



BOURKE AND DISTRICT CHILDREN'S SERVICES

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

POLICY NAME: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

BDCS 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 supports children's wellbeing, happiness, creativity, and independence while reflecting and enhancing the quality of their learning and engagement in experiences. The choices made in our services 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.

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 ensure 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 buildings.
- 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.
- Ensure double adaptors/power-boards are out of reach of children and 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.
- 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.



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- 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- 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.

PLAY EQUIPMENT SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

- Climbing equipment is installed according to manufacturers' recommendations and compliant with Australian Safety Standard, this includes ensuring:
 - Play equipment must be always supervised by an educator when accessible by children.
 - The impact area surrounding play equipment must comply with AS/NZS 4422- playground surfacing requirements.
 - Non-fixed play equipment must comply with maximum free height of fall under AS-4685:2021.
 - Non-fixed play equipment over 600mm must have soft fall material surrounding the fall zone.

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 indoor/outdoor areas.
- The same two educators are to complete the End of Day Checklist.
- If a child has not been signed out and educators did not see them leave, they must take reasonable steps to confirm the child's safety. This includes contacting the parent/carer. If they cannot be reached, educators should check with other staff present that day to confirm the child was 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 all staff (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:

- Suggest equipment and materials to the Nominated Supervisor based on children's needs and interests.
- Include children's and families' suggestions when planning environments and selecting resources.
- 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.
- 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 bring recycled and natural materials for use in the service.
- Plan activities that promote appreciation of nature and connection to the environment, such as caring for plants.
- Offer children opportunities to be active, messy and noisy and play on a large scale.
- Value indoor and outdoor environments equally as spaces that foster learning, creativity, interaction, and 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.



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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our Physical Learning Environment Policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance, or any incidents related to the policy. This review will be conducted in consultation with children, families, and staff.

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

82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment
84(a)	Sleep and rest
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
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
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



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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). (2025).
 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 2025). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).
 KidSafe Australia: <https://kidsafe.com.au>.
 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2024). Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services. (6th Ed.). [Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services - 6th Edition](#).
 Red Nose Safe Environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>.
 Revised National Quality Standard. (Amended 2025).

RELATED POLICIES

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

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- End of Day Checklist
- Start of Day Checklist

POLICY REVIEWED	NEXT REVIEW DATE	POLICY REVIEWED BY
OCTOBER 2025	OCTOBER 2026	Charlotte Parnaby
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play equipment safety requirements updated • Annual policy maintenance • Updated legislation and other links where necessary 	
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	POLICY REVIEWED BY
AUGUST 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policy format • Child Safe Standards added • Regulation amendments incorporated • Physical Activity section moved into separate policy 	Prue Ritchie
JANUARY 2021		Prue Ritchie