

WATER SAFETY

1. Policy statement

Children's safety and wellbeing are paramount at our service and will be fostered through our child safe culture, responsive relationships, engaging experiences, and safe and healthy environment. The safety and supervision of children around water is of the highest priority. Water safety policies and procedures help keep children safe in and around water and support children's learning in a safe environment. This relates to water play, excursions near water, hot water, drinking water and hygiene practices with water in the program environment. Children will be supervised at all times during water play experiences.

2. Background

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for managing water safety, including safety during any water-based activities.

According to Kidsafe (the recognised authority on the prevention of injuries in children), drowning continues to be one of the main causes of fatalities of Australian children. Every year a number of children drown or are in 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 a lack of supervision. A child can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water. A water hazard or water feature may include dams, ponds, water fountains, large drains or any areas that retain water. Items such as nappy buckets, sinks, pet drinking bowls, ponds, pools, water features and water tanks are also potential drowning hazards.

Whilst water hazards at our service are kept to a minimum, we acknowledge that water trolleys, sinks, buckets, and toilets can be hazardous for children, and diligent supervision is required. We acknowledge the importance of safe practices around water and when children are near water, supervision of the children is paramount and the adult to child ratio must be maintained to reduce risks. Oversight including policy, procedures, risk assessments and authorisations are required to ensure the safety, health, and wellbeing of children near water hazards.

3. Legislative requirements

Section/Regulation	Description
Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Section 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
Regulation 25 (1) (c)	Additional information about proposed education and care service premises
Regulation 101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
Regulation 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
Regulation 168(2)(a)(iii)	Education and care services must have policies and procedures on water safety, including safety during any water-based activities
Regulation 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Regulation 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Regulation 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
Regulation 274	Swimming pools
Child Safe Standard 1	Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
Child Safe Standard 3	Families and communities are informed and involved
Child Safe Standard 7	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe, through continual education and training
Child Safe Standard 8	Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse or other kinds of harm to occur
Child Safe Standard 10	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

4. Principles informed in this policy:

Duty of Care & Child Safety

- Children's safety and wellbeing is the highest priority at all times.
- All staff have a responsibility to supervise, assess risk, and intervene immediately in unsafe situations.
- Policies must comply with state legislation, e.g., NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, Education and Care Services National Regulations, and local council regulations for water-based activities.

Risk Assessment & Management

- Conduct a comprehensive risk assessment for each water-based activity, including inflatable water parks, splash parks, swimming pools, and excursions.
- Consider:
 - Depth of water, type of surfaces, and potential hazards (slippery surfaces, sun exposure, crowding)
 - Staffing ratios (higher than usual where water is involved)

- Emergency access points and procedures
- Weather conditions, including heatwaves and storms
- Implement risk mitigation strategies: signage, restricted areas, flotation devices, and sun protection.

Supervision & Staffing

- Maintain high staff-to-child ratios for all water activities, exceeding the minimum regulatory ratios if necessary.
- Staff must be trained in water safety, first aid, CPR, and emergency response, including the use of rescue equipment.
- Clear allocation of responsibilities and zones of supervision so every child is observed at all times.

Competency & Training

- Staff must hold relevant accreditations: CPR, pool lifeguard, first aid, and child supervision in aquatic environments.
- Children's swimming abilities should be assessed and recorded, and activities should be differentiated based on competency.
- Conduct refresher training and drills before and during vacation care programs.

Safety Equipment & Environment

- Ensure the availability of:
 - Lifejackets or flotation devices appropriate for children's sizes
 - Rescue poles, safety ropes, and first aid kits
 - Barriers or fencing for hazardous areas
- Water temperature, depth, and cleanliness should be checked regularly.
- For inflatable water parks, check equipment certification, stability, and supervision guidelines.

Excursion & Incursion Management

- Require written parental consent for all water-based activities.
- Transport to excursions must follow road safety laws and adequate supervision.
- Conduct site-specific risk assessments for splash parks or incursion providers.
- Providers should demonstrate compliance with safety standards, e.g., SafeWork NSW and local council regulations.

Emergency Planning

- Maintain a water-specific emergency plan: rescue procedures, first aid response, and rapid communication protocols.
- Include:
 - Drowning or injury response
 - Missing child procedures

- Evacuation and emergency contact procedures
- Regular mock drills for staff to ensure preparedness.

Child Participation & Education

- Teach children basic water safety rules: no running, stay in designated areas, listen to staff instructions.
- Encourage self-awareness of abilities, hydration, and sun safety.
- Promote inclusive practices, ensuring all children can participate safely.

Continuous Improvement

- Monitor and review all water activities after each session.
- Conduct incident reporting and analysis to inform updates to the policy.
- Engage families in feedback about water activities and safety concerns.

5. Key terms

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA – Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources, and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	acecqa.gov.au
Adequate supervision	Means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation ● knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently. 	Guide to the NQF (Operational Requirements – Quality Area 2)
Approved first aid qualifications	A qualification that includes training in the matters set out below, that relates to and is appropriate to children, and has been approved by ACECQA and published on the list of ACECQA’s approved first aid qualifications and training. Matters are likely to include emergency life support and cardio- pulmonary resuscitation; convulsions; poisoning; respiratory difficulties; management of severe bleeding; injury and basic wound care; and administration of an auto-immune adrenalin device.	National Regulations (Regulation 136)
Risk assessment	A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.	

<p>Serious incident</p>	<p>For the purposes of the definition of serious incident in section 5(1) of the Law, each of the following is prescribed as a serious incident:</p> <p>a. the death of a child—</p> <p>i. while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service; or</p> <p>ii. following an incident occurring while that child was being educated and cared for by an education and care service.</p> <p>b. 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—</p> <p>i. which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or</p> <p>ii. for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital.</p> <p>Example: A broken limb.</p> <p>c. any incident involving serious illness of a child occurring while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital.</p> <p>Example: Severe asthma attack, seizure, or anaphylaxis reaction.</p> <p>d. any emergency for which emergency services attended.</p> <p>e. any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service—</p> <p>i. appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for; or</p> <p>ii. appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service premises in a manner that contravenes these Regulations; or</p> <p>iii. is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.</p>	<p>National Regulations (Regulation 12)</p>
<p>Hazard</p>	<p>Situations or things that have the potential to harm a person.</p>	
<p>Water hazard</p>	<p>Any water body that poses a potential drowning risk to children and could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) or any container with poor drainage that allows water to pool 	<p>Guide to the NQF (Operational Requirements – Quality Area 7</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smaller bodies of water, such as baths, nappy buckets, and pet water containers. 	
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6. Links to other policies

The following policies may be linked to this policy:

- Emergency and evacuation
- Incident, injury, trauma, and illness
- Excursions
- Providing a child safe environment
- The administration of first aid

7. Induction and ongoing training

- Induction and ongoing training will be implemented, focusing on this policy and related procedures.
- Information will be shared with relief/ casual and educator assistants on induction and as relevant to the environments that they are working in, their shift responsibilities and the children in their care.
- Procedures and clear expectations about conducting assessments are part of Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person induction training, and regularly reviewed at staff meetings.

8. Monitoring, evaluation, and review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family’s ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Policy created:		
Review Date	Assignee	Notes
11/03/2026	Lauren Roberts	Updated Key Principles that inform this policy

Procedure

Title

Water Safety Procedure – Vacation Care and Water-Based Activities

2. Reference to Policy and Philosophy

- This procedure supports the Water Safety Policy and aligns with the service’s Weldon Way philosophy, which prioritises child safety, wellbeing, inclusion, and experiential learning.
- It is consistent with:
 - Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (2011)
 - National Quality Standard (Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety)
 - SafeWork NSW guidelines for water-based activities
- The procedure reflects our commitment to risk management, supervision, and child participation in water-based learning and play.

3. Procedure

a. Implementation

1. Risk Assessment

- Conduct a site-specific risk assessment for each water-based activity (inflatable water park, splash park, pool-based excursion).
- Document hazards, control measures, staffing ratios, emergency access, and supervision zones.

2. Parental Consent

- Obtain written consent for all water-based excursions/incursions, including emergency contacts and medical information.

3. Staff Competency

- Ensure all supervising staff hold up-to-date:
 - First Aid and CPR certifications
 - Pool Lifeguard or Water Safety Training (if applicable)
 - Child supervision qualifications
- Staff will complete a pre-activity briefing and review emergency procedures.

4. Child Preparation

- Record each child's swimming ability and restrict activities to suitable zones for skill levels.
- Provide orientation on rules, equipment use, sun safety, and hydration.

5. Equipment and Environment

- Check inflatable water parks and splash park equipment for certification, stability, and cleanliness.
- Ensure lifejackets, rescue equipment, and first aid kits are available on site.

6. Supervision

- Allocate staff to designated zones and maintain direct visual supervision at all times.
- Ratios must exceed regulatory minimums during all water-based activities.

7. Emergency Management

- Follow the service's Water Safety Emergency Plan, including:
 - Drowning or injury response
 - Missing child procedures
 - Evacuation procedures and communication with emergency services

b. Location of Policy and Documents

- Hard copy in the Service Policy and Procedure folder at the main office
- Electronic copy on the staff shared drive / service management system
- Templates and supporting documents include:

- Water-based risk assessment template
- Swimming ability record sheet
- Parental consent forms
- Incident/accident report forms
- Emergency plan checklist

4. Systems to Monitor

- Regular audits of water-based activities, equipment, and supervision practices
- Monthly staff debriefs to discuss incidents, near misses, and improvements
- Incident reporting and analysis to inform ongoing policy updates
- Family and child feedback on comfort and safety of water activities
- Annual review of Water Safety Policy and Procedure aligned with NQS standards

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure all water-based activities comply with relevant legislation, standards, and best practice guidelines (Education and Care Services National Law, National Quality Standard, SafeWork NSW). - Provide adequate resources, funding, and insurance for water-based programs. - Approve all excursions, incursions, and water activities, including inflatable water parks and splash parks. - Ensure Water Safety Policy and Procedure are current, accessible, and reviewed at least annually. - Support staff training in water safety, first aid, CPR, and emergency procedures. - Monitor incident reports and follow up on systemic improvements.
Centre Director / Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversee the implementation of Water Safety Procedures across all programs. - Conduct and approve site-specific risk assessments for each water-based activity. - Allocate qualified staff to supervise designated areas, ensuring staff-to-child ratios exceed minimum regulatory requirements. - Ensure staff are competent in emergency response, first aid, and supervision of water activities. - Liaise with families regarding water activities, including collecting consent forms, medical information, and swimming ability records. - Maintain and audit records of risk assessments, incidents, and staff

	<p>qualifications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct pre-activity briefings for staff and children, emphasizing safety rules and emergency procedures. - Lead emergency response if an incident occurs.
Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain direct visual supervision of children at all times in water areas. - Implement risk control measures as documented in risk assessments. - Ensure children wear appropriate safety equipment (life jackets, footwear, sun protection). - Monitor children’s swimming abilities and ensure participation in suitable zones. - Conduct safety briefings with children prior to water activities. - Respond immediately to emergencies, providing first aid or initiating rescue procedures as needed. - Document incidents, near misses, and observations promptly. - Report hazards or equipment issues to Centre Director immediately. - Encourage children to practice safe behaviours and reinforce rules consistently.
Volunteer / Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist educators in supervision under direct guidance, never assuming sole responsibility. - Support setup and pack-up of equipment safely. - Observe children and report concerns, hazards, or incidents immediately to supervising staff. - Follow all safety procedures, rules, and emergency protocols. - Assist in recording observations, swimming assessments, or incident documentation as directed.
Family / Carer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide accurate and up-to-date information about their child’s health, swimming ability, allergies, or medical conditions. - Sign informed consent forms for water-based activities. - Reinforce safety rules and expectations with their child. - Communicate concerns or special requirements to the service before activities. - Support follow-up actions after incidents, if required.
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow all educator instructions and water safety rules. - Wear appropriate safety equipment when required. - Stay within designated zones and supervised areas. - Immediately notify staff of hazards, injuries, or if they feel unwell. - Engage in activities safely, respecting peers and the environment. - Learn and apply basic water safety practices, such as walking on wet surfaces and keeping a safe distance from inflatables.