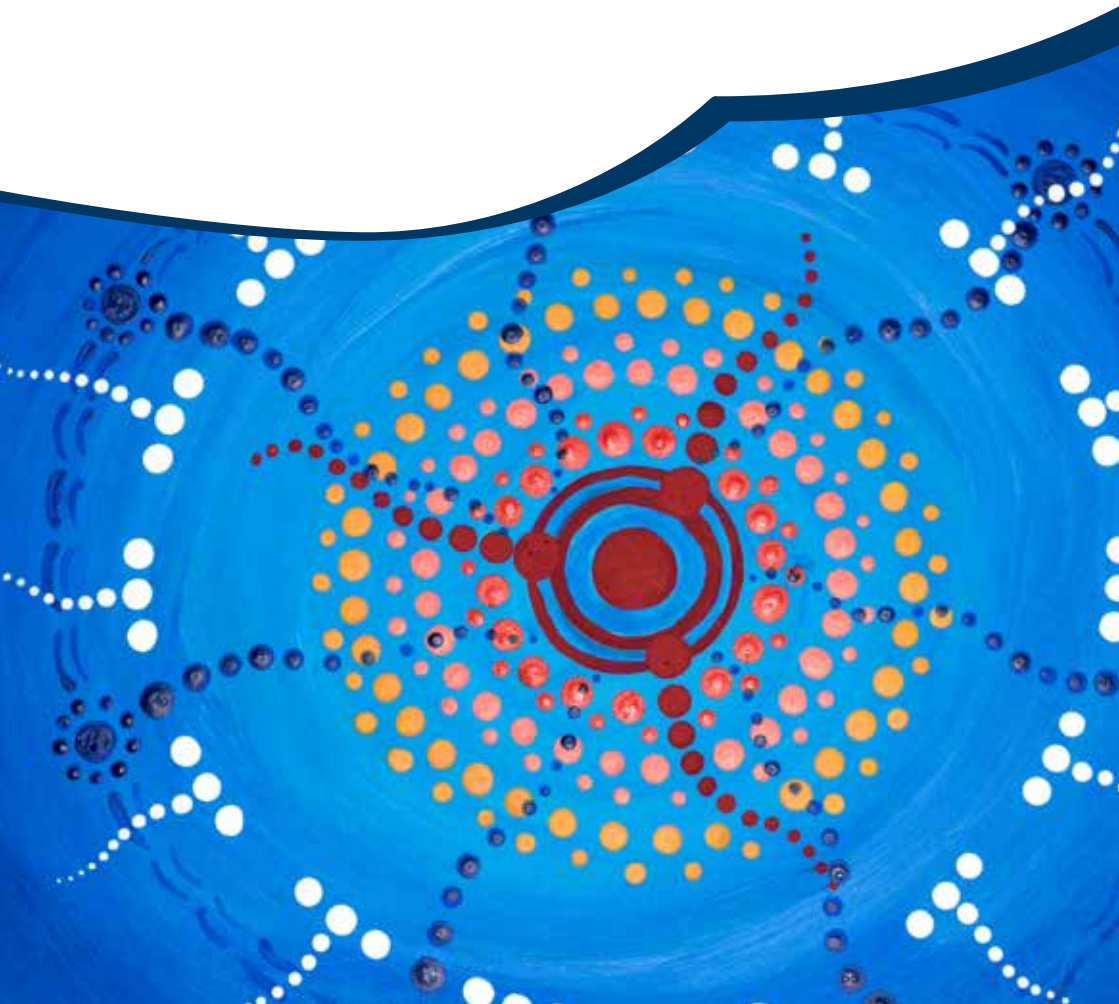


Contents

- Welcome to Gowrie NSW & ACT 5
- Our history 6
- Our commitment to reconciliation 6
- What guides our practice 7
- Health and wellbeing 12
- Our educators 15
- Our administrative services 16

Gowrie NSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of all lands on which we come together.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as enduring, living cultures and pay our respects to Elders, past and present.



Welcome to Gowrie NSW & ACT

Thank you for choosing a Gowrie NSW & ACT centre for your child.

Over the past 75 years Gowrie NSW has greatly contributed to the richness of early and middle childhood. With a focus on research and contemporary pedagogical methodology, we are at the forefront of providing support for children and families through inclusive practice.

Throughout our history, Gowrie NSW has demonstrated a strong leadership commitment to working in partnership across generations to provide a range of programs and resources that support children, families and education professionals.

Gowrie NSW has a progressive culture for providing a considered, respectful, values-based approach across all our undertakings. At Gowrie NSW we regard ourselves as a surplus for purpose social enterprise. Looking to the future, continued growth will ensure Gowrie NSW remains responsive and adaptive in an ever changing landscape to be significant and sustainable into the future.

Please read the enclosed information carefully.

Our family handbook will provide you with an overview of Gowrie NSW and outlines key information on policies and procedures to assist your child's transition to our education and care centres.

As each centre is part of a unique community, you will be provided with an information booklet providing specific information about how that centre operates, the centre environment and philosophy.

We welcome your feedback on this publication and invite you to contact the Centre Manager of your child's centre or our Compliance and Practice Manager if you have any questions, concerns or feedback that you would like to provide.

We value the trust you have shown in enrolling your child in a Gowrie NSW centre and we look forward to partnering with you in your child's education.

Our history

Over the past 75 years, Gowrie NSW has positioned itself as a vital part of the early childhood sector, due to our special and unique way of providing quality education and care as well as our ability to respond to major social, economic and political changes that have occurred over time. The past decade in particular has brought an expansion of professional development opportunities for staff. With a focus on research and exploring new areas of practice, Gowrie NSW has always been at the forefront of work in early education and care.

Our commitment to reconciliation

Gowrie NSW is strongly committed to reconciliation and recognises the special place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold within Australia and acknowledges that they are the first people of the land we share today.

Gowrie NSW will lead in the practice of inclusion throughout education and care and professional learning by:

- Modeling and embedding inclusive practice in all that we do.
- Building authentic and meaningful partnerships.
- Increasing participation of children and families to address inequalities and work towards closing the gap.
- Increasing community participation.
- Increasing workforce participation including traineeships.
- Create pathways for learning for children, families and educators.



What guides our practice?

The National Quality Standard (NQS)

The NQS is a benchmark for the standard of children's education and care in Australia. It contains seven quality areas, each with a list of standards and elements that describe quality practices for education and care centres. Each centre is rated and assessed against each quality area and provided an overall rating of:

- Working toward.
- Meeting.
- Exceeding the national quality standard.

The rating is displayed in each centre.

Educational program

Children are respected and supported as explorers, scientists, initiators and contributors to their own learning at their own pace. Each centre provides large open spaces for children to grow to their full potential and incite a sense of curiosity and exploration in a safe space.

Educators and teachers use an enquiry project based approach. The approach sets to understand the mindset and development of children through hypotheses and reflection of children's learning and carefully considered intentional teaching opportunities incorporating loose parts as passive objects appropriate for children aged six weeks to school age. Educators and teachers remain informed of contemporary research and frameworks that guide practices and the program through professional development opportunities, conferences and further study.

Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework

The national curriculum framework sets out the principles, practices and learning outcomes used by educators and teachers to guide curriculum decision-making and evaluation. The framework has a strong emphasis on play based learning and aims to achieve five learning outcomes. Each child has the opportunity to:

- Have a strong sense of identity.
- Be connected with and contribute to his or her world.
- Have a strong sense of wellbeing.
- Be a confident and involved learner.
- Be an effective communicator.

Further information is available at www.acecqa.gov.au

NSW Transition to School Statement

This document provides a way to document the interests and strengths of children in their year before school. This information assists educators, parents and primary school teachers to support children's transition to school and is completed in partnership with the child, teacher and family in the year before school.

KidsMatter Mental Health Framework

A mental health and wellbeing initiative for children. KidsMatter works with early childhood centres to support mental health and wellbeing of young children, their families and educators using a promotion, prevention and early intervention framework.

Respectful and responsive infant and toddler practice

Our approach with infants and toddlers considers:

- the impact of free movement on a baby's spirit, intelligence and physical being.
- respect for infants and toddlers as developing adults.
- time and a slow paced approach.
- trust during caregiving moments.
- cooperative relationships.
- uninterrupted time for play and exploration.

Documentation

Our educators and teachers document your child's educational development, interests, questions and discoveries and these are used as a basis for planning for learning opportunities across the environment. Documentation of the program occurs through a range of methods such as photographs, video and sound recordings, observations, learning stories, reflections and samples of children's artwork.

Communication

We're committed to connecting you with your child's learning journey and maintain an open door policy. Families are welcome to join in any time of the day. Each family receives a login to Storypark, an app providing an online record of each child's educational journey with a gallery of photos to enable you to create photobooks that you can cherish forever.

Quality Improvement Plan

Each of our centres has a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) outlining how we plan for improved practices, and relationships across seven quality areas. We encourage families, children and educators to be involved in the ongoing review and action of the plan that supports our goals for continuous improvement.

Family and community feedback

Gowrie NSW values ongoing communication and sharing of relevant information amongst educators, families, and children. Feedback and suggestions from families about any aspect of our centres are welcome at all times and can be provided in conversation, in writing via email or letter, on a 'Complaints and Family Feedback' form or through the feedback suggestions box. Feedback may take the form of compliments and acknowledgement of our successes, suggestions, enquiries, complaints or concerns. Gowrie NSW is committed to fair and effective resolutions to all concerns and complaints in a timely manner and is committed to the continuous improvement of the environment and program we provide.



**We value the connection and relationship
between the family and the centre to encourage
your child's full potential.**



Families who have a concern or complaint are encouraged, where possible, to raise it directly with the educator or staff member concerned. Where a complaint is more serious or complex, or relates to the operation of the centre as a whole, then families are encouraged to speak directly with the Centre Manager of the centre. All complaints or concerns are treated confidentially and if we are unable to resolve the issue to a satisfactory standard at centre level, the matter will be referred to a senior manager of Gowrie NSW.

The name and contact details for raising concerns or providing feedback are displayed at the main entrance to the centre. If you would like further information, please refer to our complete 'Grievance and Complaints Handling Policy (Feedback and Communication)' available in the parent information area of the centre.

Family and community partnerships

Gowrie NSW values the connection and relationship between the family and the centre and encourages participation and contribution as a partnership in supporting the child to develop to their potential. Our centres have an 'Open Door' policy and value the expertise of families, encouraging a shared approach in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing and being actively involved and encouraged to contribute to centre decisions. Please speak with the Centre Manager if you would like to be involved in the program in any way.

Health & wellbeing

Acute illness or injury procedures

If your child becomes acutely ill or is injured in an accident, a staff member will take appropriate action to notify you immediately. In the event that your child requires urgent medical attention and you are unable to be contacted, the Centre Manager may arrange for your child to be taken by ambulance to the nearest medical facility or hospital. If the parent or carer is unavailable a staff member will accompany your child in the ambulance.

If a minor accident occurs and your child is given first aid, our staff will discuss the incident with you and complete a Serious Incident Record form. Families are required to notify the Centre Manager if their child requires medical attention as a result of an incident at the Centre. The Centre may be required to notify the NSW Department of Education should an injury require the attention of, or ought reasonably require the attention of a medical practitioner or hospitalisation.

Medication procedures

We are very aware of our duty of care to you and your children in our centres. Gowrie NSW has developed an extensive 'Dealing with Infectious Diseases' and 'Administration of Medication' policy that is available for you to read. The continuing good health of your child whilst attending our centre is a priority for all families and children.

Please be aware however that our centres provide group care and within this setting viruses and diseases do spread amongst children who often have frequent contact with one another.

To ensure the health and safety of all children, families and staff, we request that your child does not attend our programs when suffering from a condition that limits their ability to participate in the program. Excluding contagious staff and children is one of the most effective means of limiting the spread of infection in a child care centre.

If your child requires medication whilst at the Centre, please fill in the 'Request for Medication form' and give the completed form and medication to your child's educator.

The medication must be presented in the original container, bearing the original label with your child's name, dosage and directions for administration. Staff are unable to administer dosage amounts contrary to the stated instructions on the label or if the medication is past the use by date. Staff will also ask you to provide information on your child's last dose of medication.

Non-prescription and homeopathic remedies will only be administered if accompanied by a letter from a medical practitioner or naturopath stating the child's name, dosage to be given and period for which the dosage is required.

If your child requires ongoing medication due to a medical condition, you will be required to provide a 'Medical Management Plan'. This will be followed in the event of an incident relating to a child's specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition. A copy of the, 'Dealing with Medical Conditions in Children' policy will be provided to families of a child that has a known specific health care need, allergy or other relevant medical condition.

Health information

A child may be refused attendance to the centre if she/he is unwell and likely to infect others (refer to 'Managing Infectious Diseases Policy' exclusion periods). A Medical Practitioner's certificate is required before your child may return to the centre after some infectious or contagious illness (such as Chicken Pox or Measles).

Paracetamol will be administered (permission is signed upon enrolment) if the child's temperature is higher than 38 degrees and we are unable to contact a parent or approved person for administering medication. Staff will make every attempt to contact you before administering Paracetamol regardless of written authorisation. Parents or carers will be called and asked to collect their child if Paracetamol has been administered.

Hand washing helps minimise the risk of cross infection. Families can help educate their child about good practice by encouraging children to wash their hands at home before every meals, after toileting and after handling pets. Staff will model and encourage good hygiene practices and such curriculum will be developed with an aim to educate and reflect good practice.

Our health policy and guidelines are based upon, 'Staying Healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services', produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council. A copy is available in the parent's information area.



Meals

Gowrie NSW has a strong commitment to providing healthy and nutritious food and drink as part of our program. Our programs provide food that is consistent with national dietary guidelines for children, national infant feeding guidelines, state regulations and food safety principles.

Special dietary requirements are taken into consideration with planning of the food menu so please advise the Director in writing as part of the enrolment procedure or as new information is known and your child has special dietary requirements that need to be considered.

The centre will minimise risk of exposure to foods and other substances that might trigger a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis in susceptible children. Information on known allergies of children and will be displayed at the centre. A copy of the menu is displayed at each centre. Feedback on the menu is encouraged and can be provided to the centre. A comprehensive nutrition policy is available at the centre in the family information area.

Our educators and teachers

Professional staff

Professional and experienced educators and teachers care for your child whilst they attend Gowrie NSW centres. Photographs of all permanent staff are displayed in our centres for your reference. From time to time casual staff (either Gowrie NSW casuals or agency staff) are employed when permanent staff are on leave or when additional staff are required. At all times the continuity of care by key educators is given the greatest consideration.

All educators have a Working with Children Check, First Aid, Anaphylaxis and Asthma training. Gowrie NSW teachers and educators are mandatory reporters under the State's child protection laws.

Educators and teachers have the opportunity to attend professional development courses throughout the year as part of their commitment to ongoing learning and to ensure they remain informed of current early and childhood pedagogy and practice.

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics and The United Nations Rights of the Child provide a professional framework for educators and teachers and a commitment to action on working with young children. Information on these documents is displayed at the centre.

earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/coe

unicef.org.au/crc



Our administrative services

Child protection and Safeguarding Children

One of the most important concerns of any community is the health, safety and wellbeing of its children and young people.

Education and Care centres and employees must ensure that all children in their care are safe whilst in attendance in a child care centre. Gowrie NSW staff are also required to report any child who is 'at risk of harm' whether the child is attending the centre or in the child's home.

If a parent or guardian arrives at the centre and appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and the educator is concerned about the health or welfare of a child leaving the premises in their care, the educator will suggest that an alternative contact person is contacted to pick up the child.

To ensure the safety and confidentiality of all children who attend the centre please do not take any photographs of children other than your own whilst at the Centre.

All Gowrie NSW staff are classified as 'Mandatory Reporters' which means that each staff person is required by law to contact Family and Community Services if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm. If the educator believes that your child is at significant risk of harm they will contact the NSW Police or Family and Community Services Child Protection Helpline.

Workplace Health and Safety

Gowrie NSW is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff and visitors to our centres. On a regular basis our centres are required to organise emergency evacuations and 'centre emergency lock down procedure' as part of our regulatory requirements. If you are visiting one of our centres during one of these occasions you will be required to participate and follow the directions of staff.

Emergency evacuation information is available at each exit.

As a reminder to all families and visitors, our children's centres are smoke, alcohol and drug free zones.

Payment information

The following is a summary of the Gowrie NSW 'Fee Policy'. A full copy of the policy is available from the Centre Manager.

Fees

All fees are deducted via the direct debit system, Debit Success either by credit card or from your nominated bank account. All accounts are monitored to ensure that they are kept up to date. If you are experiencing financial hardship, please discuss your situation confidentially with the Centre Manager.

Fees can be paid weekly, monthly or fortnightly on a day that suits you. Our fees are must deducted a week in advance.

Information on fee payment options are available from the Centre Manager. Our centres do not accept cash or cheque payments for child care fees.

Information on assistance with child care fees can be found at: www.mychild.gov.au or www.humanservices.gov.au

Bond

We do not require a bond as fees are paid in advance via our direct debit system, Debit Success..



Procedure for overdue fees

If fees are not paid on time, you will be given a reminder statement and will be required to pay your outstanding fee within 7 days from the date of the account. Any changes or fees incurred by Gowrie NSW and/or a third party in relation to recovery of bad debts will be the liability of the family in addition to the outstanding amount.

Late collection fee

Our centres are licensed to have children in care for defined operating hours. If a child remains in one of our centres outside of these hours, fees will be charged to cover the associated operational costs of keeping the Centre open and or any relevant fines or levies the Centre may incur for operating outside of licensed hours.

There is an administration fee of \$25 and a late collection of children fee charged at the rate of \$1 per minute per child for the first 10 minutes increasing to \$5 per minute thereafter. This amount will be charged to your fee account.

Notice of withdrawal and change of days

Four (4) weeks written notice is required if you intend to withdraw your child or reduce days of attendance. Fees are charged for all booked days of care. Discounted fees are not available for periods of absence from the Centre including planned holidays even if notice has been provided of the absence. This is in line with Federal Governments requirement for absences and eligibility for child care benefit.

Our centres do not offer 'make up days' or 'days in lieu for non attendance'.

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Besides the staff, the things I like best about Gowrie NSW Early Education & Care is the beautiful environment – especially the garden and the trees.

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