



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The physical environment can contribute to children’s wellbeing, happiness, and creativity as well as promoting the development of independence. It can contribute to and make visible the quality of children’s learning and involvement in experiences. The choices made in an education and care service about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air, and light in combination with access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor areas, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.1	Fit for Purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.

3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
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EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
73	Educational programs
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
80	Weekly menu
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing and security
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
107	Space requirements—indoor
108	Space requirements—outdoor space
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
110	Ventilation and natural light
111	Administrative space
112	Nappy change facilities
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

RELATED POLICIES:

Animal and Pet Policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Programming Policy Work Health and Safety Policy Health and Safety Policy	Bike Safety Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Sun Safety Policy Water Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Our Service will ensure the environment is safe, clean, and well maintained for children, families, educators, and visitors. Children’s awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions. The physical environment will support children’s participation and engagement, development, learning, and safety, and will provide supervised access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children’s learning and development by:

Choosing Appropriate Resources and Equipment

- Appropriately sized furniture and equipment will be provided in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age ranges represented in the service.
- The Approved Provider will be responsible for any large purchases of equipment. The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the service.
- Educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of their classroom.
- Educators will complete a log for the Nominated Supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis.
- The Service will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment.

- Resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of the Service's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Children will be provided with resources and equipment that encourages appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level.
- The environment will be organised to ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing.
- Specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment.
- Climbing equipment will be set up in a safe way and compliant with Australian Safety Standards. For example, incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
- Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazards.
- An environment will be provided that allows different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas)
- A natural environment for children to explore and experience will be provided which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water.
- Educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment.
- Our Service will work within our Sun Safety policy and procedures, providing adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities.
- An environment that ensures children are appropriately supervised at all times will be provided.
- All required fencing will be maintained in good condition and is compliant with current regulations.
- A variety of indoor and outdoor experiences will be provided, catering for children's interests and abilities.
- Children will be supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment. These resources will be adequate in number for the number of children attending our Service and be developmentally appropriate.
- A developmentally appropriate environment will be provided where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking.
- An environment will be provided that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously.
- The environment will incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity.

- Sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating, and sleeping facilities will be available.
- Toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety.
- Natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air will be incorporated into the building.
- Appropriate areas for food preparation are provided.
- A separate indoor space for children who are under two years of age is available.
- An area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur is available.
- Power points not in use have safety caps, all double adaptors and power-boards are out of reach of children, and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling.
- Educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children.
- Where appropriate children are involved in setting classroom guidelines.
- Families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats, etc.
- A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained.
- All equipment, including resources, equipment, car seats, booster seats, etc. meet relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly.

Laundry of Soiled Items

- Soiled clothing will be returned to a child's home for laundering. Educators will remove soiled content and place into a plastic bag. Items will be stored securely in a sealed container or double-bagged before being placed in the child's bag.

Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

- The Service will keep a record of any changes that are made to the physical environment of the service, such as rearranging of rooms etc. to show continuous improvement.
- The Service will document the links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment, and the children's learning in the program.

Sleep/Rest Environment

- All cots must meet the mandatory Australian Standard for Cots- (AS/NZS 2172)

- Mattresses should be in good condition- clean, firm and flat and fit the cot base with no more than 20mm gap between the mattress sides and ends.
- Cots and beds will be positioned to encourage a calm and relaxing environment. There will be a minimum space of 300mm between each cot to reduce the possibility of cross infection.
- Cots and beds will be regularly checked to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe. Beds will be located in an area that is easy to access for all educators and other staff.
- Beds will be stored in a dry area.
- Educators will ensure to use correct manual handling techniques when moving the beds.
- Beds should not be placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks.
- Light bedding will be used for cots and beds.
- Checks will be made to identify any hazards to ensure a safe environment
- Hanging cords, strings from blinds, curtains or electrical devices will be away from cots and mattresses.

Ongoing Maintenance

- The Service will continuously reflect on its environment and put in place a plan to ensure that the environment reflects our ideology of providing an environment that is safe, stimulating, and engaging for all who interact within it.
- The Nominated Supervisor will document required maintenance in a maintenance plan/log for the Service as required. Repairs and maintenance will be conducted throughout the year according to priority including, hazard removal, safety precautions and any relevant policies.
- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for completing a building safety checklist of the service and its grounds bi-annually and ensure any work deemed necessary is completed to Australian standards.
- The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will also ensure that the Service and its grounds comply with Local Government and BCA regulations in regard to fire-fighting requirements, ventilation, natural and artificial lighting, and safety glass.

Grouping of Children

- Our Service groups the children according to their age and/or developmental stage. Within that space, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences.
- Each age group has different legally required adult to child ratios, which are adhered to at all times in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Our indoor and outdoor environment provides opportunities for developmentally appropriate planned experiences, intentional teaching, and spontaneous play throughout the day.

Safety Checks

A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children begin to arrive. This inspection will include the:

- Service perimeters
- Fences/Fence Line
- Gates
- Paths
- Buildings
- All rooms accessible by children
- Fixed equipment
- Sand Pit
- Mud pit

This must be done in order to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals.

In the event of a sharp object being found (for example a syringe) educators will wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the object and place it in the 'sharp object box'. This box will be disposed of as per the recommendations of our local council.

Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead, or dangerous looking branches as well as checked for any infestations.

Non-fixed play equipment in the Service grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an Educator.

The Service will have regular pest inspections carried out by an accredited pest control company.

Documentation of these inspections will be kept and any further recommended treatments as a result of the findings from the pest control check will be carried out in a timely manner.

The Indoor and Outdoor Daily Safety Checklists will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the service. The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have repairs carried out as soon as possible.

The following is a guideline:

CLEANING OF BUILDINGS, PREMISES, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

General Cleaning

- The Service will use structured cleaning schedules to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly.
- Educators will clean the service at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.
- Accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the service always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.

When purchasing, storing and/or using any dangerous chemicals, substances, medicines or equipment, our service will:

- Adhere at all times to manufacturer's advice and instructions when using products to clean furniture and equipment at the service.
- Store all dangerous chemicals, substances and medicines in their original containers provided by the manufacturer. All labels and/or use by dates should be kept intact at all times.
- Any substance found to be stored in a different container than originally provided, or with destroyed labels and/or unknown use by dates where applicable will not be used under any circumstances.
- Containers will be disposed of correctly following local council guidelines, and not reused under any circumstances.
- All dangerous chemicals, substances and equipment must be stored in a locked place or facility that is labelled, secure and inaccessible to children. These materials may include, but are not limited to, all cleaning materials, detergents, poisonous or dangerous substances, dangerous tools and equipment including those with sharp and razor edges and toiletries.
- Educators will follow the instructions of manufacturers, particularly of any product that may need to be stored in a refrigerated environment as per instructions.
- Any substances that need to be refrigerated must be stored in a labelled, child resistant container, preferably in a separate compartment or in a part of the refrigerator inaccessible to children.
- All hazardous chemicals must be supplied with a **Safety Data Sheet (SDS)** formerly called a Material Data Safety Sheet. Our Service will adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for use, storage, and first aid instructions recorded on the SDS.
- The Service will keep a register of all hazardous chemicals, substances and equipment used at the Service. Information recorded should include where they are stored, their use, any risks, and first aid instructions and the current SDS. The register will be readily accessible.

- Appropriate personal protective clothing should be worn in accordance to the manufacturer's instructions when using and disposing of hazardous substances or equipment.
- Seek medical advice immediately if poisoning or potentially hazardous ingestion, inhalation, skin or eye exposure has occurred, or call the Poisons Information Line on **13 11 26**, who may advise you to call an Ambulance on **000**.
- In the case of any child or educator becoming injured by a chemical, substance, or equipment, the Service will initiate our emergency, medical and first aid procedures, immediately notify the appropriate authority that administers workplace health and safety and any other person or authority as required by regulations or guidelines.
- In any major emergency involving a hazardous chemical or equipment, a hazardous gas or a fire or explosion hazard, call the emergency services, dial 000 and notify the appropriate authority that administers workplace health and safety and any other person or authority as required by regulations or guidelines.
- The Poison Safety Checklist will be used in order to ensure we are consistently meeting requirements.

Children's Bathroom

- Supervision in the bathroom is vital when in use.
- Educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing.
- Bathrooms will be cleaned at least twice a day and at other times as required.
- Bathroom floors will be mopped at least daily.
- Signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that children, educators and other staff and families are aware that the floor is wet.
- Educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure.

Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment

- Our Service ensures that electrical equipment is regularly inspected and tested by an accredited person if the electrical equipment is supplied with electricity through an electrical socket and used in conditions where it could be damaged, including exposure to moisture, heat, vibration, mechanical damage, corrosive chemicals or dust.

- A record of all electrical testing and tagging must be attached and kept until the equipment is next tested or disposed of and must specify:
 - a) The name of the tester.
 - b) The date and outcome of the testing.
 - c) The date on which the next testing must be carried out.

Maintenance of Fire Equipment

- All fire equipment at our Service will be maintained as per the legal standards.
- External agencies will be employed to assist the service with this maintenance if no currently employed staff or educators are qualified to complete the maintenance checks.

SUN PROTECTION

Our Service implements the SunSmart Program to ensure children's health and safety is maintained at all times whilst at the service. We will use the SunSmart UV Index tool to ensure we are protecting children and staff from UV radiation. Educators will document the UV rating each day to ensure the safety of children, staff, and Educators. The UV Index will be used when:

- Planning or participating in outdoor activities
- Undertaking recreational activities – for example Munch and Move.

1. Outdoor Activities

The Service will use a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above. This will include:

- From October to March sun protection is required at all times. Extra sun protection is needed between 11am and 3pm and during this period outdoor activities should be minimised. Minimising outdoor activities includes reducing both the number of times (frequency) and the length of time (duration) children are outside.
- From April to September (excluding June and July) outdoor activity can take place at any time. However, from 10am – 2pm sun protection is required.
- In June and July when the UV index is mostly below 3, sun protection is not required. **Extra care is needed children who have very fair skin.**
- All sun protection measures (including recommended outdoor times, shade, hat, clothing and sunscreen) will be considered when planning excursions.

- Educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day.

2. Shade

The Service will provide and maintain adequate shade for outdoor play. Shade options can include a combination of portable, natural and built shade. Regular shade assessments will be conducted to monitor existing shade structures and assist in planning for additional shade.

3. Hats

Educators and children are required to wear sun safe hats that protect their face, neck and ears. A sun safe hat is a:

- Legionnaire hat.
- Bucket hat with a deep crown and brim size of at least 5cm (adults 6cm).
- Broad brimmed hat with a brim size of at least 6cm (adults 7.5cm).

Please note: baseball caps or visors do not provide enough sun protection and therefore are not to be worn in this service. Children without a sun safe hat will be asked to play in an area protected from the sun (e.g. under shade, veranda or indoors) or can be provided with a spare hat.

4. Clothing

When outdoors, Educators and children will wear sun safe clothing that covers as much of the skin (especially the shoulders, back and stomach) as possible. This includes wearing:

- Loose fitting shirts and dresses with sleeves and collars or covered neckline.
- Longer style skirts, shorts and trousers.
- Enclosed shoes and socks to protect children's feet
- Children who are not wearing sun safe clothing can be provided with spare clothing.

Please note: midriff, crop or singlet tops do not provide enough sun protection and therefore are not to be worn by children nor staff.

5. Sunscreen

All Educators and children will apply SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every 2 hours. Sunscreen is stored in a cool, dry place and the use-by-date monitored.

6. Babies

Babies under 12 months will not be exposed to direct sunlight and are to remain in dense shade when outside. They will wear sun safe hats and clothing and small amounts of SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen specifically manufactured for infants may be applied to their exposed skin.

The Australasian College of Dermatologists does not recommend the widespread regular use of chemical sunscreens in very young babies (less than six months of age), as they absorb more of any chemical applied to the skin than adults. Sunscreens should be applied to areas of the skin not protected by clothing. The American Academy of Paediatrics has stated that sunscreens may be used on infants younger than six months on small areas of skin if adequate clothing and shade are not available.

Source: Cancer Council Australia.

7. Role Modelling

Educators will act as role models and demonstrate sun safe behaviour by:

- Wearing a sun safe hat (see Hats).
- Wearing sun safe clothing (see Clothing).
- Applying SPF30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors.
- Setting up experiences in shaded areas.
- Wearing sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (optional).

Families and visitors are encouraged to role model positive sun safe behaviour.

8. Education and Information

Sun protection will be incorporated regularly into learning programs. Sun protection information will be promoted to educators, families and visitors. Further information, support and free resources are available from the Cancer Council website www.cancer council.com.au/sunsmart or call the SunSmart Information Line on 02 9334 1761.

9. Policy Available

The Sun Protection Policy, updates and requirements (including hat, clothing and sunscreen) will be made available to educators and staff, families and visitors.

10. Review

Our Service will monitor and review the effectiveness of our sun protection policy regularly, at least once every 12 months.

WATER SAFETY

Regulations state that services are not permitted to have pools unless they existed on the premises before 6 November 1996. However, to stop accidents and illnesses relating to swimming pools, wading pools, water troughs and other water situations our Service will:

- Remove any items or objects that could be used to climb into the fenced area of a pool, trough, or water storage unit e.g. chairs, bins, bikes, and any shrubs or overhanging trees.
- Make sure no child swims in any water without:
 - Written permission from family member to learn water safety and swimming.
 - Appropriate educator/child ratios in place.
 - Having sufficient numbers of educators present who have first aid or recognised water safety and rescue procedures.
- At all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water.
- Staff will ensure that all water containers are made inaccessible to children and also make sure children's play areas are safely fenced off from water hazards such as rivers, dams, creeks, lakes, irrigation channels, wells etc.
- All wading pools/water troughs etc. will be immediately emptied after every use: storage will prevent the collection of water e.g. upright/inverted. The grounds will also be checked after rain or watering and water that has collected in holes or containers will be emptied/removed.
- Wading/water troughs are hygienically cleaned, disinfected, and chlorinated appropriately:
 - On a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant.
 - Wash away disinfectant before filling trough.

SERVICE CLOSURE

- Two Educators must close the Service each night.
- Both Educators are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed by checking sign in and out sheets for all rooms AND physically checking all rooms and areas.

- Educators are to follow Service-closing procedures each night.
- In the case where a parent has omitted to sign their child out, and the Educators did not witness the child leave the service, the Educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the Service.
- If unable to contact the family, the Educators are to contact other Educators present on that day for confirmation that the child has been collected. The Nominated Supervisor is to then be notified before leaving the Service.
- Individuals visiting our Service must also sign in when they arrive at the Service and sign out when they leave.
- Details of absences during the day must also be recorded.

Source

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Cancer Council NSW: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au>

Cancer Council Australia: <https://www.cancer.org.au>

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard.(2020)

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*

NSW Sample Sun Protection Policy: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Final-Activated-PDF-Workplace-sun-protection-policy-general-November-2013.pdf>

Red nose Safe environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Swimming Pools Act 1992

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	February 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE	February 2021
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor changes to grammar, content changed • Sources checked for currency • Addition of nappy change facilities and cot specifications • Checklist alphabetised 		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed all wording stating 'should' to 'will' or similar language to imply these items are being done. • Introductory statement and purpose modified. • Grammar, punctuation and spelling edited. • Additional information added to points. • Duplicated information deleted. • Sources checked for currency. • Sources/references corrected, updated, and alphabetised. 	February 2020	
February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor adjustment to the wording of the opening paragraph • Added 'related policy' section • Minor amendments to terminology throughout the document to improve interpretation and compliance 	February 2019	
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard 	February 2018	
February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor adjustments made with the addition to more information about the UV Rating, the importance of checking the rating prior to going outdoors to ensure protection and the use of sunscreen on babies. 	February 2018	