

ECEC Policy 3

Water Safety

Controlled Document

Approval rating
4

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Document Owner:	Manager – Early Childhood Education & Care		Approved by:	Executive Manager – Children & Youth Services	
Reviewed by:	Project Officer – Early Childhood Quality & Risk Education & Care				

Statement

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 Service environment. Children will be supervised at all times during water play experiences to help keep children safe in and around water and support children's learning in a safe environment.

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 Service environment.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors (including contractors) of the Service.

Implementation

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.

Water Hazards

The National Regulations make reference to 'water hazards' however the term is not expressly defined. In this policy, a water hazard is defined as anything that can hold 5cm of water and fit a child's nose and mouth and a 'water hazard' may include:

- large bodies of water such as dams, creeks, river or pooling water, swimming pool, portable pools and spas, jetted bathtubs (or Jacuzzis)
- fishponds
- smaller bodies of water such as baths, mop buckets
- sinks, basins
- water features, such as a wishing well
- containers for feeding animals
- water troughs, containers for paddling- clam shells
- beach

The approved provider/nominated supervisor/responsible person will:

- adhere to all obligations under the *Education and Care National Law and Regulations*
- complete detailed risk assessments that identify and assess risks associated with any water hazards and water-based activities
- ensure adequate supervision is provided when participating in water activities including:
 - direct and constant monitoring of children
 - careful and intentional positioning of educators
 - scanning and moving around the environment
 - observing play and anticipating behaviour
 - ensuring higher adult to child ratios ensuring no child is left unattended when in proximity to water
- provide direction and education to educators, staff and families on the importance of children's safety and supervision in and around water
- ensure health and safety practices incorporate approaches to safe storage of water and water play

- ensure premises adjacent to or providing access to any water hazards that cannot be adequately supervised at all times (e.g., dams, swimming pool) are to be isolated from children by a child resistant barrier or fence
- ensure there are no items near fencing that children could climb up onto to gain access to a water hazard (pot plants, boxes, chairs)
- conduct a risk assessment in accordance with Regulation 101 prior to taking children on an excursion; consider any water hazards and any risks associated with water-based activities before an excursion/incursion is approved
- ensure at least one educator who holds current approved first aid qualifications, including emergency life support and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, is in attendance at the service at all times
- display a Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) guide near any swimming pool, wading pool, or body of water
- ensure hot water is inaccessible to children, including hot drinks accessed by educators, staff or families
- ensure the regulatory authority is notified within 24 hours of becoming aware of a serious incident.

Educators will:

- provide active supervision when children are participating in water activities including:
 - supervise children near water at all times
 - never leave children alone near any water
 - direct and constant monitoring of children
 - scanning and moving around the environment
 - observing play and anticipating behaviour
- ensure children in a bath (if required) are
 - directly supervised at all times; and
 - remain within an arm's reach of an educator
- ensure fish / frog ponds and water features that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times and/or pose an unacceptable risk to children are guarded or effective barriers are in place
- complete a daily Safety Inspection of premises to ensure that all hazards are known 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.
- utilise water activities in appropriate weather 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
- monitor all taps on the premises that children have access to and ensure they are turned off securely when not in use
- make inaccessible to children all water containers, e.g., mop buckets, nappy buckets
- empty wading pools immediately after every use and store to prevent the collection of water, e.g., upright
- check for and empty any water that has collected in holes or containers after rainfall or watering gardens
- ensure water troughs are not used without a stand to keep it off the ground
- ensure children remain standing on the ground whilst using the water trough
- ensure buckets of water for soaking toys or clothing are inaccessible to children
- ensure water troughs or containers for water play are filled to a safe level and emptied into the garden areas after each use
- discourage children from drinking from these water activities (as above)
- ensure laundry, storerooms and educator areas are to have **Staff only** signs on doors to remind adults to close doors behind them
- teach children about staying safe in and around water
- ensure wading pools are hygienically cleaned, disinfected and chlorinated appropriately:
 - on a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant
 - wash away disinfectant before filling pool
 - add Chlorine to pool before children used the pool
 - check chlorine levels frequently
 - 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

Operational Safety

- Water tanks will be labelled with “**Do Not Drink**” signage and the children will be supervised in this area to make sure they are not accessing this water for drinking

- Educators will discuss with the children the use of water tank water and how it differs from drinking water
- Hot water accessible to children will be maintained at the temperature of 45.C° which will be tested annually. (Australian standard AS 3498)
- Hot drinks are not to be consumed near children by educators, students or visitors
- Water for pets at the Service must be changed daily and only be accessible to children when educators are present.

Important: Parents will be notified as soon as practicable but within 24 hours if their child is involved in an incident/accident at the Service or while under Service care. Details of the incident/accident will be recorded on an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*.

Regulation 176: If the incident/accident situation, or event presents imminent or severe risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of the child or if an ambulance was called in response to the emergency (not as a precaution) the regulatory authority will be notified within 24 hours. Educators will 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.

Consequences of Policy Violations:

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or contract. The severity of the consequences will depend on the nature and impact of the violation, as determined by CatholicCare Wollongong. People and Culture will review each case individually to determine appropriate actions based on the circumstances.

Related Policies

Administration of First Aid Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Excursion/Incursion Policy	Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Sun Safe Policy
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Resources

Water Safety Procedure

Key Resources

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
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.
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Relevant Legislation

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS/EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
Sec. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Sec. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
25(1)(c)	Additional information about proposed education and care services premises
12	Meaning of a serious incident
101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursions
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
122	Educators must be working directly with children to be included in ratios
126	Centre based services-general educator qualifications
168(2)(a)(iii)	Education and care service must have policies and procedures in relation to- Water safety, including safety during any water-based activities
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
176	Time to notify the certain information to the Regulatory Authority

Induction and ongoing training

Induction and ongoing training will be implemented on commencement and during staff meetings as required, focusing on this policy and related procedures.

Information will be shared with relief/casual educators on induction, and as relevant to the environments that they are working in, their shift responsibilities, and the children in their care.

Sources

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

ACECQA. (2023). [Policy and procedure guidelines- Water Safety Guidelines](#)

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023)

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (Amended 2023).

KidSafe (2021). Water Safety. <https://kidsafe.com.au/water-safety/>

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): www.nhmrc.gov.au

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Victoria Government. [Better Health Channel. Water safety for children.](#)

[Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

Policy created/ Reviewed

Date	Major, Minor or Administrative	Description of Revision(s)
July 2025	Major	New Policy – adapted from Childcare Centre Desktop. Merged ELC and OSCH policies.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any necessary updates or modifications to ensure compliance with legislative and standard requirements will be communicated to all employees, contractors, and representatives of CatholicCare Wollongong.

Other situations may include:

- Following an incident, to identify gaps and strengthen data protection measures.
- adoption of new tools or systems.
- mergers, restructuring, or shifts in services that impact on current processes.
- As part of routine evaluations to ensure policies remain effective and aligned with best practices.
- If client/s provide feedback or complaints, prompting a review for improvement.
- When inefficiencies or errors are identified.

The agency will formally review this Policy every three years as part of the policy's known life cycle period.

Type of Policy	
Approval rating 1	New agency policy/adjustments that are legislated or are a Diocesan directive. Minimal collaboration required.
Approval rating 2	High level agency policies that are developed at executive management level (such as employee entitlements) go to CELT for final review before COO recommendation for approval by the CEO.
Approval rating 3	Operational agency policies are endorsed by the QSC to ensure policy is applicable across all program areas. Then go to CELT for final review before COO recommendation for approval by the CEO.
Approval rating 4	Program specific where it is only the individual program that need to ensure that the policy meets practice requirements. No QSC, CELT or CEO. However, if it is a new policy, courtesy email outlining what they are should go to the CEO, COO and EM Quality & Risk (EM Q&R) for information only.