

BARINGA COVID-19 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES

1.	What is Baringa doing to protect children and staff from COVID-19?	1
2.	Will Baringa stay open and services continue to operate?	2
3.	What if I want to keep my child at home as a precaution and do not require care temporarily?	2
4.	What if I have flexible working arrangements and do not require care temporarily?	3
5.	Will I have to pay fees if my child has to self-isolate or if I keep my child at home?	3
6.	What government assistance is available for families related to childcare fees?	3
7.	What happens if Baringa has to close due to COVID-19?	3
8.	Will I have to pay fees if the centre is partially or fully closed?	4
9.	Is there a way I can contribute funds during a closure, to help Baringa stay viable?	4
10.	What if we cancelled our holiday plans and now my child needs care?	4
11.	Will Preschool Vacation Care still be on?	4
12.	What if my children’s educators feel unwell or need to stay home?	5
13.	What if I am feeling concerned and need support?	5
14.	How can I find out more information?	5
15.	What if I have more questions?	5

1. What is Baringa doing to protect children and staff from COVID-19?

The health, safety and wellbeing of Baringa children and staff is our highest priority. Please refer to the **Baringa COVID-19 Action Plan** which outlines the centre’s current and planned actions in managing its operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since January 2020, Baringa has been following direction from the ACT Government and Australian Government regarding exclusions relating to COVID-19 and we have been forwarding information to families and staff. We continue to follow these directions and forward formation as it becomes available.

Childcare Exclusions

As of 16 March 2020, our policy is to ensure children identifying under the following groups stay home and do not attend the centre for 14 days:

- Children who have travelled to any country outside of Australia in the last 14 days; or
- Children whose parents/carers have travelled to any country outside of Australia in the last 14 days; or
- Children who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19; or
- Children whose parents/carers have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

We request that families with children who meet any of the above criteria notify the centre as soon as possible and ensure their children stay home to prevent potential risk to the centre.

We ask that families also refer to ACT Government advice regarding self-isolation and social distancing.

The same applies for all Baringa staff.

Health and Hygiene Measures

Baringa is practising a high level of precaution based on the centre's policies and procedures and government advice. More extensive daily cleaning now includes the use of bleach with a focus on door handles, surfaces and floors.

We ask parents, carers and staff to please ensure:

- They wash their hands or use hand sanitiser:
 - as they enter the centre and as they leave the centre; and
 - as they enter a room and as they leave a room.
- They keep all "home toys" and "home items" away from the centre including soft toys.
- They keep all drink bottles away from the centre. All children and staff will use centre-supplied cups.
- They practice safe hygiene practices at home and help extend conversations with your children.
- They take home each day all their children's belongings including clothing.
- For Melaleuca and Hakea: take home each day their child's milk bottles and dummies.

We ask staff to notify Centre Management if they are:

- Experiencing flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat or headaches; or
- Experiencing difficulty breathing; or
- Have been requested by a medical professional to be tested for COVID-19

Exclusion of Visitors

As of 18 March 2020, unless required in an urgent or emergency situation, no visitors will be allowed to enter the centre during business hours.

- This includes, but are not limited to cancellation of centre tours, allied health service visits, incursions from external facilitators, meetings, tradespeople and work experience placements.
- Deliveries will be dropped off at the front courtyard and brought into the premises by Baringa staff.
- Only staff who are rostered for the day are to be on the premises.
- Cleaners will enter the premises after hours and undertake daily deep cleans, including extensive cleaning with use of bleach with a focus on door handles, surfaces and floors.

2. Will Baringa stay open and services continue to operate?

The health, safety and wellbeing of Baringa children and staff is our highest priority. Please refer to the **Baringa COVID-19 Action Plan** which outlines the centre's current and planned actions in managing its operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the concern for COVID-19 continues to grow, Baringa remains updated with government and medical information so we can respond accordingly. We continue to follow direction from the ACT Government and the Australian Government. ACT Health is working closely with educational facilities, including ACT schools and education and care services, to monitor and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of 18 March 2020, please be assured the ACT Government has advised it is safe for children to be in education and care services. This recommendation is based on health advice and consistent with other states and territories, that schools and education and care services remain open for the foreseeable future.

We understand this is a difficult and uncertain time for many, we will continue to communicate with our community via email at least weekly. We encourage families to stay informed with the ACT Government's COVID-19 health advice for educational facilities in the ACT on the [ACT Health Website](#).

3. What if I want to keep my child at home as a precaution and do not require care temporarily?

We request families to notify the centre of any planned absences ahead of time. Please email admin@baringa.org.au as soon as possible. This will help us with staffing requirements and plan for required children to educator ratios.

4. **What if I have flexible working arrangements and do not require care temporarily?**

We request families to notify the centre of any planned absences ahead of time. Please email admin@baringa.org.au as soon as possible. This will help us with staffing requirements and plan for required children to educator ratios.

5. **Will I have to pay fees if my child has to self-isolate or if I keep my child at home?**

As per the [Fees Policy](#), fees are payable for the days your child is booked into the centre, including times when your child is absent. This includes circumstances where your child has to self-isolate due to Childcare Exclusions in FAQ1 or if you keep your child at home and do not require care.

If your child has eligible holiday rates available this financial year, we will let you know and give you the option of applying a 50% discount during the period. As per the [Fees Policy](#), from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, holiday rates are available to a maximum of ten (10) days per child per financial year.

Due to special circumstances, Centre Management can waive the usual 10 days notice period for holiday rate requests.

6. **What government assistance is available for families related to childcare fees?**

As of 18 March 2020, the Australian Government is exploring options to help families access additional help through a more streamlined process. Baringa will continue to provide information as we receive it.

Care Subsidy

The families of children who cannot attend or choose to keep their children at home, can receive help through Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Eligible CCS will continue to be paid during an exclusion period or if you want to keep your child at home, provided that your child returns to Baringa after the temporary period.

Families can use their 42 allowable absence days to cover continued fee relief during any exclusions due to COVID-19. If your child becomes sick, please provide medical evidence as this can be used for additional absence days above the 42 allowable absences.

Additional Child Care Subsidy

If families are experiencing financial hardship because of the impact of COVID-19, and they need help making the co-contribution to their child care fees, they can access Additional Child Care Subsidy (Temporary Financial Hardship) or ACCS. Eligible families will receive a subsidy equal to the actual fee charged by the child care service, up to 120 per cent of the CCS hourly rate cap.

In most cases, the full cost of child care will be covered. It can be accessed for up to 13 weeks and eligible families are entitled up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight. Families will be required to provide supporting evidence of a substantial reduction in their ability to pay child care fees, such as an email from their employer.

Please email admin@baringa.org.au if you would like to explore this option. More information is available on Services Australia [website](#) or you can enquire with Centrelink on 131 150.

7. **What happens if Baringa has to close due to COVID-19?**

The centre has activated a heightened level of health and hygiene precautions to minimise the risk of COVID-19 affecting the centre. However, Baringa will continue to be responsive to ACT Government and Australian Government advice and direction, which may include a recommendation for closures.

Please refer to the **Baringa COVID-19 Action Plan** which outlines the centre's current and planned actions if Baringa has to partially or fully close due to COVID-19. Please note the Specified Area relevant:

- Area 1: Melaleuca and Hakea
- Area 2: Grevillea and Banksia
- Area 3: Acacia and Hibiscus.

8. Will I have to pay fees if the centre is partially or fully closed?

Please refer to the **Baringa COVID-19 Action Plan** which outlines the centre's current and planned actions if Baringa has to close due to COVID-19 exposure.

During the **Confirmed Case Isolated** stage, a confirmed case of COVID-19 (staff or child) has had close contacts within one specific area only.

- Children who are identified as close contacts of the confirmed case would need to abide by Childcare Exclusions as per FAQ1. During this time, the answer to FAQ5 applies over 14 days since contact with the confirmed case.
- Children who are not close contacts of the confirmed case can continue to attend as normal and normal fees apply.

During the **Confirmed Case Non-Isolated** stage, a confirmed case of COVID-19 (staff or child) has had close contacts within more than one specific area, and/or a staff affected is from the kitchen team or front office.

- During the temporary 48 hour voluntary closure, fees will not be charged. Parent's voluntary contributions to the Centre Emergency Fund are welcome to assist the centre's contingency planning as we are a not-for-profit, community organisation and registered charity.
- Once the centre re-opens, children who are identified as close contacts of the confirmed case would need to abide by Childcare Exclusions as per FAQ1. During this time, the answer to FAQ5 applies over 14 days since contact with the confirmed case.
- Once the centre re-opens, children who are not close contacts of the confirmed case can continue to attend as normal and normal fees apply.
- If the notification of the confirmed case is on a Friday, the 48 hours closure period will be over the weekend, and the centre will re-open on Monday as normal and normal fees apply.

During the **Mandatory Closure**, the ACT Government or Australian Government enforces a closure of all childcare centres and/or non-essential businesses.

- During this time, childcare fees will not be charged. Parent's voluntary contributions to the Centre Emergency Fund are welcome to assist the centre's contingency planning as we are a not-for-profit, community organisation and registered charity.

9. Is there a way I can contribute funds during a closure, to help Baringa stay viable?

If Baringa has to close temporarily or under mandatory closure, childcare fees will not be charged. Parent's voluntary contributions to the Centre Emergency Fund are welcome to assist the centre's contingency planning as we are a not-for-profit, community organisation and registered charity.

10. What if we cancelled our holiday plans and now my child needs care?

If you had given notice of planned absences but then require your permanent days again or need to add additional days, please email admin@baringa.org.au as soon as possible. This will help us with staffing requirements and plan for required children to educator ratios.

11. Will Preschool Vacation Care still be on?

The Preschool Vacation Care Program on 14-24 April 2020 will go ahead and we very much looking forward to it. The four excursions will be replaced with alternative programming to enable the full program to be delivered on-site. This is due to external venues cancelling due to ACT Government's direction. Activities will be delivered by our Hibiscus educators using resources from the planned themes.

A revised program will be available soon at www.baringachildcare.com/vacation.

12. What if my children’s educators feel unwell or need to stay home?

The health, safety and wellbeing of Baringa children and staff is our highest priority.

If educators feel unwell and need to take some leave they are being supported to do so. There may be times when our casual educators will assist in your children’s room. Please be assured all educators are well trained and care for your children’s education and wellbeing. We are all one Baringa Family.

13. What if I am feeling concerned and need support?

It has been an extremely challenging start to the year. Many of us have been impacted by recent events and we encourage everyone to make sure that you take some time to look after your own wellbeing.

Please know we are here for you. It is important we not only look out for ourselves, we look after each other. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Below are some useful resources for parents and families:

- [Tips for Coping with Coronavirus Anxiety](#) by the Australian Psychological Society includes information on looking after yourselves and talking with children about coronavirus.
- [Lifeline](#) offers free phone counselling 24/7 via 13 11 14, as well as support through sms counselling and online counselling.
- [Kids Helpline](#) is available for parents and carers via 1800 55 1800 or via webchat or email.

14. How can I find out more information?

Baringa will continue to provide information as we receive them from ACT Government and/or Australian Government regarding COVID-19.

We encourage you to also stay informed through the following:

- [ACT Health - Public Health Alerts](#)
- [ACT Health - Advice for Educational Facilities](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#)

If you have any medical questions please see your GP and/or contact the Coronavirus Health Information on [1800 020 080](#).

15. What if I have more questions?

We will continue to provide regular updates to families. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns please email admin@baringa.org.au, call 6258 8891 or speak to Centre Director, Betty Lam.