

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Rationale and Policy Considerations

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.

Legislation and Government Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (SA)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Privacy Act (1988) Commonwealth

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Regulations 73-76, 80, 82, 86, 99, 102-115, 156

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education Elements 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 3.1.1, 3.1.2

Policy Statement

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.

Strategies for Policy implementation

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

Choose 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.

Laundering 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.

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.

WATER SAFETY

Regulations state that services in [New South Wales] 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.

Links to other 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

Sourced from

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. ~~(2017)~~-(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

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