



GUMLEAF COTTAGE EARLY YEARS LEARNING

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Welcome to GUMLEAF COTTAGE

We believe it is important for the staff of Gumleaf Cottage to create a happy, caring, family atmosphere, and to have a good rapport with the families who attend our service.

We want to understand clearly what the needs are for your child, and to give you the opportunity to become involved in the service activities by accepting your ideas, incorporating into the program your knowledge of different cultural and social backgrounds, and, generally, listening to your comments and feedback.

From the above beliefs we have developed the following philosophical statement:

“Gumleaf Cottage offers a safe home-like environment which supports the individual needs of the children and their families based on open communication; provides an anti-bias curriculum which is challenging, stimulating and educationally sound; and supports the staff in their work and training needs.”

OUR HISTORY

Gumleaf Cottage was established in 1985, with the original owners still managing the service on a daily basis. We have survived the ups and downs of the child care industry by providing a quality service for the families of the Hawkesbury and its surrounding areas, and by maintaining a highly regarded reputation which is second to none.



RECOGNITIONS

- Gumleaf Cottage was the first private long day care centre to be established in the Hawkesbury.
- In June 2006 we were recognised by the Cancer Council of NSW as being the first SunSmart child care service in the Hawkesbury.
- In 2010 we started to enter industry awards such as Australian Child Care Week Awards and the Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards, and so far we have been quite successful. (Please refer to our Community file.)
- In March 2011 Leonie was nominated in the national Hesta Child Care Workers Awards of Excellence.
- In May 2012 Gumleaf Cottage was announced as a finalist for NSW Service of the Year in the Australian Family Early Education & Care Awards; and Leonie, our Director, was named as a finalist for Director of the Year.
- In November 2012 the service received a National award for Sustainability at the Australian Child Care Week Awards; and two State awards for Sustainability; and Creative Expression.
- In May 2013 Gumleaf Cottage was named as NSW Early Childhood Service of the Year in the Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards.
- In May 2015 Leonie was named as a finalist for Director of the Year in the Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

In any relationship of mutual respect and trust there are responsibilities for all parties. For our service to provide the very best for each child we require each family to meet their responsibilities by:

- providing all necessary information about their child, and keeping that information up to date;
- paying their child care fees each week; and
- acting in accordance with the service policies and procedures.

ADMINISTRATION

HOURS OF OPERATION

The service is licensed to provide long day care for 28 children per day.

The service is open from 7.00am – 6.00pm Monday to Friday for 48 weeks per year.

The service is closed on all Government gazetted public holidays and usually for a four week period during the December/ January school holidays.

Families are requested to respect the opening and closing times of the service.

A few points to consider:

- It is important to let us know if your child will not be able to attend care. Telephone calls will be accepted from 7.30am.
- The service closes at 6.00pm, therefore families are requested to arrive by 5.50pm to allow enough time to sign out, read the daily information sheets and collect their child's belongings.
- It is the responsibility of each family to make other arrangements for the collection of their child if they cannot personally reach the service before closing time.
- If a child is left at the service after closing time, all efforts will be made to contact the family or one of the nominated emergency contact persons authorised to collect the child. If we are unable to contact anyone then our child protection policies will take effect. A late fee will be charged to the family's account.

SIGNING ATTENDANCE RECORDS

All children must be signed in and out of the service. This is a condition of CCB and Regulations, and is also in line with our Child Protection Policy.

It is also each family's responsibility to initial for all absences on their child's attendance record.

FEES

Please refer to the Fees Policy for information regarding Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate, the bond and method of payment.

The Fee Schedule sets out the daily fee; examples of how CCB and CCR are calculated; plus the casual hourly rate for enrolled children;

Under the Jobs Education and Training (JET) Scheme (for eligible families wanting to study or enter the workforce) fees will be \$1.00 per hour per eligible day per child before CCB and CCR are calculated.

ATTENDANCE PATTERN

Children may attend the service full time (4-5 days) or part time (1-3 days) except for those children in the 4-5s group who are encouraged to attend at least 2 days per week to enable the teachers to work with the children to prepare them for school.

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

Priority of access guidelines have been set by the Federal Government which provides Child Care Benefit to the families through the Centre.

Priority 1 is for a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect; Priority 2 for a child of a single parent or both parents who satisfy the working/ studying/ training test; and Priority 3 for any other child.

When applying for Child Care Benefit each family is allocated allowable hours (24, 50 or 50+). Any family entitled to only 24 hours' care (2 days) per week who requires more than their allocation may enrol for extra days provided they pay full fees for the additional hours.

ORIENTATION

There is an orientation process for new children and families which is tailored to meet each family's needs. Families and children are encouraged to visit and become familiar with the service prior to enrolment.

Staff take a positive and reassuring approach to each family's feelings when a child commences care as it can be a very sensitive time for the family. Some children settle in immediately while other children who only attend 1 or 2 days may take up to 8 weeks before they feel comfortable in being left in care.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between families and staff is of paramount importance.

Information about what is happening in the service is available on the noticeboards; in our newsletters; in each family's pigeon hole; through our parent/ teacher discussions or by talking directly to the staff on a daily basis.

Each family has a pigeon hole in the office. Please check your box each morning and afternoon as this is where we place all information for families; or where you will find birthday invitations; book club brochures; sample packs; etc.

TRANSLATION SERVICE

If you would like us to try to obtain certain brochures in your cultural language, or if you would like us to have the service information translated for you, please speak with the Director.

ARRIVAL/ COLLECTION OF CHILDREN

Each child will be accepted by a staff member on arrival at the service.

Each child will only be released to:

- a parent/guardian;
- a person nominated on the child's enrolment form;
- or another person who a parent nominates by phone or in writing in an emergency situation, and whose identification will be checked on arrival at the service.

Although staff try to speak to all families when collecting their child it sometimes gets a little busy, so it is important that parents/guardians let staff know when they are leaving the service with their child (even if they think a staff member is already aware).

Children are to remain in the classroom until their parent/guardian is ready to hold their hand and walk them out the gate.

Older siblings who arrive with a parent are to remain with their parent and are not to play on the service equipment.

It is each and every person's responsibility (including visitors) to follow the service policies to protect everyone in the service. Safety and supervision are important factors in our service.

FAMILY CONCERNS

The service has a family grievance policy which sets down a plan for families who may have a concern regarding the staff or service operations. A copy of the policy and related forms can be found in the Policy Manual.

Please speak with the Director if you have any concerns about any area of our work so we can work together to resolve those issues.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT

Families are welcome to visit the service at any time.

We respect the special relationship between children and their families and incorporate this perspective in our interactions with the children.

We believe it is our role as child care workers to support each family in the care and upbringing of their child in a secure and happy atmosphere.

Each family is encouraged to participate in the service's activities in whatever way is comfortable for them. During the year there will be opportunities to attend morning teas and family activity days which will provide a greater window as to what we do.

Families are encouraged to share any particular skill they might have (craft; musical instrument; language, etc.).

Comments and suggestions are important in making any changes to our procedures so please feel free to comment on the program and put forward any ideas.

WE NEED TO KNOW

If:

- someone other than those people listed as authorised collectors will be collecting your child (ID will need to be shown to staff);
- your child will be away due to illness;
- your child will be going on holidays;
- you need to update your child's immunisation record;
- custody/access arrangements have changed;
- any changes in contact information such as home, mobile or work phone numbers; emergency contact names; or
- you have changed your doctor or dentist.

Please notify the director of any of the above changes, or any changes which may have an effect on your child during their time in the service.

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

The service has a range of books regarding child development and health issues which are available for families to borrow.

We also have a wide range of free brochures and booklets on various topics including healthy eating habits; safety issues at home; services available in the community; for families to take home.

PHILOSOPHY, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A copy of our philosophy is available in the Policies and Procedures Manual, which is available for viewing at any time.

We encourage families to comment on our policies and procedures throughout the year and we will use this feedback when reviewing our policies.

STAFFING

The service consists of a well organised and experienced team with varied qualifications and experience to implement our program:

Leonie holds the position of Licensee/ Director/Nominated Supervisor/Educational Leader; and

Colin holds the position of Licensee/ Cook/Certified Supervisor.

Both Leonie and Colin have had 30 years' experience in managing the day to day operations of the service.

Leonie also holds a Diploma in Community Services (Children's Services).

Other combined qualifications held by the management team include:

- Training in Office Administration and Management;
- Training in Identifying and Responding to Children at Risk of Harm;
- Various workshops relating to child care issues; specific health issues and child care Regulations;
- Training in Food Safety and Hygiene; Menu Planning and Nutrition (Develop Menus to Meet Special Dietary & Cultural Needs);
- Senior First Aid Certificate, including asthma and anaphylaxis management

The current team of educators consists of a team of part time workers who either hold a Bachelor of Education or a Diploma in Early Childhood Education.

Regardless of previous training, all educators have access to a wide range of professional development and training opportunities throughout each year to update their knowledge on early childhood and to acquire new skills.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Our educators work closely with Hawkesbury Early Childhood Intervention Service (HECIS); Sydney North West Inclusion Support Agency; South Windsor Early Intervention Unit; Hawkesbury Community Health Centre and other professionals such as speech therapists, psychologists, and occupational therapists, to meet the needs of children with additional needs, and to support the families and educators in their work.

If you have any concerns about your child's development please speak with the staff for guidance and assistance.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CENTRE

STAFF:CHILD RATIO

The service is licensed to accept 28 children per day.

The children can occupy two classrooms – the Butterfly Room for the older children and the Caterpillar Room for the toddlers – to enable the children to engage in age appropriate experiences; or the rooms can operate as mixed/family groupings.

The program pays equal attention to both the indoor and outdoor environments. At all times, our focus is on engaging the children in play based learning, with the utmost importance placed on supervision for the safety and well-being of the children.

THE PROGRAM

The service aims to provide a homelike atmosphere within a caring and stimulating environment for each child. The staff aim to build a trusting and secure environment for both the children and their families.

Our aim is to provide a flexible educational program which incorporates learning experiences based on the needs, strengths and interests of each child; and which gives each child the opportunity to make choices and accept new challenges.

Our program begins when the first child arrives in the morning and continues throughout the day until the last child leaves the service.

Children learn through play, so at times the service may look disorganised and casual, and this may worry you. However, the staff carefully plan and supervise the program for the safety and interests of the children, through structured, free choice and self-regulated activities.

It is believed children learn self-discipline by being able to choose their own play activities. But, at the same time, we believe children need to be encouraged to participate in different activities to stimulate their curiosity and build up their self-esteem. Sharing and co-operating with other children is encouraged by the staff.

ANTI-BIAS AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

We will aim for total equity with special attention paid to the areas of non-stereotyping of sexes; social justice; and physical and cultural acceptance and awareness.

PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

The service promotes non-violent methods of play. We do not allow toys in the service which promote violence or violent play, and we discourage both speech and behaviour of a violent nature. Children will be encouraged to use peaceful conflict resolution skills and these will be role modelled by the staff.

ENTERTAINMENT / SPECIAL EVENTS

From time to time we may plan special activity days for the children which involves people coming into the service to perform for the children. These educational shows will be held at a small cost to each child.

Throughout the year we invite family members to special event morning teas, and to open days where families are able to experience hands on participation in the children's program. These are fun events which the children look forward to because they enjoy involving their families in their learning.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Gumleaf Cottage is strongly committed to providing a positive environment for young children.

The service's aim is to foster discipline or behaviour based on control of one's self; and understanding and appreciation of other people's needs, rights and feelings. We like to support this through our social programs developed for the children.

Staff will role model appropriate behaviour for the children in a positive manner. We believe positive adult behaviour will promote a warm, friendly environment for adults and children.

At no time will physical punishment be used at the service. Discipline will focus on the positive rather than the negative aspects of the child's behaviour. It is the behaviour which is rejected, not the child.

NUTRITION

The service provides morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. The weekly menu is displayed on the noticeboard. Menus are planned around a four week cycle. Recipes for any meals which are not self-explanatory will also be displayed.

Our meals are varied to encourage the children to try new foods, and as part of the program we discuss healthy eating habits with the children.

Dental care is also taught as part of our health program, and as part of this the children are encouraged to rinse their mouths with water after meals.

Our main drink throughout the day is water. Milk is offered at morning tea and sometimes for afternoon tea.

Families of children with special dietary needs (such as allergies, intolerances or religious/cultural requirements) will work with the cook to ensure provision is made for suitable meals. Sometimes, it may be necessary for the family to provide their child's meals.

The educators are very conscious of the need for regular exercise so a range of physical activities are incorporated into the daily program.

REST PERIODS

We adapt routines to meet the individual needs of children ensuring sleep/rest time is safe and supervised. .

Children are often very active and stimulated throughout their busy day in childcare. Daily routines for preschool children provide time for sleep or rest and all children are provided with a mattress for this purpose. If a child chooses to sleep then we need to recognize their need for sleep. If a child chooses not to sleep, books and quiet table activities are provided at rest time.

Generally children sleep from 30-75 minutes, depending on their needs. Sleeping patterns can be checked on the information chart in the front of the attendance book.

SUN PROTECTION

Gumleaf Cottage is a SunSmart service. Our duty of care will ensure that all children, while attending the service, are protected, as much as possible throughout the year, from skin damage caused by the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun.

This will be done by:

- ensuring each child wears a sun hat (either wide brimmed, deep bucket or legionnaire style) all year round (caps will not be acceptable);
- encouraging each family to dress their child in protective clothing (shirts with sleeves, long shorts);
- providing shaded areas for play; and
- staff applying SPF 30+ sun-screen to each child's exposed skin 30 minutes before going outside to play.

We encourage each family, as their child's no.1 carer, to apply sunscreen to their child while dressing them each morning. This is particularly important during the summer months.

The staff will role model sun protection procedures through wearing appropriate clothing and hat, and applying sunscreen to their exposed skin.

CLOTHING

In line with our Sun Protection Policy, tank tops or other clothing where shoulders or tummies are exposed to the sun will not be worn during outside play.

Children need to be dressed in clothes that are suitable for play and which can be easily put on and taken off, especially in the case of toileting.

Shoes need to be either enclosed or securely strapped to the child's foot. Thongs, slides, Crocs or scuffs are not appropriate footwear for active outside activities nor for inside play in a child care setting.

Please check our clothing and footwear chart.

All items of clothing, including footwear, need to be clearly marked with the child's name.

SICK CHILDREN

A child care setting is no place for a sick child.

If a child is unwell they should remain at home. It is extremely unfair on the unwell child, the other children in care and the staff to have a sick child in the service.

The service cannot provide care for children with infectious diseases, nor can staff work in the service if they have an infectious disease. (Link: Immunisation and Infectious Diseases Policy.)

A doctor's certificate is necessary for re-admission to the service after having a vaccine preventable disease. If there is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, all families will be notified and information about the disease placed on the noticeboard.

If a child becomes ill while in the service, a parent/guardian will be contacted to collect the sick child. We will make the child as comfortable as possible until he/she is collected.

Please remember that a parent/guardian or one of the emergency contact people noted on your child's enrolment form must be available at all times while your child is in care in case your child falls ill during the day and needs to leave the service.

IMMUNISATION RECORDS

Under the Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children attending Child Care Facilities) Act 2013 an early childhood education and care service cannot enrol a child unless the parent/guardian provides documentation that shows the child:

- is fully vaccinated for their age, or;
- has a medical reason not to be vaccinated, or;
- is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations.

A copy of your child's record from the Immunisation Board is the preferred form of documentation for evidence of a child's immunisation status.

A child's immunisation status is also linked to CCB. Please ensure your child is immunised on time to avoid having your CCB cut by Centrelink.

The immunisation schedule is displayed in the office for your reference.

MEDICATION

Any medication (prescription, over-the-counter cough syrups, etc.) required to be given to a child while in care must be in the original bottle.

Any prescribed medication must also be fully labelled with the child's name, dosage and date the medication was dispensed. Prescribed medication naming someone other than the child will not be given to the child, nor will out of date medication.

When a child needs to take medication while in the service, the child's medication register must be completed and the medication handed to a staff member for safe storage. (Link: Medication Policy.)

Medication should **never** be left in a child's bag. Any medication found in a child's bag and not authorised on the medication register will be removed from the bag and handed to the parent/ guardian at the time of departure. The unauthorised medication will not be given to the child.

Any child who is prescribed antibiotics will not be able to attend the service for at least 24 hours after first taking the antibiotic because:

- antibiotics usually take at least 24 hours to take effect and can cause side effects (such as diarrhoea); and
- the child is obviously unwell and should remain at home.

ACCIDENTS/EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

At all times at least one staff member who holds a current first aid certificate will be on duty.

We aim to ensure that the staff, children and families are aware of the risk of accidents in a child care setting and to instruct them on safety measures to reduce those risks. This is done through the display of posters and signs; items in our newsletters; pamphlets and information lodged in pigeon holes.

It is a condition of enrolment that each family signs an authorisation for staff to seek emergency treatment in the event of an accident or illness, including dental, hospital and ambulance services. Provision for this is included on the enrolment form.

Management has established emergency evacuation procedures in the event of situations such as fire, flood, severe storm or earthquake. (Please refer to the Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy in the Policy Manual.)

The staff regularly practice emergency evacuation drills with the children to familiarise them with those procedures.

IN GENERAL

LOCKERS

A locker is available for each child in which to store their possessions for the day. Please ensure your child's name is written on their school bag, hat, sheet, sheet bag, clothing (especially items which may be taken off) and all other belongings.

ITEMS FROM HOME

It is requested that children's toys or books are NOT brought to the service. This will avoid possible damage or loss, for which the staff cannot take responsibility.

Security items such as a soft toy or small blanket used by a toddler should be clearly labelled with the child's name.

Items of food or drink should not be left in your child's school bag as they are not needed at preschool. All food and drink is supplied.

BORROWED ITEMS

We understand that sometimes a child may take a particular liking to one of our toys and accidentally take the toy home.

It would be appreciated, if you find a toy in your child's pocket or bag which does not belong to them, that you return the toy to the service.

It is quite frustrating when a piece from a matching game, puzzle or set goes missing. We would much rather have the piece returned so the children can use the resource again.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PROVIDE FOR YOUR CHILD:

- A backpack (big enough to hold the following articles).
- Sun hat (must be either wide brimmed; deep bucket, or legionnaire style). Under our Sun Protection Policy caps are **not** acceptable.
- At least one spare set of clothing (tops, bottoms and extra undies in case of little accidents).
- Security item for toddlers (if needed).
- Single size sheet (for rest time) placed inside a non-porous sheet bag. **No pillow or blanket.**
- Dummy and/or bottle (if required).
- If not yet toilet trained, 4-6 disposable nappies for the day.
 - Children being toilet trained will need extra clothing plus pull-ups or extra undies depending on the stage of toilet training. (Please refer to our toileting policy.)

Please note: Trolley bags (bags on wheels) are unsuitable because:

- they do not fit into the lockers; and
- they can cause other children to trip over them during transition times.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

- The Family Assistance Office hotline number is **13 6150**
- The nearest **Department of Community Services** is located at:
300 George Street, Windsor 2756
Telephone: (02) 4574 6666