# WATER SAFETY POLICY

The safety and supervision of children is paramount when in or around water. This relates to managing water safety, including any activity involving water play, excursions near water, safety around hot water, and hygiene practices with water in the Out of School Hours (OSHC) Service environment. Children and young people will be actively supervised at all times during water play experiences and other activities involving water to help keep them safe while supporting their learning in a safe environment. Water safety education is embedded in the educational program to help children develop lifelong safety awareness.

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

| QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY | | |
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| 2.1.2 | Health practices and procedures | Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented. |
| 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. |

| EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS | |
|---|---|
| S. 2A | Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children |
| S. 165 | Offence to inadequately supervise children |
| S. 167 | Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards |
| 12 | Meaning of a serious incident |
| 101 | Conduct of risk assessment for excursions |
| 115 | Premises designed to facilitate supervision |
| 136 | First aid qualifications |
| 168 | Education and care service must have policies and procedures |
| 170 | Policies and procedures to be followed |
| 171 | Policies and procedures to be kept available |
| 172 | Notification of change to policies or procedures |

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| 176 | Time to notify the certain information to the Regulatory Authority |

## RELATED POLICIES

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|---|---|
| Administration of First Aid Policy<br>Child Safe Environment Policy<br>Educational Program Policy<br>Excursion/Incursion Policy | Health and Safety Policy<br>Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy<br>Physical Environment Policy<br>Sun Safe Policy<br>Supervision Policy |

## PURPOSE

To ensure the safety and supervision of children in and around water. This includes water play, excursions near water, hot water, drinking water and hygiene practices with water in the OSHC Service environment.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the OSHC Service.

## DEFINITIONS

For additional definitions and key terms used within this policy, refer to Key Terms – Policies and Procedures.

Adequate supervision: Means an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation; it also means knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently.

Hazard: Situations or things that have the potential to harm a person

Risk assessment: A systematic process of identifying hazards, assessing risks, and deciding on control measures to ensure children's safety

Serious incident: Each of the following is prescribed as a serious incident:

- the death of a child while being educated and cared for by an education and care service; or

following an incident occurring while that child was being educated and cared for by an education and care service;

- any incident involving serious injury or trauma to a child occurring while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a medical practitioner; or for which the child attended or ought to have attended, a hospital;
- any incident involving serious injury, trauma or illness requiring urgent medical attention or hospital attendance;
- any emergency for which emergency services attended;
- any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for; or
    - appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service; or
    - mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.

Water hazard: Any body of water that poses a threat of drowning risk to a child or children. This could include:

- large bodies of water, such as rivers, creeks, dams, ponds, swimming pools, jetted bathtubs (or jacuzzis), in-ground spas, above-ground portable spas (or hot tubs), fountains, water play troughs or any container with poor drainage that allows water to pool
- smaller bodies of water, such as baths, nappy buckets, containers that collect water, pet bowls.

Source: ACECQA (2026). *Water Safety: Policy and Procedure Guidelines.*

## IMPLEMENTATION

Our OSHC Service is committed to ensuring that children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and practices relating to water safety. Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, an approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for managing water safety, including during any water-based activities and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed.

According to Kidsafe, drowning is one of the leading causes of unintentional death for Australian children. Every year a number of children are killed and hundreds more rescued from near drowning situations. Non-fatal drowning incidents are also of great concern as they can have potential long-term effects, including brain damage and permanent disability.

The most common factor in childhood drowning is lack of supervision. A child can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water. Items such as nappy buckets, sinks, pet drinking bowls, ponds, pools, water features, water tanks are all potential drowning hazards.

## THE APPROVED PROVIDER, MANAGEMENT AND NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

### Governance and Compliance

- adhere to all obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations
- ensure the *Water Safety Policy* and associated procedures are implemented consistently by all educators, staff, students and volunteers
- ensure all educators, staff and volunteers participate in a comprehensive induction that includes an understanding of child safety, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and our *Water Safety Policy.*

### Risk Management

- ensure educators regularly inspect the environment to identify and manage potential water hazards
- complete detailed risk assessments that identify and assess risks associated with any water hazards and water-based activities
- consider children's ages, abilities, developmental needs and individual circumstances when assessing risks associated with water hazards and water-based activities
- ensure health and safety practices incorporate approaches to the safe setup, supervision, storage and disposal of water and water play
- ensure premises adjacent to or providing access to water hazards that cannot be adequately supervised at all times (e.g. dams, swimming pools) are isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence
- ensure there are no items near fencing that children could climb to gain access to a water hazard (e.g. pot plants, boxes, chairs)
- conduct a risk assessment before taking children on an excursion to identify and address any water hazards at or near the destination (e.g. rivers, lakes, beaches, ponds and water features). This includes assessing supervision ratios, staff water safety qualifications, and emergency response arrangements specific to the location. Refer to our *Excursion/Incursion Policy* for full excursion risk assessment and authorisation process.

### Active Supervision

- ensure adequate supervision is provided when participating in water activities including:

  - direct and constant monitoring of children
  - careful and intentional positioning of educators
  - maintaining clear communication between educators about children's location, supervision responsibilities and any emerging risks
  - scanning and moving around the environment
  - observing play and anticipating potential hazards or behaviour
  - maintaining clear lines of sight to children wherever possible
  - ensuring appropriate educator-to-child ratios and, where necessary, higher levels of adult-to-child ratios based on the activity and identified risks
  - ensuring no child is left unattended when in proximity to water
  - responding immediately to any unsafe behaviour or emerging hazards.
- provide direction and education to educators, staff and families on the importance of children's safety and supervision in and around water
- ensure hot water is inaccessible to children, including hot drinks accessed by educators, staff or families.

## Training and Professional Practice

- ensure at least one educator, staff member or nominated supervisor who holds a current ACECQA-approved first aid qualification, that was attained within the previous three years, is in attendance at the OSHC Service and immediately available at all times
- ensure at least one educator, staff member or nominated supervisor who holds a current CPR certificate (completed within the previous 12 months) is in attendance at the Service and immediately available at all times
- display a CPR guide near any swimming pool, wading pool, or body of water [best practice]
- ensure emergency procedures for water-related incidents are developed, communicated and practised by educators and staff
- ensure educators have the skills and confidence to respond to water-related incidents.

## Incident Management and Review

- notify parents/guardians as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if their child is involved in an incident at the Service or while being educated and cared for at the OSHC Service
- ensure details of the incident are recorded on an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*
- notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident

- conduct a review of practices following any water-related safety incident, including an assessment of areas for improvement within the policy and associated procedure and risk management practices.

## EDUCATORS WILL:

### Active Supervision and Safe Water Practices

- provide active supervision when children are participating in water activities including:
    - supervising children near water at all times
    - never leaving children alone near any water
    - direct and constant monitoring of children
    - scanning and moving around the environment
    - observing play and anticipating behaviour
- ensure that any body of water with a depth greater than 3 cm is inaccessible to children at all times and is guarded with an effective barrier at all times (child-proof fence/grate over the water)
- follow emergency procedures and contact emergency services if a child appears to be missing or unaccounted for or is involved in a serious incident or accident.

### Training and Professional Practice

- participate in induction and ongoing training to support an understanding of water safety responsibilities, this policy and associated procedures
- ensure they maintain current approved first aid qualifications, including current CPR
- maintain knowledge of strategies to keep children safe in and around water
- share water safety information with families and encourage conversations about children's experiences, confidence and safety around water.

### Water Hazards, Environment and Safety Checks

- complete a daily *Outdoor Cleaning and Safety Check* of premises to ensure that all hazards are identified and minimised. When a hazard or potential hazard is detected, educators will complete a risk assessment to address any concerns and children will be excluded from the area until the hazard has been rectified.
- monitor all taps on the premises that children have access to and ensure they are turned off securely when not in use
- safely cover or make inaccessible to children all water containers, e.g., mop buckets, nappy buckets
- ensure laundry, storerooms and educator areas have **staff only** signs displayed on doors to remind adults to close doors behind them

- ensure buckets of water for cleaning, soaking toys or clothing or other purposes are inaccessible to children unless it is a part of a planned and supervised activity
- check for and empty any water that has collected in holes or containers after rainfall or watering gardens.

## Water Play and Learning Experiences

- provide water activities in appropriate weather conditions as part of the planned program
- allow the children the opportunity to experiment with water, sand, and mixing materials
- incorporate water safety awareness into the educational program through play, conversations and intentional teaching
- support children to develop age-appropriate knowledge and skills about staying safe in and around water as part of the educational program, including recognising hazards, following safety instructions and seeking help when needed
- discourage children from drinking water used in water-based activities to support their health and safety.

## Water Troughs and Wading Pools

Ensure water troughs are used safely and:

- ensure water troughs are not used without a stand to keep them off the ground
- ensure children remain standing on the ground whilst using the water trough
- ensure water troughs or containers for water play are filled to a safe level and emptied into the garden areas after each use.

Ensure wading pools are hygienically cleaned and disinfected appropriately:

- on a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant
- wash away disinfectant before filling pool
- children with diarrhoea, upset stomach, open sores or nasal infections should not use the pool
- all children ~~should~~ wear appropriate swimwear/bathers, go to the toilet before entering the pool, and follow correct toilet hygiene practices while in the pool
- remove all children immediately, empty and disinfect the pool should a child pass a bowel motion whilst in the pool
- empty the wading pool immediately at the end of each use and store to prevent the collection of water, e.g., upright.

## Incident Management and Review

- follow the *Administration of First Aid Policy* after any incident involving a water-based activity, including contacting 000 if a child is found unresponsive or has inhaled water
- immediately notify the responsible person, nominated supervisor or approved provider of any water-related incident, injury or emergency
- complete required documentation, including an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*, as required
- reflect on practice and share strategies during staff meetings to maintain and improve child safety around water.

## OPERATIONAL SAFETY

The approved provider will ensure:

- water tanks are labelled with "Do Not Drink" signage and the children are supervised in this area to make sure they are not accessing this water for drinking
- educators discuss with the children the use of water tank water and how it differs from drinking water
- hot water accessible to children is maintained at the temperature of 45°C and is tested annually (Australian Standard AS 3498:2020)
- water for pets at the OSHC Service is changed daily and is only accessible to children when supervised by educators.

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Our *Water Safety Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or after a water-related incident. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service or the family's ability to utilise the OSHC Service.

## RELATED RESOURCES

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| Outdoor Cleaning and Safety Checklist<br>Excursion/Incursion Risk Assessment | Water Safety Procedure<br>Water Safety Risk Assessment |

## SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. *Approved learning frameworks*

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Water safety: Policy and procedure guidelines*
Early Childhood Australia. (2016). *Code of Ethics*
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Kidsafe. Water Safety.
Royal Life Saving Society Australia. Keep watch program
Victoria Government. Better Health Channel. Water safety for children.

## REVIEW

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| POLICY REVIEWED BY | Marty Gray | Principal | Sept 26 |
| POLICY REVIEWED | SEPTEMBER 2026 | NEXT REVIEW DATE | SEPTEMBER 2027 |
| VERSION NUMBER | V9.09.26 | | |
| MODIFICATIONS | • annual policy review<br>• introduced headings to improve structure<br>• updated water safety responsibilities; strengthened active supervision, risk management, water hazard controls, water safety education and risk assessments for excursions<br>• checked and updated sources where required | | |