SNAKE AWARENESS POLICY

Our Service is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff while respecting wildlife in and around our environment. We aim to minimise the potential risk of injury from a snake bite by promoting awareness of snakes and educating children and staff about how to respond safely when snakes are encountered.

Education and care services may be located in areas where snakes may be present, including bushland, gardens and other outdoor environments. Snakes are most prevalent during spring or summer but may be encountered at any time of the year, especially on sunny days.

Snakes are generally shy and timid animals, that will avoid people where possible. Unprovoked, they rarely bite. The greatest risk of snake bite from venomous snakes is often associated with people trying to kill or handle them. Snakes are generally protected under state legislation, and it is an offence to kill or injure them.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
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		
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S.2A	Paramount consideration – safety, rights and best interest of children
S.3A	Paramount consideration [NSW]
12	Meaning of serious incident
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
89	First Aid Kits
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
100	Risk assessment must be conducted before excursion
136	First aid qualifications

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy	Health and Safety Policy
Anaphylaxis Management Policy	Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
Emergency and Evacuation Policy	Supervision Policy
Family Communication Policy	Work, Health and Safety Policy

PURPOSE

We aim to ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children and staff from harm and hazards likely to cause injury, including the potential risk from snake bites. This policy aims to identify the potential risks of snakes within and around our Service environment, outline strategies to minimise the risk of snake bites, and provide guidance on the appropriate medical response if required.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

SNAKES

Australia has around 170 species of land snakes, some equipped with venom more toxic than that of any other snake in the world. Some of the most dangerous snakes belong to the front-fanged group, including the tiger snake, brown snake, eastern taipan, death adder and mulga or king brown snake. Venomous snakes may be encountered in urban and rural areas. Snake bites can cause serious injury or illness and may be life threatening.

IMPLEMENTATION

The safety, rights and best interests of children are our priority when identifying and managing potential risks from snakes within and around the Service and during excursions and outdoor activities. Educators and staff follow relevant risk assessments and procedures and take appropriate action if a snake is encountered. Educators and staff maintain appropriate supervision and take reasonable precautions to protect children from harm.

APPROVED PROVIDER/MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

Governance and Risk Management

- ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations are met
- ensure educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy
- ensure a risk assessment is conducted to identify the potential risk of encountering a snake on the Service premises and before undertaking any excursions

Prevention and Environmental Controls

- ensure daily inspections of the outdoor and indoor learning environment are conducted prior to children arriving at the Service
- ensure lawns and gardens are well maintained, including cutting any long grass around the boundaries of the premises
- remove potential snake habitats such as piles of timber, compost heaps or sheets of galvanized iron from around the premises
- maintain clean surroundings around any animal housing/cages to reduce potential mouse populations, which may attract snakes
- ensure pet food and water bowls are not accessible to wildlife

Awareness and Education

- provide a snake identification chart for snakes found in the local area for educators and staff
- provide information to families about snake awareness and recommended responses if a snake is encountered
- ensure educators and staff are aware of the Service's procedures for responding to a snake sighting, including how to keep children safe and when to seek assistance
- provide emergency services with a description or photograph of the snake, if it can be obtained safely without approaching or handling the snake
- ensure children receive age-appropriate information about how to respond to a snake sighting or encounter at the Service or during transportation or an excursion.

Emergency Planning and Management

- develop an emergency plan and procedure that includes the response to a snake encounter and emergency first aid required in the event of a snake bite
- ensure educators and staff periodically practice the Service's emergency procedures for responding to a snake encounter or suspected snake bite as per their *Potential Emergencies – Risk Assessment*
- ensure that at least one educator or staff member with current ACECQA-approved first aid qualification is present and immediately available to respond in an emergency at all times while the Service is providing education and care to children
- ensure an emergency action plan is displayed in a prominent location for responding to a snake bite
- ensure first aid kits are readily accessible to adults and contain compression bandages, and that a fully stocked first aid kit is taken on excursions
- ensure that emergency medical assistance is sought immediately for any suspected snake bite, including calling 000 for an ambulance. Any anaphylaxis response is managed in accordance with the *Anaphylaxis Management Policy*.
- ensure an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* is completed, following a snake bite
- the approved provider will make a notification of any serious incident arising from a snake bite or snake-related emergency to a regulatory authority (within 24 hours of the incident) through the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) and notify the child's parents/guardians within the prescribed timeframes.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- examine the Service grounds during their daily indoor and outdoor safety checks and report any potential snake hazards or sightings
- ensure no animal food or water is left out for wildlife, particularly overnight
- become familiar and confident with the Service's *Emergency and Evacuation* Policy and other related policies and procedures for responding to a snake encounter or a snake bite
- not approach, touch, catch, kill or handle snakes
- be aware of and familiar with snake species inhabiting the local area
- maintain a current ACECQA-approved first aid qualification
- ensure first aid kits are easily accessible and contains compression bandages
- notify the nominated supervisor/responsible person immediately if a snake is sighted
- provide children with age-appropriate information about snakes and snake bite prevention
- remind children regularly that if they encounter a snake, they should move away quietly and report the sighting to an educator
- remind children not to put their hands into hollow logs, rock crevices or other areas where snakes may be hiding.

ENCOUNTERING A SNAKE

If a snake is sighted or encountered at the Service, educators and staff will:

- inform children to move away quietly and calmly
- move children and staff away from the immediate area, or move everyone out of the room / area / premises if the snake is indoors
- isolate the area and prevent access until the snake has moved away or been safely removed
- note the location of the snake
- if possible and safe to do so, monitor the snake from a safe distance without approaching or disturbing it
- contact an appropriate local wildlife rescue organisation or licensed snake handler if the snake remains and assistance is required
- if the snake is indoors, close doors where possible to limit its movement and wait for assistance (e.g. a licensed snake handler) to remove the snake
- not approach, touch, catch, kill, contain or handle the snake.

EMERGENCY SNAKE BITE ACTION PLAN

- Conduct a primary survey of the area and move the person away from the snake. Do not attempt to catch, kill or handle the snake
- Stay calm and call for help- have someone call 000 for an ambulance
- Reassure the child/adult and encourage them to keep calm and still
- Apply a pressure immobilisation bandage as soon as possible
- Write down the time of the bite and when the bandage was applied. If possible, mark the location of the bite site (if known) on the skin with a pen, or photograph the site
- Keep the person still and immobilised and minimise movement
- Remain with the person and reassure them until the ambulance arrives
- Do not remove clothing or wash the bite area - venom left on the skin and clothing can help identify the snake
- Do not cut or suck the bite to drain venom
- Do not apply a tourniquet (a strap to stop blood flow)
- Be prepared to commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if the person becomes unresponsive or is not breathing normally.

FAMILIES WILL:

- familiarise themselves with the *Snake Awareness Policy*
- ensure their child wears enclosed shoes to the Service
- reinforce snake awareness behaviours with their child, especially during periods when snakes are more likely to be active
- provide feedback to the Service regarding this policy for review and improvement.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Snake Awareness Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation or ACECQA guidance, or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service or the family's ability to utilise the Service, or earlier in line with the *Governance Policy*.

RELATED RESOURCES

Administration of First Aid Procedure Animals and Pets - Risk Assessment	Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Potential Emergencies - Risk Assessment

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*

Australian Venom Research Unit, University of Melbourne. About Venom

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Health Direct. (2024). Snake bites

St John Ambulance Australia. (2022). First aid fact sheet: Snake bite

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	OCTOBER 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	OCTOBER 2027
VERSION	V8.10.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • reorganised sections to improve flow and clarity • updated wording to cover snakes in and around the Service, not just bush settings • added the paramountcy principle to the implementation section • clarified emergency response responsibilities and removed the requirement to identify snakes for antivenom • removed detailed first aid information from the appendices, as this is covered through first aid training and references • updated sources and references as required		
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS			
OCTOBER 2025	• policy maintenance - no major changes to policy • sources checked for currency and updated as required		
AUGUST 2024	• policy maintenance - no major changes to policy • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required • Childcare Centre Desktop resources added • sources checked for currency and updated as required		