

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.

Purpose

Our Centre 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. Our Centre provides an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

Implementation

Our Centre is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children's learning and development.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and educators' responsibilities include the following:

Physical environment is designed to:

- Maximise children's engagement and positive experiences
- Provide space where children can experience quality care in a safe and healthy environment
- 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), VIC Department of Planning and Environment, local councils and regulatory authorities
- Provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the centre
- Provide sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating, and sleeping facilities
- Ensure toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments
- Ensure adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety
- Provide appropriate areas for food preparation
- 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
- Facilitate adequate supervision of children at all times including toilets and nappy change facilities
- Ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing
- Provide different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas)
- Provide adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities
- Provide shade 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, mud and/or water
- 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)
- Provide a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences, catering for children's interests and abilities
- Provide a developmentally appropriate environment where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking
- Provide an environment that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously



- Ensure safety of children at all times. Non-fixed play equipment in the Centre grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an educator.
- 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

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 centre
- Children will be 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 will be adequate in number for the number of children attending our Centre and be developmentally appropriate
- Specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment
- Resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of the Centre's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- Large purchases of equipment will be the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor
- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the centre
- Educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of children in their particular room
- Educators will complete a log for the Nominated Supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis (see *Equipment and Maintenance Record*)
- Children's ideas and suggestions in planning the indoor and outdoor environments will be facilitated
- Children will be encouraged to make decisions about the use of equipment and resources
- The Centre will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment
- Climbing equipment will be installed according to manufacturers' recommendations and compliant with Australian Safety Standards. For example, incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
- Incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity
- All equipment and resources including cots, highchairs, etc. meet relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly
- Families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, etc
- Educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children
- Educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment
- A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained by educators and the nominated supervisor

Laundering of Soiled Items

- Laundry and hygienic facilities are located and maintained in a way that do not pose a risk to children
- Soiled clothing will be returned to a child's home for laundering
- Educators will remove soiled content and place into the child's Individual Wet bag.

Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

- A record of any changes that are made to the physical environment of the centre is maintained, such as rearranging of rooms etc. to show continuous improvement
- Links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment, and the children's learning in the program will be documented



Sleep/Rest Environment

- Educators and staff will strictly adhere to the *Sleep and Rest Policy* and procedures
- 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 Centre 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
- Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazards
- The Nominated Supervisor will document required maintenance in a maintenance plan/log for the Centre 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 engaging an external expert to complete a building safety checklist of the centre and its grounds bi-annually and ensure any work deemed necessary is completed to Australian standards
- The Centre 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.

Grouping of Children

- Our Centre 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.

Daily Safety Checks

A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children begin to arrive. The *Indoor and Outdoor Risk Assessment* will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the centre. The Nominated Supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have any identified repairs carried out as soon as possible.

This inspection will include the:

- Centre perimeters
- Fences/fence line
- Gates
- Paths
- Buildings
- All rooms accessible by children



- Fixed equipment
- Sand pit

This must be completed in order 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.

Cleaning of Building, premises, Furniture and Equipment

General Cleaning

- The Centre will use structured cleaning schedules to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly
- Educators will clean the centre at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed
- Accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the centre always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.
- Educators and staff will adhere to our *Health and Safety Policy*.

When Purchasing, Storing and/or using any Dangerous Chemicals, Substances, Medicines or Equipment

Our centre will:

- Ensure all procedures ensure all procedures are followed to maintain a safe environment
- Adhere to the Centre's *Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy*
- Adhere at all times to manufacturer's advice and instructions when using products to clean furniture and equipment at the centre
- Keep a register of all hazardous chemicals, substances and equipment used at the Centre. 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.

Children's Bathroom

- Clear supervision is provided to children when in use (having regard to the need to maintain the rights and dignity of children)
- Educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing, toileting
- 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.

Maintenance of Fire Equipment

- All fire equipment at our Centre will be maintained as per the legal standards
- External agencies will be employed to assist the centre with this maintenance (if no currently employed staff or educators are qualified to complete the maintenance checks)
- Ensure batteries in smoke alarms are replaced annually

Sun Protection

- Educators and staff at the Centre will adhere to our *Sun Safety Policy* and procedures at all times
- A combination of sun protection measures will be implemented whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above
- Educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day (see *Sun Safety Policy* for further information)



- Temperature of outdoor equipment and surfaces will be monitored during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play

Water Safety

To prevent accidents and illnesses relating to wading pools, water troughs and other water situations our Centre will:

- Remove any items or objects that could be used to climb into a trough, or water storage unit e.g. chairs, bins, bikes, and any shrubs or overhanging trees
- Make sure no child plays in any water without:
 - Risk assessments being completed and approved by the Nominated Supervisor
 - 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.
- 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, appropriately:
 - On a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant
 - Wash away disinfectant before filling trough.

Centre Closure

- Three educators must close the Centre each night
- All educators are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed by checking that all children have been sign in and out for all rooms AND physically checking all rooms and areas
- Educators are to follow Open and Closing Checklist 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 centre, the educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the Centre
- 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 Centre
- Individuals visiting our Centre must also sign in when they arrive at the Centre, and sign out when they leave
- Details of absences during the day must also be recorded.

Source: Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014). Cancer Council: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au>
 Cancer Council Australia: <https://www.cancer.org.au> *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. (2011).
 Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).
 Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2020). 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*. NSW Government *Kids and Traffic Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program* Red nose Safe environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment> Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Date Implemented: 16/04/2012

Review Completed: 11/04/2021

Schedule for Review: 11/04/2022

Authorised by COM: Nov 2020

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.
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
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 Service 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	
81	Sleep and rest	
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	
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 service must have policies and procedures	
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available	

