



BOURKE AND DISTRICT CHILDREN'S SERVICES

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

POLICY NAME: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Our service will ensure the environment is safe, stimulating, 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.

BACKGROUND

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 our 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.

OVERALL STRATEGIES / HOW WILL IT BE DONE?

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IS DESIGNED TO:

- Be a safe and healthy environment which provides space for children to experience quality care and education.
- Facilitate adequate supervision of children at all times (including toilets and nappy change facilities).
- Allow children to explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking.
- Permit children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously.
- Allow for different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet and loud play areas).
- Be enriched by natural resources and provide opportunities to engage with nature.
- Meet licensing requirements for buildings, space requirements, fencing, light, ventilation, firefighting equipment, emergency evacuation exits and safety glass for National Regulations, the Building Code of Australia (BCA), NSW Department of Planning and Environment, local councils and regulatory authorities.
- Provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the service.
- Provide sufficient and accessible handwashing and toileting facilities which are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Provide adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety.
- Provide sufficient and accessible eating facilities and areas for food preparation.
- Provide appropriate sleeping facilities.
- Provide a separate indoor space for children who are under two years of age.
- Provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur.
- Incorporate natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air into the building/premises.
- Ensure immediate communication is available at all times to and from parents and emergency services.
- Provide adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities and in the form of trees or physical shade structures.
- Provide a natural environment for children to explore and experience which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, sand, mud and/or water. No poisonous or dangerous plants will be included in the education and care environment.
- Ensure all required fencing is compliant with current regulations and is maintained to ensure it is in good condition (including self-closing gates with safety locking mechanisms and boundary fencing).
- Ensure all fences and barriers that enclose outdoor spaces used by children are of a height and design that children cannot go through, over or under.
- All double adaptors and power-boards are out of reach of children, and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling.

APPROPRIATE RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT ARE PROVIDED INCLUDING:

- Appropriately sized furniture and equipment in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age ranges represented in the service.



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- Children are supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment that encourage appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level.
- Resources are adequate in number for the number of children attending our service and are developmentally appropriate to extend and challenge children's learning and development.
- Specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs are catered for to ensure an inclusive environment.
- Resources and equipment are 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.
- Climbing equipment is installed according to manufacturers' recommendations and compliant with Australian Safety Standard (ensuring soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up).
- Commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity.
- Maximising the use of natural materials when possible to foster children's connections with the natural environment and enhance the look and feel of nature within the environment e.g. wooden shelving.
- Ensuring all equipment and resources including cots, highchairs, car seats, booster seats, etc. meet relevant Australian Standards.

END OF DAY ENVIRONMENT CHECK

- Two 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.
- Same two educators are to complete the End of Day Checklist.
- 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.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE APPROVED PROVIDER AND NOMINATED SUPERVISORS WILL:

- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Ensure educators (including casual staff) receive information and induction training to fulfil their roles effectively, including being made aware of the Physical Learning Environment Policy, their responsibilities in implementing it, and any changes that are made over time.
- Ensure students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy.
- *Ensure the physical environment is designed per the requirements of this policy.*
- *Ensure appropriate resources and equipment are available as per the requirements of this policy.*
- *Ensure indoor temperatures are maintained at levels that support children's safety and wellbeing.*

EDUCATORS WILL:

- Provide ideas to the Nominated Supervisor for equipment and materials to be purchased based on the needs and interests of children.
- Ensure any resources or equipment that require maintenance or promptly reported to the Nominated Service and take appropriate action to ensure no harm is caused to children e.g. remove broken resource.
- Consider ideas and suggestions from children and families when planning both the indoor and outdoor environments and the selection of resources.
- Design learning environments that are welcoming and accessible for all children and families, considering cultural diversity, social and physical inclusion, interests, abilities and learning styles.
- Allow children and families to collect and bring recycled equipment and natural resources into the environment for use in the service.
- Consider programming activities that support an appreciation of nature and foster children's connections with the natural environment., for example, taking care of plants.
- Offer children opportunities to be active, messy and noisy and play on a large scale.



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- Equally value both the outdoor and indoor learning environments as places that support children's learning, creativity, social engagement and sense of belonging.
- Seek to develop learning environments that are secure and predictable and that support children to take increasing responsibility for their health, hygiene and personal care.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our Physical Learning Environment Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with children, families, staff, educators, and management.

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Standard 1	Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
Standard 3	Families and communities are informed and involved
Standard 4	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Standard 7	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
Standard 8	Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
Standard 10	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDRENS 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.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS AND NATIONAL LAW

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 the educational program to be given to parents
80	Weekly menu
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment
84(a)	Sleep and rest
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102	Authorisations 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



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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
123	Educator to child ratios – centre based services
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures must be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

STATUTORY LEGISLATION & CONSIDERATIONS

[Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 \(Amended 2023\)](#)
[Education and Care Services National Regulations \(Amended 2023\)](#)
[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

SOURCES

Acknowledgement to Community Early Learning Australia and Childcare Centre Desktop.
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2014).
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2023). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (Date). [Name. Policy Guidelines](#).
 Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.V2.0, 2022](#).
 Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
 Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017). (Amended 2023).
 Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2023).
 KidSafe Australia: <https://kidsafe.com.au>.
 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.
 Red Nose Safe Environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>.
 Revised National Quality Standard. (Amended 2023).

RELATED POLICIES

- Educational Program Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy
- Safe Storage of Dangerous Goods Policy
- Safe Sleep and Rest Policy
- Sun Safety Policy
- Water Safety Policy

RELATED DOCUMENTS

End of Day Checklist

Start of Day Checklist

POLICY AUTHORISED BY	Prue Ritchie	POLICY REVIEWED	August 2024
NEXT REVIEW DATE	August 2025		
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policy format • Child Safe Standards added • Regulation amendments incorporated 		



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Physical Activity section moved into separate policy		
PREVIOUS REVIEW			
POLICY AUTHORISED BY	Prue Ritchie	DATE	January 2021