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Policies & Philosophy

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Philosophy

Acorn Child Care Centre exists to provide the highest quality of child care utilising professional, highly trained staff and facilities which reflect our commitment to caring for children. We believe that pre-school children will achieve their highest potential in a nurturing and caring environment. Our staff are trained to respect the dignity and individuality of each child, remembering at all times the trust which parents have placed in our centre. Through play based learning experiences, children will learn how to constructively interact with their peers and adults. Children will be given many opportunities through play to confidently explore and construct ideas about the world around them encouraging life long learning. We aim to impart life-skills consistent with each child's development and to extend their range of personal skills. We believe, families are the most important influence in a child's life, and are the primary source of information about their children. Therefore, we encourage parents to be actively involved in the centre, contribute ideas, and take an interest in their child's development and growth. Together we can achieve the highest level of child care.

Mission

Our mission is to provide outstanding childcare which nurtures and realises the potential within each child.

Company Structure for Acorn Child Care Centre

Acorn Child Care Centre is a proprietary limited company owned by Dr Martin and Mrs Jeanne Strahan, and Mr Doug Burns. The business activities are dealt with by the licensee Doug Burns CPA.

The centre is managed by an executive committee comprising the owners Martin Strahan, Jeanne Strahan, Doug Burns and the centre directors Rebecca Williams and Catherine Donaldson.

Staff and parent concerns and input are considered at the monthly executive meetings to ensure high quality and inclusive centre practices and policies.

The daily running of the centre is managed by the director, Catherine Donaldson, who assist prospective families who have enquiries about the centre, orientate and enrol new families and assist existing families who need clarification on any aspect of the centre's procedures.

Policy 1.0 - Operational Issues

Policy 1.1 - Staff Child ratios

The centre is licensed for 75 children. The following minimum and maximum staff ratios for each group apply:

Ages of children in group	Qualified carer: child ratio	Maximum group size	Other limits or exceptions
Possums Room (2.5 to 3 years)	1:8	15	
Koalas Room (2 to 2.5 years)	1:6	12	
Platypus Room (3-4 years)	1:12	24	
Wallaby Room (3-6 years)	1:12	24	
Age for which no other entry applies	1:7	21	1 The group may not include more than 4 children aged birth to 1 year. 2 The group may not include more than 2 children aged birth to 1 year for each qualified carer. 3 The group may not include more than 10 children aged birth to

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			2 years
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The centre's director is in addition to the above staff. Other Groups and ratios are possible under our licence and may operate from time to time to meet specific requirements.

The Centre also provides Before/After School Care, Occasional Care and Vacation Care. Staff/ Child ratios are maintained as required by the Child Care Regulation 2003.

These ratios are determined by our licensed capacity and the Child Care Regulation 2003, sections 22, 24 and 25. It is centre policy to ensure that we comply with the Child Care Regulation 2003 at all times.

The centre complies with all aspects of the Child Care ACT 2002 and the Child Care Regulation 2003.

Policy 1.2 - Hours of Operation

The centre is open 6.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, 52 weeks per year. The centre is not open on recognised public holidays in Bundaberg.

Policy 1.3 - Type of Care

Policy 1.3.1 - Long Day Care

Long Day Care caters specifically for working parents/guardians. Care is available for pre-school aged children between the hours of 6.30 am to 6.30 pm. The Centre provides all meals during this time. Attendance must be booked and charges apply on a daily basis whether the child attends or not, or attends for a part of the day only.

Policy 1.3.2 - Before & After School Care

The children in this program attend the Centre because their parents/guardians are unable to deliver them to school or pick them up after school, usually because of work commitments. The Before School program allows the children to have breakfast at the Centre (before 7.30am) and then they participate in indoor or outdoor activities. They are driven to school in the Centre Bus which leaves the Centre at approximately 8.15 am. In the After School program, children are picked up from their respective schools by the Centre bus and delivered to the Centre, arriving at approximately 3.20 - 3.45 pm. They have afternoon tea and then participate in programmed activities. We are not a school and we do not do school work, although we may supervise homework. The Centre has the right to refuse continuing care to a child whose behaviour is not appropriate, either on the bus or within the Centre.

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Policy 1.3.3 - Vacation Care

Vacation Care is offered each school holiday period. It is necessary to book a child into this care. Spaces are limited because the centre cannot exceed the licensed capacity. The children are in the care of a suitably qualified person who programs outdoor, indoor and craft activities and also excursions for the children. Our aim is to make the children's holiday as enjoyable as possible. Charges are made on a daily basis.

Policy 1.3.4 - Occasional Care

When numbers permit the Centre can provide occasional care. If there is a vacancy, or if a child with a permanent booking for a particular day does not attend (holidays, sickness etc.) someone else may take the place. Parents / guardians utilise occasional care for many different reasons: work, social outings, sport or just for a break. Charges are applied as a daily fee. Confirmation that a space is available must be obtained by the Centre Director before attendance can be accepted. A full enrolment form identical to long day care children must be completed before a child can be accepted for Occasional Care.

Policy 1.4 - Children with Special Needs

The Director will accept the enrolment of children with special needs only after due consideration of the child's actual needs and the Centre's ability to provide necessary care and supervision without compromising the Centre's duty of care to the other children. The requirements of children with additional needs have to be continually assessed and the ability of the Centre to provide continuing care and supervision through the various age groups must be taken into account.

Policy 1.5 – Exclusion from Care

The Centre reserves the right to refuse or withdraw children from care, temporarily or permanently, for the following reasons:

- Non-payment of fees (fees are to be paid in full each week). See Policy 1.7.5
- Inappropriate behaviour on the part of a child.
- Inappropriate behaviour on the part of a parent/guardian or representative.
- Children with contagious or communicable diseases.
- Children with additional needs for whom appropriate care, supervision or facilities are not available.
- Children who have not been immunised.
- If it has been less than 24 hours since a child has had a vaccination.
- Children who are visibly unwell or have a temperature over 38 deg. C. Please refer to section 3.12 for other illnesses where

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parents will need to make alternative care arrangements for their children.

- Children with lice. Please refer to section 3.16 for more details. *Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council, December 2005 – “Staying Healthy in Child Care – Preventing infectious diseases in child care”.*

Policy 1.6 - Record Keeping and Privacy

The Centre is obliged to keep the following records:

- Enrolment form
- Developmental records
- Consent forms
- Medication records
- Account records
- Attendance records
- Childcare Benefit records
- Childcare Benefit claims
- Court Orders affecting child.
- Photos

The centre complies with the National Privacy Principles, which form part of the Privacy Act 1998, in that we:

- Only collect information that is necessary and explain why we need this information.
- Ensure that information we have is complete, accurate and up to date.
- Protect family’s personal information from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Access to children’s records is limited to the centre director, group leader, assistant group leader, parent/guardian, administration staff (at the discretion of the director), Dept of Communities staff (where ID is shown).
- Records remain the property of the centre are not to be removed from the premises without permission of the director.

Policy 1.7 - Business Practices and Fees

Policy 1.7.1 - Fee Schedule

Fees are charged according the following schedule:

- Possums – Toddlers – (2.5-3 years) \$330 per week (Daily \$66)
- Koalas – Toddlers – (2-2.5 years) \$330 per week (Daily \$66)
- Platypus – Kindy – (3-4 years) \$320 per week (Daily \$64)
- Wallabies – Preschool – (3-6 years) \$320 per week (Daily \$64)
- Before School Care - \$18 mornings
- After School Care - \$23 evenings

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- Vacation Care - \$64 per day

One month's notice will be given for any changes in the fee schedule of the centre. Such a notice will be prominently displayed on reception notice boards.

Policy 1.7.2 - Account Statements

Account statements are issued on Monday each week and include charges for the coming week. These statements will include any payment activity from the previous week.

Parents/guardians should check their statements carefully each week and refer any problems immediately to the Director. If something is wrong it is an indication that data has been incorrectly entered into the computer and the error will therefore continue until corrected. Parents are responsible for checking the CCB which appears on their statement.

Please note that all bookings must be paid for regardless of attendance.

Policy 1.7.3 - Child Care Management System (CCMS)

The Centre applies the guidelines of the Commonwealth Government in the administration of Child Care Benefit.

- The Centre requires the following information for each child who attends and the parent/guardian under whose name Child Care Benefit is registered – Date of Birth and CRN
- Parents/guardians must understand that the Centre does not control or administer the amount of CCB which each child receives. Any discussion on this matter should be directed to the Centrelink Office.
- The Director can assist with advising parents/guardians about CCMS but further information may be found at Centrelink on the corner of Tantitha and Woongarra Streets, Bundaberg. The Family Assistance Office can be contacted by phone on 13 61 50.

Policy 1.7.4 - Payment of Child Care Fees

It is anticipated that all families utilising the Acorn Child Care Centre facility pay fees using the integrated direct debit method. A direct debit authority will be signed by all families at enrolment. Fees for the current week will be charged on Monday and this will appear on printed statements posted to family boxes on Monday afternoon. Direct debit will deduct these fees from parent's bank account on Wednesday night. Parents can choose to have the direct debit amounts deducted from their bank or credit card accounts.

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Policy 1.7.5 - Overdue Fees

It is essential that fee payments are kept up to date.

Parents/guardians should be aware that their booking/s may be terminated should payment fall one week in arrears. No notice or prior indication of this intention need be given. Parents are reminded of this in writing when enrolling their children.

Debt collection fees will be charged to the defaulters account.

Parents/Guardians who face monetary problems are urged to contact the Director to discuss, in confidence, their circumstances and what may be done.

Generally, the following steps will be followed in relation to fee collection:

1. Statements will be issued weekly on Mondays indicating the due date for payment.
2. Where payment has not been made at the time of printing the following week's statement, the statement will be stamped with "over-due" and an accompanying letter stating that the new statement balance must be paid in full by Friday.
3. Default payments under Direct Debit will trigger loss of care.
4. Debt Collection Services will be used to recover any outstanding account balances. Costs associated with debt collection will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Policy 1.7.6 - Compliance Log Book

A compliance log book is kept at the centre which details any contravention notices as issued by the Office of Early Childhood and Education. It is available upon request. Please see the director.

Policy 1.8 - Priority of Bookings

The Centre, as part of it's obligations to the Commonwealth Government, gives priority of access to care according to the guidelines provided by the Commonwealth. These priorities are as follows:

- **First Priority** – a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect.
- **Second Priority** – A child whose parent/s satisfies the work/training/study test under section 14 of *A New Tax System*
- **Third Priority** – Any other child.

Policy 1.9 - Waiting Lists

- The Centre maintains waiting lists for parents seeking care for their children. Parents who wish to be included on the waiting list need to complete an application form which will immediately be keyed into the centre's computer system.
- The Centre cannot guarantee that a child will be enrolled at a particular time. This depends upon vacancies applicable at that time and upon priority of access rules which may apply. Parents/guardians will be notified when a child can be accepted into care.
- An administration fee of \$40 is payable per child per enrolment. This fee is non-refundable regardless of whether a position becomes available. The administration fee is not applied to future child care costs.

Policy 1.10 - Enrolment

Before any child is taken into care an interview will be arranged between the centre director and the child's parents/carers. At this interview the director will explain centre policies, fee structures, and the requirements relating to the payment of fees. Parents will be given an information pack which will provide full details about Acorn's Child Care Centre's services. At this interview parents will be given opportunity to ask questions and discuss the type of care offered by the centre.

The full completion of an enrolment form is necessary before a child can be accepted into or put on the waiting list for any type of care. The enrolment form must include the child's CRN and date of birth and the CRN and date of birth of the parent claiming CCB.

Details which must be recorded on the Enrolment Form include:

- The child's name, address, gender and date of birth.
- The cultural group to which the child belongs and the primary language spoken by the child.
- The names, addresses, home and business numbers of each of the child's parents
- The names, addresses, home and business numbers of any person or persons or should be contacted in an emergency if the child's parents cannot be contacted.
- The details as above for any person who can collect the child
- The requested booking times for the child.
- The name, address and telephone number of the child's medical practitioner.
- Details of any cultural or religious requirements.
- Details of any injuries, medical condition, or allergy.
- Details of any special food requirements
- Immunisation details.
- Dates of enrolment and starting school.
- Details of any court orders affecting child

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- Permission for centre staff to seek medical, hospital, ambulance or dental care in an emergency where parents cannot be contacted.
- Signature of parents indicating they have read and accepted the centre's philosophy and policies.

A child's booking may be changed on request, provided:

- A vacancy exists
- The rules of priority access are applied.

Any request for a change of booking must be in writing with two weeks notice given. Two weeks notice is also required to terminate care. If your child does not attend on the last day(s) during this two week notice period CCB will be removed and full fee will apply.

Policy 2.0 - Participation by Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians are encouraged to visit the centre at any time. We believe it is beneficial for parents and guardians to observe their children interacting and playing with other children. We encourage feedback and suggestions, particularly as they relate to the needs of a specific child.

Other ways in which parents may participate include:

- Joining in with excursions and trips away from the centre.
- Volunteering to assist in one of the groups.
- Completing a parent suggestion form.
- Attending parent nights.
- Bringing in items of interest such as farm and baby animals.
- Open communication with your child's group leader.

Policy 3.0 - Health

Child Care Centre Health is regulated by the *Child Care Regulation, 2003*, the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and the *Food Hygiene Regulations, 1989*. These regulations are viewed by this centre as a minimum standard only.

Policy 3.1 - Hygiene

Policy 3.1.1 - Hand Washing

The centre requires staff and children to thoroughly wash their hands using foam soap provided at each hand basin at the following times:

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Staff

- When arriving at the centre.
- When entering the kitchen.
- Before handling food.
- After changing a nappy or helping a child to toilet.
- After handling animals.
- After using the toilet.
- After handling cleaning products.
- After touching blood.
- After wiping a nose. (when outside, Aquim Gel is used to wash hands to aid in uninterrupted supervision of children.)

Children

- Before meal times
- After using the toilet
- After nappy change
- After handling animals
- After wiping nose
- Before assisting with food preparation

Policy 3.1.2 - Wearing Gloves

Staff must wear gloves at the following times:

- When changing nappies
- When assisting children with toileting
- Handling soiled linen items
- Cleaning / attending to wounds.
- Applying sunscreen to children
- Serving food
- Wiping a child's nose
- Cleaning tasks

Policy 3.1.3 - Food Handling

The only food consumed at the centre is prepared in the kitchen. The highest level of hygiene is encouraged in these areas of the centre. Only staff with a current certificate of food handling prepare meals.

- All food preparation areas are washed with detergent before and after food preparation.
- Staff wash their hands before food is prepared.
- Staff ensure that children have washed their hands before eating.
- All food is served using serving spoons or tongs.
- All remaining food is covered after preparation.
- All perishable food is refrigerated.
- Fruit is refrigerated over weekends.

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- Spoiled food is disposed of immediately into covered bins.
 - Table surfaces are wiped down prior to children eating.
- (Source – Child Care Regulation Part 2, 2003 Division 7, Paragraph 56 & 57)

Policy 3.1.4 - Kitchen Hygiene

The following cleaning routines are to be maintained

As Necessary

- Dishwasher checked and emptied.
- The kitchen is treated for insects and vermin as necessary or annually.

Daily

- All preparation surfaces are washed with detergent.
- Rubbish and compost bins are emptied when full and at the end of each day.
- Microwave oven is cleaned.
- Oven and stove tops are cleaned.

Weekly

- The following surfaces are washed with detergent – shelves, bench tops, cupboard fronts, interior cupboard surfaces, drawers, Pantry & Store.
- Inside and top of fridge is cleaned.

3-Monthly

- Range hood is cleaned.
 - Defrost Freezer
- (Source – Child Care Regulation Part 2, 2003 Division 7, Paragraph 56 & 57)

Policy 3.1.5 - Nappy Changing Hygiene

The following cleaning routines are to be maintained

Staff will ensure that the following nappy-related hygiene practices are followed:

- Staff will follow displayed nappy change procedure.
- Nappy change mats are disinfected after each use.
- Disposable gloves are worn during nappy changing.
- Only disposable nappies and cleaning material are used.
- Each child is thoroughly cleaned as part of each nappy change.
- Faeces are deposited in toilets. Soiled underwear is rinsed in sluice. Used nappies and disposable cleaning material is placed in special bins.
- Exact time of each nappy change will be recorded.

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- Staff wash their hands with antiseptic solution after nappy changing procedure is completed.
- Staff report all skin infections and rashes to Director and parent.
- Cloth nappies are not used at the centre.

Policy 3.2 - Laundry

- Bed linen is changed before use by a different child; or if wet or soiled.
 - Bed linen is changed weekly or as required.
 - All linen is neatly folded and put away after washing and drying.
 - The laundry is kept clean and tidy.
 - Lint is removed from the dryer before each use to avoid fire risk.
- (Source – Child Care Regulation Part 2, 2003 Division 7, Paragraph 56 & 57)

Policy 3.3 - Toilets

- During the day, staff ensure that toilets are kept flushed and clean and that any accidents are cleaned up immediately.
 - Toilets and bathrooms are cleaned thoroughly each evening by professional cleaners.
 - Bathroom floors are mopped daily with a disinfectant-cleaner.
 - Potties and changing mats are cleaned with disinfectant after each use.
 - Children are directed to wash their hands after every use of the toilet.
 - Staff wear gloves when assisting children with toileting.
 - Adequate supplies of toilet paper, liquid soap and hand towels are available.
- (Source – Child Care Regulation Part 2, 2003 Division 7, Paragraph 56, 57 & 58)

Policy 3.4 - Nutrition

The centre will prepare and provide all meals which children consume on site. Consequently the centre makes a significant contribution to the nutritional intake of the children. The centre provides meals which are safe, nutritious, appetising and consistent with dietary guidelines for children. Therefore the centre ensures that:

- Water is available at all times and children are encouraged to drink water regularly.
- The menu is planned to be varied and nutritionally balanced.
- The menu will be displayed to parents and staff.
- Children will be encouraged but not forced to eat.
- Staff members will sit with children during meal times and eat the same food.
- Children will be given the opportunity to assist with food preparation.
- The menu will be chosen from a variety of cultures.
- Parents are invited at any time to make suggestions regarding the existing menu and to provide the centre with specific nutritional requirements of

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their children. The centre management will decide if any particular diet is beyond the scope of our centre's resources.

- Care will be taken not to serve specific children with food that would harm their health or offend cultural beliefs.
- Parents of children on special diets will be asked to provide details of their food requirements.
- Parents will be advised daily when their child is not eating well.
- The centre's emphasis on fresh fruit & vegetables and reliance on foods without added sugar ensures that children's teeth are kept healthy.
(Source – Oral Health – Bundaberg District Health Service, 1998)
- Children are encouraged to use the “swish and swallow” method of dental hygiene after each meal.
(Source – Awabakal Dental Kit, Newcastle, 2005.)
- Meals are relaxed, pleasant times.
(Source – *Go for 2 & 5* Australian Government 2005)

Acorn's Menu has been independently evaluated and approved by a dietitian from QLD Health

Policy 3.4.1 – Elimination Diets

There may be times when parents are advised by their doctor to embark on a process of dietary elimination to combat a possible allergy. The centre is not prepared to involve itself in this process due to the extra resources required and the potential risk of a severe allergy or anaphylactic shock. Static allergies such as lactose, peanut or gluten intolerances will be provided for by the kitchen.

Policy 3.5 - Housekeeping / Maintenance

The appearance, maintenance and tidiness of the centre are indicative of the importance and value we place on children. Every effort is made to ensure that the centre is kept clean and tidy and that all toys, equipment, resources and playground equipment are put away when finished with. Passage ways and thoroughfares are kept free of any obstruction which could pose a health and safety threat to children, staff, parents or visitors.

- A professional cleaner will be engaged on every day that the centre is open and will:
 - Empty bins.
 - Clean all toilet surfaces with disinfectant.
 - Vacuum all carpeted floors.
 - Sweep all outside paths and verandas.
 - Clean windows – as necessary.
 - Dust sills, bench tops and skirting boards.
 - Remove spider webs.
 - Clean staff areas
- Staff will check that toys and other resources are put away after use and will encourage children to help with any tidying activities.
- Staff will ensure that all outside toys are put away at the end of each day.

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- Staff will ensure that sandpits are cleared of toys, covered and tied down at the end of each day.
- Staff will ensure that plastic and chewable toys are adequately disinfected.
- Staff will complete a safety checklist when opening and closing the centre. Outside play areas are checked for safety before children are taken out to play.
- Any damaged equipment is removed from children for maintenance.
- Any maintenance requirements are entered into the maintenance book.
- Any observed hazards or maintenance issues in the centre are reported to the director immediately.
- In addition to these points, the following maintenance schedule is observed:
 - 6 monthly - fire extinguishers checked by Chubb
 - 6 monthly – Bus checked by Queensland Transport
 - 4 monthly – Grease trap pumped out
 - 6 monthly – emergency lighting check

Policy 3.6 - Sleeping Equipment and Procedures

- The sleeping area is not over-heated.
- Children from the age of 2 sleep on waterproof mattresses with a fitted sheet.
- Top sheets and blankets are provided as needed.
- During sleep time, curtains are drawn and the areas are kept free from noise.
(Source – SIDS Australia – *Safe Sleeping for the Under 2s* – 2001)

Policy 3.7 - Storage of Chemicals and Cleaners

- All bulk chemicals are stored in their original containers in cupboards which are not accessible to children. Access to this room is restricted to staff. Warning notices are displayed.
- The centre has data sheets concerning all chemicals on premises.
- All other chemicals and hazardous substances are clearly labelled and are stored in a safe manner out of children's reach.
- Chemicals are purchased from a supplier who provides details of the composition of all substances and details of emergency action to be undertaken in the event of accidental spillage, splashing or consumption.
- Emergency action documents are kept in the Laundry, director's office and at location of chemical storage.
(Source - Workplace Health & Safety Regulation (1997) Part 13 (Hazardous Substances) sections 87 to 114)

Policy 3.8 - Medication

- Staff will administer medication to a child when authorised to do so in writing by a medical practitioner/pharmacist. Any such authority must clearly show the name of the child and how and when the medication is to be administered.

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- Parents may verbally authorise the administration of child paracetamol or similar by phone if the authorisation to do so has been completed on the enrolment form. The medication form must then be signed by the parent/guardian when the child is picked up.
- The director may authorise the administration of child paracetamol or similar if the parent/guardian cannot be contacted.
- All medication instructions given by phone must be checked and confirmed by two staff members and details written on the medication form.
- Details regarding a child's medication must be entered on the medication form by the parent/guardian upon arrival at the centre, recording the following: Child's name, Date, Drug, Dosage, Time(s) due and Signature.
- The staff member administering medication and witness must sign the medication form when medication is given.
- Staff will only administer medication to a child if his/her name is on the label. Staff will not administer medication to a child that has a sibling's name on the label unless a letter of confirmation can be provided by a medical practitioner.
- All medication must be handed to a staff member for safe storage/handling. Under no circumstances must any medication be left in a child's bag.
- Staff members will not administer the first dose of any medication, double dose medication or more than 2 prescription medications in one day.

Policy 3.9 - Sun Protection

- All children and staff are required to wear a hat which offers adequate sun protection (either wide brim hat or legionnaire style) while playing outside. We implement the "No hat, no outdoor play" policy.
- Staff will ensure that all children playing outside are protected with a sunscreen with a 30+ rating applied/monitored (age appropriate) prior to outdoor activities.
- Children are encouraged to make use of shaded areas outside for play activities.
- We recommend that appropriate out-side clothes consist of : shirts and dresses with collars and elbow length sleeves and longer style shorts and skirts.
- The centre will provide and display sun care literature from the Queensland Cancer Council and Sun Smart education is delivered as an integral part of our program.
- Parents will be provided with current Sun Smart information via brochures and newsletters.
- The centre complies with the *Building Standards for Child Care Centres - Qld Development Code Part 22: 23 Nov 2005 in relation to adequate shade in outside play areas.*

Source – Queensland Cancer Fund – "Early Childhood Settings – SunSmart Policy Guidelines." – Currently accessed from Queensland Cancer Fund Website – 11/09/06.

Policy 3.10 - Infectious Diseases

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- Children suffering (or believed to be suffering) from any infectious or communicable disease or condition must not be brought to the centre or must be removed as soon as the disease or condition is noticed. A medical certificate will be required before the child can return to the centre.
- Notification of communicable or infectious diseases to which children may have been exposed will be given as soon as a suspected case has been confirmed. Such notice will be in the form of a sign at the front desk and on the door to the room concerned.
- An infectious illness book is kept by the centre, which is filled in if a child or staff member has an infectious illness.
- All parents are to be informed immediately of exposure to any communicable or infectious conditions as soon as a suspected case has been confirmed.

Policy 3.11 - Child Protection

- Under the Child Protection Act 1999 staff members have the right and obligation to document and report any suspected cases of child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect) to the appropriate authorities with the Department of Child Safety.
- Staff will follow the centre's procedure on documenting and reporting any suspected cases of child abuse.
- The centre and its staff members are under no obligation to inform the parents/guardians of the child if they have reported a suspected case of child abuse.

Source – Child Abuse Prevention Resource Sheet – Published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. September 2005

Policy 3.12 - Child Illnesses

A. Temperature (Elevated)

- Child has temperature in both ears of 38 degrees or over and this is witnessed by a second staff member.
- Parent contacted to verify that Children's Panadol can be administered and that the child needs to be collected from the centre as soon as possible.
- If parent cannot be contacted but it is indicated on the enrolment form that the child can have Children's Panadol, then ONE dose can be administered with Director authorisation. Director to continue to try and contact primary caregivers/emergency contacts to inform them that Children's Panadol has been administered.
- Staff continue to monitor and record child's temperature every 15 minutes for a one hour period until an authorised person arrives to collect the child.
- If an elevated temperature has occurred the child must stay away from the centre for a minimum of 24 hours. If there are other symptoms accompanying the elevated temperature, then a clearance letter is required.

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- If a parent requires administration of Children's Panadol or Nurofen for teething discomfort, this needs to be in writing from their Doctor.

B. Other Child Illness

Children who are sick cannot attend or remain at the centre. Parents/Guardians should be aware that on these occasions they must make alternative care arrangements for their child. If a child has any of the following illnesses, parents/guardians will be called to arrange alternative care:

- a. Conjunctivitis
- b. Rashes and blisters
- c. Heavy nasal discharge
- d. Bronchitis
- e. Diarrhoea
- f. Impetigo (school sores)
- g. Vomiting

Where a child has been sent home with a serious illness such as vomiting, diarrhoea or suspicious rashes a clearance letter issued by a medical practitioner will be required in order for the child to return to the child care centre.

Policy 3.13 - Immunisation

The centre excludes children who have not been immunised. Child Care Benefit (CCB) is not available to non-immunised children.

- Parents are required to complete an immunisation questionnaire on their children's level of immunisation each 6 months. Centre records are updated from these questionnaires.
- New families are required to show current immunisation certificates before enrolment.
- Where a child is diagnosed with a reportable disease the director will notify the public health officer.
- Parents and staff at the centre will be notified by signage at the time of any such outbreak.
- Information on vaccinations is available to staff.
- Any child not immunised or for whom immunisation records are incomplete at the time of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease will be excluded from the centre until such time as medical advice states that it is safe to return. The director's office contains a schedule of recommended absence times for specific diseases and may be referred to at any time.
(Source – "Staying Healthy in Child Care – Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care – Fourth Edition." 2005)

Policy 3.14 - Injuries, Accidents

In the event of a child sustaining an injury, the following procedures will be followed:

- A staff member holding a current first aid certificate will render appropriate first aid to the child.
- The site or cause of the accident is made safe.
- The child's parent/guardian is immediately informed.
- A full description of the accident including names and addresses of any witnesses are recorded in an incident report as soon as possible after the accident and brought to the attention of the director. Other details to be recorded include date and time of the accident, the parent contacted and by whom, details of first aid administered and by whom, strategies for future prevention.
- Should an injured child require hospitalisation the director will ensure that the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care is informed as soon as possible.

Policy 3.15 - Smoking

- Smoking is not permitted at any time within the centre or on the grounds and parking areas which surround the building.
- Staff are not permitted to smoke while in uniform.

Policy 3.16 - Lice

- When children are found with head lice, the parent / guardian will be asked to find alternative care arrangements for the remainder of that day.
- When lice are found on a child on two occasions in one week the child and other members of the same household will require alternative care arrangements for the remainder of that week and all of the following week to allow opportunity for the family to deal with the problem completely.
- To control the spread of head lice, staff will discreetly check all children's hair when a child in the centre is found with head lice or is showing signs of having head lice.
- It is recommended that long hair be tied back while attending the centre.

Policy 3.17 - Clothing

- Staff ensure that children's clothing is adjusted to the weather and temperature. In some cases a child's clothing will be changed.
- Children are required to bring a spare set of appropriate clothing each day.
- Children do not remain in wet clothing.

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- Children are encouraged to wear collared and sleeved clothing with a closely woven natural fabric to provide adequate protection from UV Rays. Source – Queensland Cancer Fund – “Early Childhood Settings – SunSmart Policy Guidelines.” – Currently accessed from Queensland Cancer Fund Website – 11/09/06.

Policy 3.18 - Minimising the use of toxic and dangerous chemicals

- The centre chooses cleaning products which are the least dangerous to children and yet still meet the cleaning and hygienic outcomes required. Eg (Orange Squirt, Zest and Aquium Gel.)

Policy 3.19 – CMV (Cytomegalovirus)

CMV is a common virus to which many adults in the community have already developed immunity. The virus can be spread through contact with blood, faeces, urine or saliva. When CMV is contracted by a pregnant woman there is a risk that the unborn baby will also be infected. Such an infection in an unborn baby may lead to eye disease, deafness, developmental delay or death.

Where a pregnant staff member is concerned about the risk of becoming infected with CMV she should be tested by her local doctor for immunity to the virus. If the blood test returns a positive CMV IgG antibody (immunity) no further action need be taken. If the test returns a negative result (no immunity), duties will be modified so that the staff member minimises the risk of coming into direct contact with blood, faeces, urine or saliva.

It should be noted that other health policies (eg 3.1, 3.3 and 3.10) deal with procedures which will minimise cross infections at our centre and the use of universal precautions by all staff such as wearing rubber gloves and hand washing at times of toileting, nappy changing and nose blowing is encouraged.

Source – Staying Healthy in Childcare – 4th Edition. WideBay TAFE – Participate in Workplace Safety Procedures Version 3 2007.

Policy 4.0 - Safety, Emergency & Evacuation Procedures

Policy 4.1 - Security

Policy 4.1.1 - Arrival & Departure. At each attendance parents/guardians are required to sign children in on arrival and out on departure recording:

- Name and signature of parentfs
 - Time of arrive and departure
- The above information is to be recorded in the attendance books.
 - Attendance books assist staff in the case of an emergency and are also a requirement for Child Care Benefit.

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- When departing, parents/guardians are requested to inform a staff member that the child is being taken.
- In instances where the parent/guardian is not collecting their child the following procedure is requested:
 - Inform your child's group leader of the arrangement
 - Ensure that the nominated collector is listed on the attendance book.
- Any person arriving at the centre to collect a child who is not known to staff will be required to show photo identification.
- Children cannot be released to a minor (under 18 years of age). Such a person cannot be nominated as the "Emergency Contact".
- Even when authority is given, centre staff may use discretion in refusing to release a child when circumstances are such that they feel a child may be at risk.
- Staff will not enter into a physical confrontation in the event of a child pick-up but will urgently contact police, parent/guardian or child welfare bodies in suspicious circumstances.
- Staff will always act in what they believe to be the best interests of the child.

Policy 4.1.2 - Late Collection of Children

When a child remains uncollected at the centre past closing time, the following steps will be followed by centre staff:

- An attempt will be made to contact the parents/guardian at closing time.
- If a child is still remaining at the centre 15 minutes after closing time and no contact with parent(s) has been established, the child/ren will be relocated to the local police station and the local child welfare agency notified.
- A late fee of \$20 for every 10 minutes or part thereof will be charged. This fee is not eligible for Child Care Benefit.

Policy 4.2 - Evacuation Procedures

- The director will ensure that emergency evacuation procedures are practised 3-monthly and that each practice is reported in the appropriate record. Details of the evacuation plan are displayed prominently throughout the centre.
- The attention of parents/guardians is drawn to the requirement for each child to be signed in to the centre upon arrival and signed out upon departure. These records will ensure the orderly conduct of an evacuation.
- The role each staff plays in such an emergency is established and rehearsed.
- Staff are familiar with location and use of fire extinguishers.
- Each telephone location in the centre displays emergency numbers.
- The assembly point for each group is well known.
- The signal used to warn staff, children or parents of an evacuation is the fire alarm and/or whistle.
- In the event of a fire, staff will undertake procedures as follows:
 - Assist anybody in immediate danger.
 - Close the door to the affected area.
 - Activate fire alarm.

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- Ring 000 and ask for fire brigade to come to Acorn Child Care Centre at 10a Branyan Street, Bundaberg.
- Evacuate to assembly area.
- Remain at assembly area, call rolls, ensure all children are accounted for and wait for arrival of fire brigade.
- One staff member will meet fire brigade and give details of fire and whether all staff and children have been accounted for.
- A sign indicating that fire drill is in process will be placed on the front door.

Policy 4.3 - Health & Safety

Acorn Child Care Centre is committed to providing a safe environment for the children, staff and visitors. Consideration is given to all areas of the centre which may pose a risk to anyone's safety. All risks are identified, evaluated and dealt with promptly. The Centre ensures that:

- A Health & Safety representative is elected.
- The Health & Safety representative raises concerns at staff meetings.
- Health and Safety concerns identified by the staff are addressed by the executive committee.
- Personal protective equipment is supplied as necessary.
- Dangerous chemicals are handled, stored and transported safely.
- Information and instruction on Occupational Health & Safety is provided to all staff.
- Safe systems of work are in place.
- Children, parents and visitors are not exposed to situations which may pose a risk to their health and safety.
- Procedures also exist to protect volunteer, parents and members of the public. This includes visible evacuation procedures, CPR procedures and emergency telephone numbers.
- Records of all children's injuries and illnesses are kept.
(Source – Queensland Government Workplace Health and Safety. Brochure – 022. October 1997)

Policy 4.4 - Poisonous Plants

The centre is aware of section 54 of the *Child Care Regulation 2003* which requires that any child care centre “must not have any plants accessible to children that are poisonous or otherwise pose an unacceptable danger to the children”. As such there are no plants at the centre which are considered poisonous or harmful to children. Any new plants or trees are considered for their suitability at a child care centre.

Policy 5.0 - Staff

Policy 5.1 - Appointment of Staff

- All employees of Acorn Child Care Centre must comply with the requirements of Child Care Regulation 2003, whereby staff must:
 - Hold appropriate qualifications.
 - Be of good character
 - Have no criminal convictions
 - Hold a current first aid certificate
 - Hold a current positive suitability notice
- Appointed staff must give certified copies of their qualifications and other required certificates to the director.
- Acorn Child Care Centre is an equal opportunity employer.
- Permanent staff will first work a 3 month probationary period. The employer may then confirm a permanent position.
- Permanent fulltime, permanent part-time and casual staff are all employed under the state “Child Care Industry” award. A copy of the award is available in the staff room and may be copied as needed.

Policy 5.2 - Training of Staff - Generally

The centre recognises the importance of in-service training for all staff. Consequently staff are encouraged to attend conferences, seminars, training programs and professional updates. Staff are also encouraged to work towards further levels of education in Early Childhood Development so that promotional opportunities will be available.

The centre maintains a file for each staff member which records prior academic achievements and any current study endeavours.

Policy 5.3 - Training of Staff in Policies

Staff are familiar with the centre’s policies and are able to recognise when a particular action or activity is in breach of these policies. Staff may, from time to time, be required to explain a matter of policy to a parent or a newer staff member.

- At the commencement of employment each staff member will be issued with a copy of the centre policy. The policy contains information concerning the expectations the centre has of all of its employees, procedures for a variety of tasks, centre policies and other matters.
- All Staff have read the policy and have ticked the induction checklist stating that the policies have been read and that they will at all times act in harmony with these policies.

Policy 5.4 - Students and Volunteers

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Acorn Child Care Centre is committed to giving opportunities to work experience students and volunteers and seeks to present childcare as vocationally satisfying. Where students and volunteers do not have the requisite training and qualifications to work in a child care centre the following provisions will apply:

- The student/volunteer will not form part of the formal care team.
- The student/volunteer is given no responsibility for care of children.
- The director is satisfied that normal care and supervision is not compromised.
- The student/volunteer holds a current positive suitability notice.
- At the first visit the student/volunteer will be interviewed by the director who will assign tasks consistent with perceived skills and experience.
- The student/volunteer will sign in and out using the visitor's book in reception.
- For the benefit of child programs each student/volunteer's visit will be for a minimum of two hours.
- The student/volunteer will not be left alone with children at any time.
- Students who are involved with the centre for more than 1 day will be provided with the centre policy.
- Parents will be informed of any students in the centre via a notice on the parent notice board.

Policy 5.5 - Programming Time

- All group leaders will receive approximately two hours per week of paid time for the purpose of working on their group program. This time will be allocated by the centre director and will be convenient to both the centre and group leader. Assistant group leaders receive approximately half an hour per week for programming.

Policy 5.6 - Developmental Records (Child Profiles)

- The centre is required to keep developmental records for individual children in care. It is the responsibility of the centre director, in consultation with all staff members, to decide the form that these records will take. These records will be the basis of programming for both the group and the individual child and should be updated regularly. Individual developmental records must be made available for parents to discuss with a staff member. Developmental records will remain in the centre for a period of three years after the child has left the service. At times staff may take the learning story books / programs home but they must be returned on the next week day.
- Acorn educational programs for children are guided by the Early Years Curriculum Framework. Acorn has two specific programs, a kindergarten program and a full music immersion program. Acorn's music immersion program is delivered by a qualified music teacher. Acorn's kindergarten program is delivered by a qualified early years teacher. The kindergarten program is delivered 5 days per week from 8.30am-4.30pm.

Policy 5.7 - All Staff to hold current first aid qualifications

- All staff who are employed by the centre are required to hold a recognised senior first aid certificate which includes CPR.

Policy 5.8 – Inclusion & Bias

It is important that children learn to treat each other equitably and without regard to gender, race or other factors than may lead to discrimination. Children learn this behaviour by observing their own parents, the community and staff within our centre.

Therefore it is important that staff fully appreciate the issue of bias and discrimination and endeavour to include all children in every activity and aspect of centre programs. This is further reinforced by including in the program special activities to help children appreciate the principles of fairness, equity and social justice. Such principles may be reinforced spontaneously when a situation presents itself.

Staff evaluate their own performance to ensure that their own belief systems and biases do not impact on their interaction and modelling with children.

Policy 5.9 – Behaviour Modification

The National Accreditation Council (1993:10 as sighted in Young Children’s Behaviour, second addition, by Louise Porter) states that discipline must ‘always encourage the individuality and confidence of children and never lower their self esteem’. In support of this statement, we aim to implement a behaviour guidance plan developed by Child Care Queensland 2008. It is our goal at all times to make use of the children’s strengths, and to circumvent their difficulties in order to maximise their daily functioning and wellbeing. It is our aim then, to implement the following strategies (as suggested on the table below), when dealing with undesirable behaviour from the children.

Behaviour Guidance Plan

<i>5 x Step Behaviour Guidance Plan</i>	
STEP 1	PREVENTION <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Observation○ Focus on positive behaviour○ Model appropriate behaviour
STEP 2	REDIRECT <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Redirect child to another activity (with appropriate rationale for the suggestion)○ Make explanation clear, reasonable and consistent○ Explain briefly reason why behaviour is unacceptable○ React calmly to negative behaviour

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STEP 3	CONSEQUENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If behaviour continues, “sit and watch” away from others (maximum time away 1 x minute for each year of child’s age ie: 2 y.o. = 2 minutes)○ Child returns when calm and behaviour is dealt with together with a brief explanation of reason why the behaviour is not acceptable
STEP 4	ONGOING MANAGEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If behaviour becomes frequent or an issue inform Director who will consult with parents/guardians and devise a plan of action
STEP 5	PLAN OF ACTION <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If unacceptable behaviour persists and with parent/guardian agreement, external resource officers will be consulted in an effort to address the behaviour and assist the child

Source: ‘5 x Step Behaviour Guidance Plan’ Childcare Queensland 2008 (Policy reviewed 12/08)

Biting It is important to note that in the event of a child repeating harmful behaviours such as biting and scratching etc. the centre will endeavour to work closely with the families to plan and implement behaviour modification strategies to stop the undesirable behaviour. This plan will be evaluated one to two weeks after implementation. Parents will be involved in this process. It will be at the discretion of the centre Director to exclude the child if the harmful behaviours continue.

Children’s Finger Nails It is requested that parents trim their child’s fingernails on a regular basis to help prevent incidents such as scratching or to prevent them getting caught or torn on play equipment. In the event of noticing a child regularly harming other children by scratching them, it will be requested that the child’s fingernails are trimmed before attending Acorn. The carers will check that this is done when the child arrives for the day.

Policy 5.10 – Staff Uniform

- The centre has a uniform which staff are expected to wear at all times.
- The uniform must be clean and ironed for the commencement of each shift.
- 100% of the cost of purchasing uniforms will be reimbursed by the centre. This does not include shoes which must be enclosed navy or black.
- To present an acceptable professional image within a conservative community, no staff member is to have oral or visible body piercing apart from one set of earrings. Other jewellery is limited to one flat ring and a watch.
- Hair which is longer than shoulder length is required to be tied back to give a more professional look.
- Shoes to be clean and polished.

Policy 5.11 – Supervision of Children

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Staff will at all times adhere to staff:child ratios as per Child Care Regulations 2003 (see Policy 1.1 – Staff Child Ratios)

Playtimes:

- Staff will position themselves in areas of the room or playground which allow for maximum supervision.
- Age appropriate activities should be placed in areas which maximise supervision and utilise shade (outside).
- When outside staff will position themselves in areas of high activity with at least one staff member a wandering supervisor.

Bathrooms:

- Staff will communicate verbally to ensure that all toileting times are fully supervised so that children toilet and hand wash effectively and that the bathroom is used for its intended purpose only.

Mealtimes:

- Staff will utilise the servery window to the kitchen to maximise supervision of mealtimes.

Staff will, on a daily basis, complete an evaluation of their supervision.

The director will, on a daily basis, conduct a spot check on supervision, documenting, evaluating and following up any discrepancies.

Policy 5.12 Food Transport Between Centres.

Foods prepared for consumption at Acorn Babies, will be prepared on site at Acorn Child Care Centre and transported in the following manner.

- Transported at a time when children are playing inside.
- Transported on a sturdy trolley along the verandah of Acorn Child Care Centre and subsequent cemented path through the gate to Acorn Babies and directly into kitchen where it will be distributed and served to children and staff.
- Foods will be covered at all times during transport.
- Foods will be maintained at a temperature which meets the correct food temperature criteria.
- Dishes will be washed at Acorn Babies before being returned to Acorn Child Care Centre.

Policy 5.13 Gate between Acorn Child Care Centre and Acorn Babies.

A gate exists between Acorn Child Care Centre and Acorn Babies. The purpose of this gate is to facilitate the movement of food between centres, to allow parents with children at both centres an easier route to drop off and collect children and for the movement of staff, volunteers and administrative personnel between centres. The following policies relate to this gate:

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- School aged children are not to operate the gate in any circumstance.
- Parents who use the gate to collect or drop off children at both centres are still required to sign in and sign out their children at both centres.
- Only the primary guardian or parent is permitted to take their child through the gate.

Policy 5.14 Staff Sick Leave

- Full time staff will be entitled to 10 days sick leave per year. Any untaken sick leave will accumulate.
- A doctor's certificate will be required for sick leave in the following situations:
 1. Where sick leave extends beyond two consecutive days.
 2. Where sick leave is taken on either a Monday or Friday.
 3. Where sick leave is taken on either side of a public holiday.
- Where a doctor's certificate does not accompany a staff member's timesheet, annual leave will be used to cover the absent day.

Policy 5.15 Staff Time off Without Pay Policy

A full time employee is contractually bound to work 38 hours per week, 52 weeks per year - except where approved annual leave, sick leave or long service leave is being taken. This means that leave without pay is not approved of, unless prior consent is given by the licensee. It should be understood that a fulltime employee accumulates leave on the basis of time elapsed. This means that leave is accumulating even when the employee is on leave. Taking time off without pay gives rise to accumulated leave in excess of entitlement.

Policy 5.16 Parental Leave

The centre is compliant with the National Employment Standards (NES) which provides in detail under Division 5 responsibilities for the employee and employer when a staff member requires to take parental leave. This document can be downloaded from the following link:

<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/national-employment-standards/pages/default.aspx>

Pertinent extracts from the NES follow:

- s67 An employee must have completed 12 months of service.
- s70 An employee is entitled to 12 months of unpaid leave associated with the birth / adoption of a child.

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- s73 A pregnant employee may be required to take unpaid leave within 6 weeks before the birth. The employer may ask the employee to give the employer a medical certificate containing whether or not the employee is fit for work.
- s74 The employee must give the employer 10 weeks written notice of the intended start and end date of the leave and provide confirmation of these dates 4 weeks prior to the leave.

Policy 5.17 Paid Parental Leave Scheme

The Paid Parental leave Scheme is a Federal Government initiative commencing July 2011. Details of the scheme may be found at the following link:

http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/ppl_working_parents.htm

The scheme offers the primary carer 18 weeks of government funded Parental Leave Pay at the rate of National Minimum Wage. This pay is physically paid by the employer with funds received from the government. To be eligible the employee must have worked 10 of the 13 months prior to the birth / adoption of their child and worked at least 330 hours in that 10 month period.

It is the responsibility of the employee to lodge their claim for Parental Leave Pay with the Family Assistance Office who will decide if an employee is eligible for the scheme.. Centrelink will then contact the employer to make arrangements for the payments.

The scheme runs concurrently with Parental Leave as outlined in Policy 5.16. It should be noted that leave entitlements do not accrue during the 18 weeks of Paid Parental Leave.

Policy 6.0 - Dealing with concerns

Policy 6.1 - Concerns of Parents

- Reception has a suggestion box which parents/guardians are encouraged to utilise to offer comments/suggestions both positive and or negative on the program, routine, policies, procedures or anything at all which you think is pertinent.
- There is also a parent feedback form located at reception. These forms can be left at reception upon completion.
- If parents have a complaint about any aspect of care at the centre, they are encouraged to approach their child's Group Leader first and then the director or Licensee as appropriate.
- Where the issue is not fully resolved, complaints may also be made to:-

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The Office for Early Childhood Education and Care
Maryborough Regional Office
North Coast Region
Website: www.deta.qld.gov.au
Phone 4190 3871
Fax 4190 3870

or

Child Care Information Service 1800 637 711 (07 3224 4225)
8.30am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Policy 6.2 - Concerns of Staff and Carers

Acorn Child Care Centre aims to be a preferred employer. Our goal is for staff to enjoy their work and find employment at the centre fulfilling and challenging. The licensee acknowledge that there may be times when staff members are unhappy with their role or have been upset by the actions of another staff member. Where such a situation exists it is best for the issue to be resolved quickly by the following procedures:

- See the person concerned and talk out the issue in an appropriate environment. Attempt to come to an agreement.
- Where agreement cannot be reached it is recommended that another staff member or the director be invited to mediate.
- Ongoing disputes between staff members will have a negative impact on the standard of child care and will not be tolerated.
- Staff assessments will be conducted on a 12 monthly basis. Opportunity is given at these interviews for staff to share their vocational goals.
- At all times staff are encouraged to offer suggestions concerning the centre's program either in writing or personally to the director or licensee.