



Welcome to

# MercyCare Early Learning

What matters to you,  
matters to us.



Family Handbook

# A little about us

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At a MercyCare Early Learning Centre what matters to you, matters to us. Because one size certainly does not fit all, we promise to listen, be responsive and flexible.

Every child is a unique little person that has the right to be seen, valued and an active participant in their own lives. We believe child care is about bringing out the special qualities and strengths that makes a child an individual.

Our centres are an extension of your home, providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for every child. Our educators work closely in partnership with families, ensuring a strong link between home and their early learning centre.

We encourage families to share what they love from home and their community. This can look different for each family, from sharing a talent or skill; a cultural celebration; or simply a bit of time. We value your feedback and want to hear from you about our programs, practices and more to ensure we make our centres the best they can be for your child and family.

We recognise what can truly make the difference at a childcare centre – is our educators. Our educators strive to build a reciprocal, respectful and genuine relationship with parents that reflects our values. Our educators care deeply; listen to what truly matters to families and their community; and are passionate about providing opportunities for each child to learn, discover, develop and belong.

At our MercyCare Early Learning Centres we believe a transparent, supportive and collaborative partnership with families gives children the best outcomes. We expect that families will be involved in their child's learning journey, participate in our program and influence service delivery. We encourage and value family feedback which will be used to guide service decisions and implement positive change. Families expertise, knowledge, background and values will form a part of our program and practice and help create a sense of belonging and inclusion for all our children.



When you join a MercyCare Early Learning Centre, you are joining something much bigger. With roots extending back more than 175 years in Western Australia, today as a not-for-profit organisation MercyCare continues to strengthen, adapt and grow to meet the needs of Western Australians.

We support Western Australian families and communities – from the smallest members in our early learning centres; young people supported through fostering, accommodation and wellness; vulnerable families through housing and support; new Australians through our multicultural services; Kimberley communities through our accommodation; and our most senior members through our aged care services.

We do all this founded on our vision for people and communities to thrive.



## Our Philosophy

We approach our work with a spirit of Mercy compassion and justice, that is flexible and responsive. We ensure children and families are at the centre of everything that we do, that they have an equal opportunity and their voices are heard.

As part of our reconciliation journey, we seek to facilitate the engagement of head, heart, hands and spirit to recognise the unique place and role of Australia's First Peoples, their leadership and contribution to Australia.

Our practices ensure that we take responsibility to reduce our environmental footprint and connect the children to the natural environment through play.

Our centres are an extension of home, providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for all children. We have a commitment to ensure all children are visible, valued and active participants in their own lives.

We appreciate, gain knowledge of and celebrate multicultural Australia and see our community as an integral part of this rich, diverse and cultural tapestry.

## Organisational Structure

Board and Trustees

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director  
Early Learning Services

Compliance Lead,  
Mission & Strategy  
Project Lead

Early Learning  
Services Manager

Area  
Manager

Centre  
Manager

Assistant  
Coordinator

Qualified Room  
Leader

Diploma, Certificate III, Assistant Educators,  
Administrators, Cooks, Volunteers, Cleaners,  
Students and Trainees

MercyCare Early Learning Services delivers high quality early years education and care to meet the growing needs of Western Australians.

Our play-based approach is best practice, based on the Early Years Learning Framework. Our passionate and experienced educators use the children's interests and the enjoyment during play to build upon developmental milestones like language, social and emotional, physical and cognitive skills. Our Early Childhood teachers implement parts of the WA Kindy curriculum and prepare our children for a successful transition into formal schooling.





## Children's learning programs

Overwhelming research shows the best way to learn is through play. Our play-based programs are developed based on a child's needs – using their strengths and interests to engage children so the magic of learning and achieving success can follow.

Our philosophy, values and the Early Years Learning Framework guide our program development and experiences, while the child's surrounding environment is deliberately designed to engage, teach and provide further opportunities to practice new skills.

Your child's discoveries and experiences can be viewed in their Learning Records on your Xplor app. We encourage parents to contribute to our program and their child's learning journey in any way they can by sharing stories and events from home, volunteering their time or giving feedback and suggestions.

### Meals

At our early learning services your children are offered morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea each day. For those that stay a little later, we offer a healthy late snack to keep them going until they get home. Please note, for all our children's safety no food or drink (apart from water and formula

powder) is to be brought into our centres. Our weekly menu is communicated daily via the Xplor app, and displayed in our centres.

At our Outside School Hours Care Service, morning and afternoon tea is provided. During vacation care lunch is to be supplied by the parent.

All our cooks undertake specific nutrition and menu planning training which means our menus are carefully planned and nutritionally balanced to provide children with the necessary fuel to play and learn throughout the day, and to support healthy and positive eating habits. Please inform the staff in writing of any allergies your child may have. Children with allergies must supply a medical note and/or an effective action plan endorsed by your doctor, and any life-saving medication your child requires.



## Birthdays

Your child's birthday is important to us. We will celebrate this important day by organising special birthday activities. We love to incorporate any personal and cultural birthday practices and ceremonies you may do at home into their day.

We endeavour to offer celebratory food that is healthy and does not compromise the nutritional value of our menu. Due to Food Safety Regulations, our Food and Nutrition policy states that only food purchased and prepared by the Service Cook is offered and available to children. This also protects children from inadvertent exposure to food that may cause allergic reaction, or conflict with cultural or religious requirements.

## Rest time

Children are encouraged to have a sleep or rest during the day to give active bodies and minds the break they need. Older children are encouraged to participate in 'quiet time' where pillows, books and quiet activities are provided for them. Please speak to staff about your child's individual sleep or rest requirements. Educators follow our sleep recommendation procedures to ensure safety. This includes, but is not limited to, removing necklaces during sleep (including Amber teething necklaces), removing hoodies and placing babies to sleep on their backs.

## Guiding children's behaviour

Positive guidance strategies are implemented when solving problems with the children. Limits encouraging appropriate social behaviour will be clearly expressed in positive terms and reinforced consistently in developmentally appropriate ways.

Parents will be consulted and asked to work with the educators to ensure behaviour guidance techniques are consistent and clear.



# Your child's day

## Orientation

Parents are encouraged to bring in their child at least one week before attending the centre. Appointments for orientation visits are required so that educators are well informed, the daily routine is not disrupted, and so we can make arrangements to spend as much time with you and your child as possible. It is up to the family how many orientation sessions are necessary; however, as a general guide, two consecutive or alternative days orientation is encouraged.

These orientation visits will not be charged. An indicative orientation outline is below; however, schedules can be designed to cater to families and children's individual needs.

**Day One** 1 hr with parents

**Day Two** 30 minutes with parents, then parent leaves child for 30 minutes. Parent/s must remain onsite. This is a great time to chat about any concerns or needs over a cup of tea or coffee.

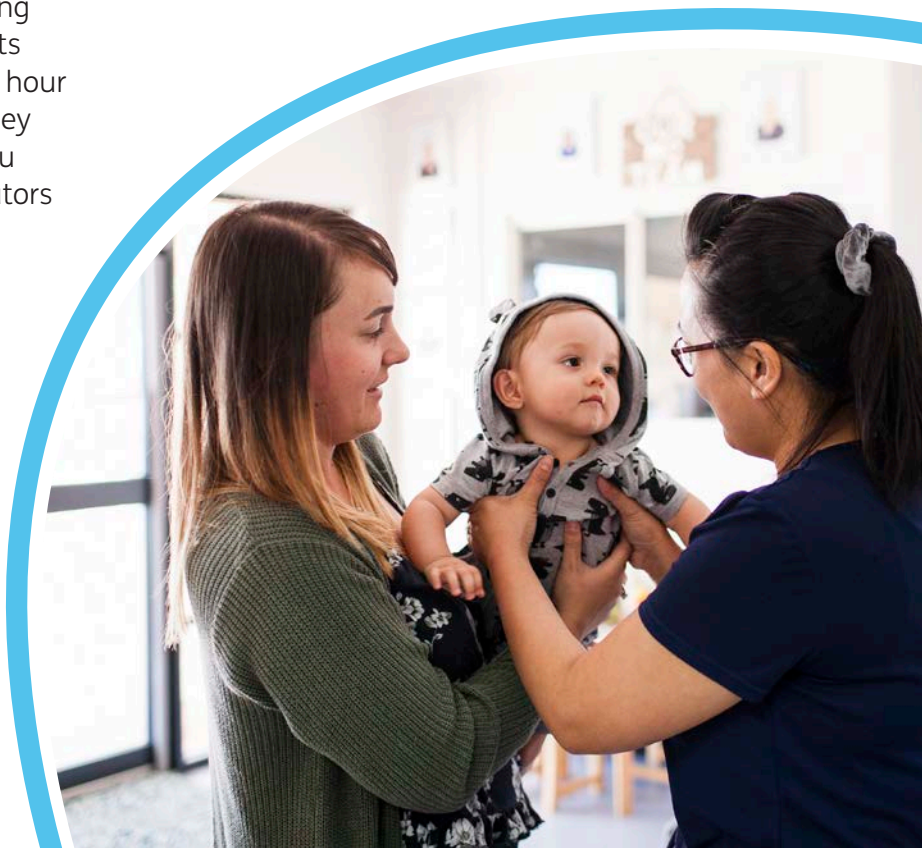
More orientation visits may be arranged after consultation with the educators and Manager.

When your child officially starts attending our service on their booked days, parents are advised to call the service at least 1 hour after leaving their child to check how they are settling; however, we will update you throughout the day via Xplor and Educators will keep you informed of your child's settling-in progress. Feel free to bring in their favourite comfort item, or an object that may smell or remind them of home during the first few weeks until they settle.

## Arrival and departure of children

It is a requirement of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (who administer CCS payments) and Department of Communities (who administer the National Law and Regulations) that all children must be signed in (on arrival) and signed out (on departure). Failure to sign your child in and out each day may result in the cancellation of CCS. These sign in/ out records are used for CCS attendance reviews and in emergency evacuation drills.

Each child must be personally handed over to an educator. Please let us know an estimated time you will be picking your child up so that we can prepare them for home. Only authorised persons can collect your child, unless prior arrangements are made with management. The service must be advised of this in writing.





## What to bring every day



### 0 to 2 years olds

- Legionnaire or bucket style sun hat
- Extra clothing
- Extra underwear if child is being toilet trained
- If required, a dummy and/or empty clean milk bottles. Bottles must match number of feeds required. All bottles will be rinsed prior to sending home.
- Nappies (min 5 per day)
- Unopened formula tin if required
- Water bottle or sipper cup
- Wet bag to store any soiled clothes in
- Small backpack to keep your child's belongings in



### 2 to 3 years olds

- Legionnaire or bucket style sun hat
- Nappies if required (min 5 per day)
- Extra clothing
- Extra underwear if child is being toilet trained
- Wet bag to store any soiled clothes in
- If required, a dummy and/or empty clean bottles. Bottles must match number of feeds required. All bottles will be rinsed prior to sending home.
- Water bottle
- Small backpack to keep your child's belongings in



### 3 to 4 years olds

- Legionnaire or bucket style sun hat
- Extra clothing
- Sleep nappy if required
- Extra underwear
- Wet bag to store any soiled clothes in
- Water bottle
- Small backpack to keep your child's belongings in

Please label all items belonging to your child to reduce the risk of items becoming lost or misplaced.

To avoid disputes and to protect your property, please encourage children to leave their toys and precious valuables at home. While we regret that sometimes personal belongings that children bring in may be broken or lost, Management cannot take responsibility for these items. We will, however, endeavour to keep them away and safe should children insist these items be brought in.

# Your child's health

## Health and safety

A child cannot be accepted into our care with any illness which may, in any way, be transferred to others.

Children and our educators with infectious disease will be excluded from the service in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines. If your child is unwell, parents are requested not to bring the child to the service. If your child becomes unwell at the service, parents/guardians will be notified and asked to take your child home. Your children will only be accepted back into the service upon provision of a 'clearance certificate' from a medical practitioner.

Speak with your Centre Manager if you have any concerns or questions.

If your child has any of the following, your child must be kept at home:

- A temperature
- Diarrhea
- Excessive cold symptoms, discharge from eyes, ears or nose
- Coughing (bringing up mucus)
- Conjunctivitis
- Chickenpox
- Diphtheria
- Measles
- Rubella
- Cold sores
- Ringworm
- Impetigo (schools sores) if not covered
- Head lice
- Gastroenteritis
- Vomiting
- Severe skin rash or infection
- Infectious hepatitis
- Whooping cough
- Scabies (itchy skin)
- Mumps
- Foot and Mouth





## Immunisation

A copy of each child's Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement MUST be presented to management with the enrolment form. Immunisation Records can be accessed via your Medicare online account through my.gov.au or through the Express Plus Medicare mobile app. The date of the statement must be within the two months prior to enrolment. Please note, the record in your WA Health Purple Book cannot be accepted.

In the case where a parent/guardian cannot provide a current AIR Immunisation History Statement, or the child is not immunised Management are unable to enrol the child at the service unless one of the following applies; the child is following an approved catch up schedule as indicated on the child's AIR Immunisation History Form the child has a medical exemption to vaccination or natural immunity- which is recorded on the child's AIR Immunisation History Statement and the record shows the immunisation status is 'up-to-date'.

## Medication

The administration of medication to children will be strictly monitored to ensure children's safety and welfare. Whenever possible, medication should be administered by parents at home.

Parents are asked to consider whether their child who requires medication are well enough to be at the centre, and to keep them at home if they are unwell. Medication will only be administered by the qualified centre staff if it is prescribed by a Health Care Professional and has the original dispensing label, or letter from the child's Health Care Professional, detailing the child's name, name of medication, dosage, frequency, instructions for administration, date of dispensing and expiry date and the parent/guardian has correctly completed and signed an authority

to give medication form on the day on which the medication is to be administered.

Medication must be given directly to a staff member and not left in the child's bag or locker.

If children are receiving medication at home but not at the centre, the centre should be advised of the nature of the medication and its purpose, and any possible side effects it may have for the child.

Creams such as nappy rash cream, teething gels etc, will only be administered with appropriately completed medication forms and if staff are comfortable with administration. If authorised by parents, school-aged children are able to self-administer any ongoing medication, under the supervision of educators. This authorisation must be given in writing on the relevant ongoing medication form where staff will record any dosage self-administered. In the case of an emergency situation, medication may be administered to a child without authorisation in case of an anaphylaxis or asthma emergency. (National Regulation 94)

## Sun protection

Sunscreen will be applied to children 20 minutes before outside play. We ask that you apply sunscreen to your child at home should your regular arrival time at the service be after 9.30am. We encourage the use of clothing that protects your child from harmful UV rays, tops that cover shoulders and arms, shorts that cover thighs, broad-rim hats. Educators will monitor the UV Rating to determine safe periods of time for outdoor play and will comply with the services sun protection policy in all other circumstances. The service supplies sunscreen, if your child requires special sunscreen or has skin allergies please speak with management.

## Accidents/injuries

In case of minor injuries that occur at the service, educators who are qualified in first aid, anaphylaxis, asthma management and CPR will treat the injury and if deemed necessary contact the parents immediately to advise of the injury. A health event record will be completed by staff and made available to parents to sign upon collection of the child. If a serious incident/injury should occur, the educators qualified in first aid should assess the injury and report to management. A decision will be made whether to call the parents.

## First aid

Educators with a current first aid, anaphylaxis, asthma management and CPR qualification are on duty at the centre at all times.

## Excursions

An excursion permission form must be filled in by parents for any outings from the service. The excursion form gives consent from parents which enable the educators of the service to take your child out for an excursion.

Risk assessments are undertaken before each excursion and the excursion procedure will be adhered to. Our comprehensive excursion procedure includes, but is not limited to, regular headcounts including moving on and off vehicles, approved child restraints, considering water hazards and taking weather and temperature into account to protect children from the sun and cold weather.

## Safety drills, emergency and evacuation procedures

Emergency evacuation procedures will be clearly displayed placed near every exit. Safety drills will be practiced at least eight times a year.

## Court orders, restraining orders and family separation

A copy of any Court Orders and/or Restraining Orders must be given to the Manager on enrolment, or when approved by the court should the child/children already be enrolled.

It is also the responsibility of parents to inform Management of any family separation issues where Court/Restraining Orders are not in place. The family situation can in this instance mean changes to which parent wishes to collect their child/children. Without Court/Restraining Orders, we legally have to release children to either parent. However, if we are informed of circumstances we may be able to suggest measures to assist parents in separation situations.





# How we manage your booking

## Online access

We aim to make your experience with us as engaging as possible. We provide you with access to your child's records through the app and web-based childcare management program Xplor. Your enrolment, financial account and bookings can be managed directly through your personal portal. Records of your child's learning, routine, and experiences they have participated in, as well as other relevant information, is available to you 24/7.

## Booking and enrolment

We ask that you provide your application and \$25 enrolment administration fee 2 weeks prior to your child's start date. This will give the centre time to prepare for your child, for paperwork to be entered in our software and for your enrolment to be approved on MyGov. The service will let you know if your requested days are available and confirm your start date.

When reviewing your application for enrolment, every attempt will be made to meet your requirements. If there are no vacancies, your child will be put on our wait list, and you may be offered another available day. Parents on the wait list will need to keep in contact with the service to remain on this list.

## Priority of access

Priority of access will be determined based on the care requirements of families; however, those families requiring full time care, working families and children at risk will usually be prioritised.

## Movement within the service

Children are moved to the appropriate groups according to developmental milestones and as required by Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012.

However, the overall occupancy levels and occupancy of each room will be taken into consideration when moving children between groups. Prior to moving rooms parents will be notified and will be required to sign a transition permission form. This will allow your child to start visits to the next age group in a smooth, unhurried way, giving them time to become familiar with the routine and develop relationships with children and staff.

## Extra days

If space is available, additional days may be booked on a day to day basis. This can be requested via the Xplor app or in writing to the manager.

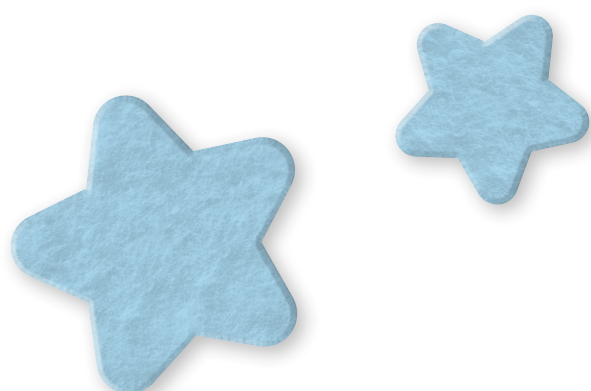
## Changing days

Any requests to cancel or change care days must be submitted via a completed booking form to management with two weeks' notice.

## Notification of absences

If your child is unable to attend on a booked day, please notify the service no later than 8:30am.

In the case of extended absence, please notify management in writing as soon as possible.





## Paying fees and government assistance

### Child Care Subsidy

#### What is it

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a payment from the Australian Government that reduces your childcare fees.

If you're eligible, the government will pay the CCS directly to your approved childcare service and you will be left with a gap fee.

You can access the CCS if you're a parent, step-parent, foster parent, grandparent or kinship carer.

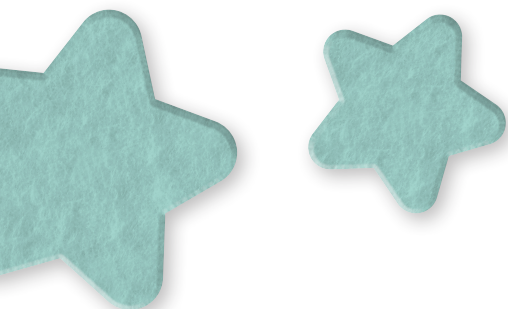
The subsidy you receive will depend on your family's income and an activity test completed by Centrelink. For example, work hours, study commitments, volunteering etc.

#### What you will need before applying online:

- A myGov account linked to Centrelink. If you don't have a myGov account, you can set one up
- A Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN) for you and your child
- Supporting documents, for example driver's license, passport, Medicare card
- Your income records, as well as your partner's


To make your claim you will need to sign into your myGov account ([my.gov.au](https://my.gov.au)) and go to Centrelink. You can search "how to claim child care subsidy" at [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au) for instructions.

Once you have your CRN and an approved claim for CCS you can use the Child Care Subsidy Calculator ([www.childcaresubsidycalculator.com.au](https://www.childcaresubsidycalculator.com.au)) or ask us to help you estimate the gap fee you will need to pay for child care.





## Enrol with us

- 1 Contact Centrelink about your eligibility for Child Care Subsidy and submit your claim.
- 2 Submit an enrolment application for one of our centres.
- 3 Once your enrolment has been confirmed, we will set up an Xplor account for you and will email you a link and password.
- 4 Follow the link and enter your password.
- 5 Check your enrolments details are correct and add your bank details in the “Finance” tab.
- 6 Approve your complying written agreement (CWA) in Xplor in the “children” tab. Check the details, if correct accept. If they are incorrect, please contact the centre. Do not reject.
- 7 Log onto myGov and approve your enrolment with MercyCare in the Centrelink page.
- 8 To ensure you stay connected with your child throughout the day, download the Xplor app on your mobile. Search “**Xplor Home**” in your App Store. 
- 9 You will be able to login with your email address and password.





## Absences

Parents are eligible to claim CCS for 42 absence days from July - June (Financial Year) annually. Public Holidays are considered absence days and are included in the initial 42 days allowed. If 42 absences are exceeded, full fees may apply for any further absences. Please speak to your Centre's manager if you feel you may exceed this allowance, as you may be eligible for additional absences dependent upon your special circumstance.

All sick days and absences will incur normal fees. Public holiday discounts are available, which are automatically applied when your child's booking falls on a public holiday.\*

Centrelink will not pay CCS for absences at the beginning and end of care. If your child does not attend their first or last day of care, full fees will apply for this day and any consecutive absent days.

\*Conditions Apply

## Payment of fees

Fees are to be paid one week in advance. If fees are not paid as per enrolment agreement and the services fee policy, your child's enrolment or booking will be withdrawn and you will be invoiced for all outstanding fees which may include: collection agency's fees, solicitor cost, and any court related fees and expenses. Parents have access to their fee statement anytime via the Xplor app. It is the parent/s' responsibility to monitor their account including any CCS changes and keep their children's account paid up to date. If CCS is not paid by the government, the parent is liable to pay the full fee.

The service's method for payment is Direct Debit through the services automated payment service provider. If you have any enquiries relating to fees, please speak with Centre manager.

An extra fee of \$1.50 per minute will be charged for children still in care after business hours.





## Legalities

### Insurance

Policies held by MercyCare include:

- Workers' compensation
- Public and products liability
- Professional Indemnity

### Parent feedback

We believe children and young people have a right to be safe, feel safe, be cared for and be respected. MercyCare wants your feedback so we can make your child's service better. Please let us know if you have a:

- *Compliment* - if happy with your service or an employee or volunteer
- *Complaint* - if you have a problem with your service
- *Suggestion* - if you have an idea to improve your service

You can provide your feedback by:

- Talking or emailing your Service Manager or Centre employee
- Filling out MercyCare's online feedback form at [www.mercycare.com.au](http://www.mercycare.com.au)
- Contacting MercyCare's Quality Services team on:
  - Email: [feedback@mercycare.com.au](mailto:feedback@mercycare.com.au)
  - Phone: 08 9442 3444
  - Post:  
MercyCare, PO Box 202,  
Wembley WA 6913  
Attention: Quality Improvement Specialist

To find out more about MercyCare's Safeguarding Children and Young People policy visit our website.

If you need support or an interpreter to provide your feedback please let a Centre employee know.

The Education and Care Regulatory Unit is the body that regulates Education and Care Services. Their contact details are:

- Phone: 6551 8333 or 1800 199 383
- Address: Level 1, 111 Wellington Street, East Perth

### MercyCare Early Learning contact details

[MercyCareELC@mercycare.com.au](mailto:MercyCareELC@mercycare.com.au)

38 Ord Street, West Perth, WA 6005

PO Box 202, Wembley WA 6913

 [MercyCareEarlyLearning](https://www.facebook.com/MercyCareEarlyLearning)

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# Enrolment checklist

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- ☐ Up-to-date printed Immunisation History Statement from Medicare (my.gov.au). Your WA Health Purple Book cannot be accepted.
- ☐ Birth certificate
- ☐ Completed enrolment form
- ☐ Completed CCS claim with Centrelink (if eligible)
- ☐ \$25 enrolment fee (payable via eftpos)
- ☐ Any medical action plans
- ☐ Any court orders