

# 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 OSHC 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, practised 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
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
123	Educator to child ratios- centre based services
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	Road Safety Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Sun Safety Policy Water Safety Policy
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## PURPOSE

Our Vacation Care 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, management and visitors 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 to purchase appropriate toys and equipment for the service.
- 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.
- Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazard when required.
- 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 policies 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 hand-washing, toileting, and eating facilities will be available.
- Natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air will be incorporated into the building.
- Appropriate areas for food preparation are provided.

- 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.
- A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained.

### Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

- The Service will keep a record or photo evidence of any changes that is made to the physical environment of the Vacation Care 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.

### Ongoing Maintenance

- 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 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.

### Safety Checks

A weekly or when required inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children arrive. This inspection will include:

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

This must be done 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.

The Vacation Care 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:

#### Outdoor checklist that may include some or all of the following:

- ☐ **Building maintenance** – regularly maintain and check for hazards, check building is in a safe, clean and hygienic condition. Records of any damage and subsequent repairs are kept.
- ☐ **Doors** – have finger jam protectors.
- ☐ **Dust mites, pet allergens** – regular dusting and vacuuming.
- ☐ **Educator's personal items** – Educator's personal items such as bags, sharp instruments, toiletries and medicines are kept secure and are inaccessible to children.
- ☐ **Ensure children are visible and supervised at all times.** High-risk areas and climbing and other outdoor play equipment are supervised at all times. Hazardous equipment, machinery, chemicals, and any other materials is inaccessible to children.
- ☐ **Fences** – securely and effectively provide a suitable barrier to all sides of outdoor play areas from roads, water hazards, and driveways. Fences have correct height for the purpose. Childproof self-locking devices are installed on gates.
- ☐ **Finger entrapment** – all holes or openings in playground equipment are between 8-25 mm to avoid finger entrapment.
- ☐ **First aid kit** is approved, maintained, and accessible throughout outdoor play.
- ☐ **Garbage** – safe and prompt disposal. Lidded secure bins are used that prevent child access and are maintained in a clean and safe condition. Our Service participates in a recycling program.
- ☐ **Garden** and renovation debris removed. Branches and bushes are regularly trimmed.
- ☐ **Garages and sheds** – are kept locked.

- ☐ **Hazardous Plants** – are identified and removed or made inaccessible to children.
- ☐ **Heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting** – is comfortable, safe, maintained, guarded and kept out of reach of children.
- ☐ **Machinery, tools and equipment** –all engine operated or other hazardous equipment, tools or machinery are stored securely and are inaccessible to children.
- ☐ **Non-slip** floors, stairs, and steps are used and nonporous indoor floors for easy cleaning.
- ☐ **Renovation** - dangers e.g. lead, asbestos, holes and excavations –risks are minimised according to the situation.
- ☐ **Pesticide residue** - dangerous chemicals are not be used to remove vermin.
- ☐ **Pet and animal droppings** are cleared or inaccessible to children in outdoor areas, dogs are excluded from children’s play areas, pet interactions with children are supervised.
- ☐ **Safe play rules and adequate safe play areas** – we talk with children about how to play safely. We maintain safe layouts for outdoor play areas to avoid collisions between children.
- ☐ **Safety glass** is installed according to the Australian Standards on all glass doors and windows accessible to children, and safety decals on both sliding doors and plate glass doors at child and adult eye level.
- ☐ **Sandpits** – are covered when not in use, regularly cleaned, raked, and sand soiled by faeces or blood is removed. Sandpits are hosed and disinfected after removing contaminated sand and material.
- ☐ **Service car park** – we ensure family members are aware of pedestrian safety rules such as holding their child’s hand and alighting children from the safety door. Families must always supervise their children in the car park to prevent accidents and injuries, which could occur as a result of reversing vehicles.
- ☐ **Spills** – are cleaned up as they occur
- ☐ **Sun protection** - clothing, hats, and sunscreen, for un-shaded areas – we minimise play at peak sun exposure times. A sunshade or natural shade covers sandpits and play areas.

### Checklist: Indoors

- ☐ **Access for children and adults with disability** - safe access is provided into, within and out of the Service. Toilet and washing facilities, are checked for hazards for wheelchairs and people with impaired sight, hearing or mobility.
- ☐ **Children at risk** – we maintain extra security and supervision for children at special risk.
- ☐ **Decorations and children’s artwork** – are not placed near ceiling fans, air conditioners or heaters. The use of tacks, pins, and staples is avoided.
- ☐ **Educator’s personal items** –Educator ‘s personal items such as bags, sharp instruments, toiletries and medicines are kept secure and are inaccessible to children.

- ☐ **Emergency evacuations** –an evacuation plan and emergency contact numbers are displayed, families are informed, and evacuation procedures are regularly practiced.
- ☐ **Fire** – fire blanket, extinguisher, fire exits, smoke detectors, electrical safety switch are checked regularly and serviced as required.
- ☐ **First aid kit** with approved contents is maintained and accessible. First Aid certificates are current for relevant educators.
- ☐ **Hazardous indoor plants** are identified or removed.
- ☐ **Heaters** –children cannot come in contact with hot surfaces. It is preferable to use heating where combustion products are ducted outside. If gas heating is used ensure there is adequate ventilation while the heater is operating.
- ☐ **Hot water** - the hot water supply is regulated so as to keep it below the temperature at which a child can be scalded (the current KidSafe NSW Inc. recommendation is below 43.5°C).
- ☐ **Machinery, tools and equipment** – all office and classroom machinery, tools, and equipment is stored securely and inaccessible to children.
- ☐ **Noise** – we reduce excessive exposure.
- ☐ **Non-slip, non-porous** floors and stairs are in the building.
- ☐ **Pets and animals** –families are informed of pets being kept on the premises and plans to obtain new pets. Pets are vaccinated, wormed, don't have fleas, are clean, and healthy.
- ☐ **Record details** - Parents are notified of any child accident.
- ☐ **Safe play rules and adequate play spaces:** we discourage running indoors and provide safe furniture layout to avoid collisions.
- ☐ **Safety glass used and installed** according to Australian Standards, and Australian Building Codes on all glass doors and windows accessible to children, **safety decals** on sliding doors and plate glass doors at child and adult eye level
- ☐ **Smoke free environment** in all areas.
- ☐ **Store in locked cabinet** any unsafe items, e.g. chemicals, medicines, razors, knives and electrical equipment.
- ☐ **Supervision and visibility of children** –children are visible and supervised at all times. High-risk areas requiring extra supervision include adventurous play experiences, playground equipment, ball sports. At least two educators are on the premises at all times within sight of each other and the children.
- ☐ **Toys** – meet safety standards, age appropriate, maintained, and non-toxic.

### Cleaning of Buildings, Premises, Furniture and Equipment

#### General Cleaning



- The Service will use 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 as needed.
- Accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the Service maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.

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

- Always adhere 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, inhaled, 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

- Children will be actively supervised whilst accessing toilet facilities to ensure other children are safe from harm.
- Educators will check the toilet facilities for safety and materials prior to commencement of daily program
- Educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing, not playing in bathrooms.
- Bathrooms will be cleaned at least daily 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 Vacation Care 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 Vacation Care Service implements the NSW 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 for services in the far west and north of NSW and for all 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. 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.**

## 7. 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.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart) or call the SunSmart Information Line on 02 9334 1761.

## 8. Policy Availability

The sun protection policy, updates and requirements (including hat, clothing and sunscreen) will be made available to educators and staff, families and visitors.

## 9. Review

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

## Water Safety

- Make sure no child swims in any water without:
  - Written permission from family member to learn water safety and swimming.
  - Appropriate educators/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 where necessary.
- 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, slipping slides 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

- Educator/s 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.
- Educator/s must sign the sign in and out sheets confirming all children are signed out.
- Educator/s 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 Educator/s 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.

## 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. (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*

## REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED: DECEMBER 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 2021
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