

Education and Care Services References

National Quality Standards

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.

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.
2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyle	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.

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials, and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.

Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations

S. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
4 (1)	Definition regular outing
73	Educational program
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
101	Conduct of risks assessment for excursion
102	Authorisations for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment

109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
136	First Aid qualifications
168	Policies and procedures are required in relation to enrolment and orientation
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

Policy Statement

‘Being adventurous is about creating opportunities for children (and adults) to explore and test their own capacities, to manage risk and to grow as capable, resourceful and resilient children and adults.’ (National Quality Standard, Professional Learning Program, 2013).

Outdoor spaces invite open-ended play and interactions, physically active play and games, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural world and the interdependence between people, animals, plants, lands and waters providing opportunities for children to engage with all concepts of sustainability through environmental education. (Early Years Learning Framework, V2.0, p.23).

We acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult to find the right balance between allowing children to engage in adventurous play in our physical environment indoors and outdoors, whilst preventing serious injuries. Our Service is committed to supporting families to understand the importance and benefits of risk taking through adventurous play for their children. We believe that for children to learn effectively and prepare for life-long skills, it’s important for them to experience challenging situations in our physical environment that is managed effectively to minimise negative outcomes, not eliminate risk.

Our natural, local environments assist children to gain an understanding of nature and gain a respect for the living and non-living environments within their world. By more involvement and play within the Australian bush, children can create and be inspired by nature and the natural resources it provides. Children are also able to gain a better understanding of our First Nations people the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are connected to the land, water, plants, animals, mother earth and father sky within the natural bushland of Australia.

Purpose

We acknowledge the important developmental benefits of adventurous and risky play such as psychological, perceptual, physical/motor skills and social development. (Sandseter, 2010). We encourage educators to support children’s curiosity by providing them with opportunities to access risks and manage situations appropriately. We aim to support and respond to children’s physical development by offering an environment that provides open-ended, dynamic, stimulating and challenging learning opportunities for all children. We recognise the importance of investigating, researching and being involved within the natural environment of our surrounding bushland in Australia and learning and using natural resources found within our local environment for play and

sustainable living. By encouraging children to understand our natural resources and environment they are building an understanding of the First Nations People within Australia and learning ways of being more sustainable for our world.

Scope

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

What is adventurous or risky play?

The Risky Play Position Statement for Young Australian Children recognises the importance of risky play for all children's health and wellbeing. Risky play is defined *"as play that is exploratory and challenging with often unpredictable outcomes. It is child-initiated and physically engages all the senses leading to positive learning and developmental outcomes."*

In our endeavour to create a physical environment that is always safe for children, we may be creating a physical environment that inadvertently limits adventure and risk-taking. The National Quality Standard (2.1.3) aims to encourage *"the educational leader and educators to foster physical and psychological development in children by encouraging physical activity that is challenging, extends thinking and offers opportunities to collaborate and take considered and appropriate risks."* (2024, p: 168).

Implementation

Our Service will continually determine whether a learning environment is dangerous, or a potential learning opportunity that may encourage risk taking.

Children are faced with risks every day. Rather than trying to eliminate all risks from children's play, our Service will identify the possible risks and make informed decisions about whether the benefit for children's development and learning outweighs the risks and protect children from any potential harm. We will ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury (S. 167 National Law).

In addition, educators will conduct daily safety checks to identify potential risks and hazards. According to Curtis (2010), a hazard is something that is inherently dangerous and needs to be immediately remedied.

For example, a climbing structure with sharp edges, a broken fence or gate.

Educators will use positive language to support and encourage children to engage in adventurous and risky play, modify activities to ensure all experiences are inclusive and promote competence and exploration.

The approved provider, management, nominated supervisor will ensure:

- that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met
- all educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers they have knowledge of and adhere to this policy

- risk assessments are conducted to identify potential hazards, assess the risks and minimise any risks that could potentially cause harm or injury to children
- an Excursion/Incursion Risk Assessment for Bush Kinder/ Forest Play is conducted to identify potential hazards, assess the risks and minimise any risks that could potentially cause harm or injury to children and approved by the approved provider (conducted at least once in a 12-month period)
- the risk assessment is reviewed regularly and prior to any Bush Kinder/ Forest Play session
- the risk assessment is approved by the approved provider
- parent/guardian written authorisation for a regular outing is provided and recorded in the child's enrolment record if Bush Kinder/Forest Play is considered a 'regular outing' under Reg. 4(1) (written authorisation is only required once every 12 months)
- the Administration of First Aid Policy and procedures are always followed while children are attending the Bush Kinder/ Forest Play
- to engage in critical reflection as a team and with the children about the risks and benefits of a new activity or process (see: ACECQA- [Talking about Practice: Adventurous Play. Developing a culture of risky play](#))
- a daily inspection of the outdoor learning environment is undertaken to identify any potential risk of harm to children as per our Health and Safety Policy
- 'active' supervision techniques are implemented, including regular attendance checks
- educators provide direct, constant and proximal monitoring of children undertaking activities that
- involve some risk and recognising when the ratio of educators to children needs to be increased
- (e.g.: carpentry, water activities, climbing)
- the regulatory authority is notified of any serious incident within 24 hours of the incident
- parents are notified as soon as practicable but within 24 hours if their child is involved in a serious incident/situation at the service. Details of the incident/situation are to be recorded on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record.
- a review of practices is conducted following an incident, including an assessment of areas for improvement
- they actively encourage and acknowledge children's competence to assess risks and possible consequences (It is important to involve children in the risk assessment process, as this provides added benefits of being able to talk through hazards, learn about assessing and managing appropriate risks for themselves)
- children of all ages and abilities are provided with authentic learning experiences aimed to challenge children's capabilities, manage risk and grow as capable resourceful and resilient children (and adults)
- children are encouraged to take risks using positive language, guidance and enthusiasm
- they provide a challenging and adventurous learning environment that supports children's curiosity, adventure and motivation
- children's growth mindset is respected and educators acknowledge them as competent and capable learners
- educators trust in children's abilities and judgement whilst scaffolding their learning
- children learn new skills in a safe environment through supervision and adherence to the correct educator to child ratios

- they mentor and support families' knowledge about the benefits of providing children with adventurous play experiences
- children are not denied the value of an experience because it may appear to be dangerous
- their duty of care is upheld and taken seriously.

Adventurous/risky play encourages children to:

- Problem-solve
- Develop skills in negotiating (including risks)
- Build resilience, perseverance and persistence
- Extend their balance, orientation skills and coordination
- Become aware of their own capabilities and limits
- Make appropriate risk decisions
- Develop self-regulation
- Take acceptable risks
- Make decisions
- Learn about the consequences (positive and negative) of risk taking
- Gain confidence and independence
- Become creative and curious
- Learn how to use equipment safely

What is bush kinder/forest play?

Our Service provides children the opportunity to regularly participate in an in-nature program as a part of their enrolment. Children have the opportunity to explore and engage with the natural world, fostering a connection to the environment and an appreciation for nature. An in-nature pedagogy incorporates time spent by children and educators outside the approved children's education and care service premises with a focus on nature. [ACECQA, NQF Review (2019)].

The purpose of the Bush Kinder/ Forest Play should be clearly identified by providing information on how the Bush Kinder / Forst Play supports the educational program and contributes to the outcomes for children. Our Service will conduct a risk assessment prior to Bush Kinder/ Forest Play with consideration given to:

- dog awareness with children and educators
- danger of snake and suitable bandages in first aid kit
- guidance to children about stranger danger
- what emergencies may occur and what we need to be prepared for
- medication needs and possible illnesses
- authorisations for all children prior to participation in the program
- sun safety clothing and sunscreen
- water safety (if applicable)
- weather conditions
- travel and possible unexpected delay
- ratios maintained in both service and excursion
- supervision appropriate for children's developmental needs
- child safe principles

- procedures and policies relating to excursions and transportation to be followed before children attend Bush Kinder or Forest Play, including authorisations

Items to be taken on bush kinder/forest play

The approved provider/ nominated supervisor must ensure that the following items are taken during participation of Bush Kinder/ Forest Play, as per the risk assessment:

- appropriate number of suitably equipped first aid kits
- fully charged and operating mobile phone
- emergency contact information details for all children participating
- medication for children requiring medical and relevant medical management plans
- items required for Bush Kinder/ Forest Play - such as sunscreen, hats, change of clothes, other equipment, wet weather gear
- child's attendance record
- food and water as required
- nappy change equipment if required

Bush kinder/forest play encourages children to:

- use natural items for sustainability
- develop skills in natural local environments
- build a respect and understanding of local customs and traditions
- build knowledge of Australian and Torres Strait Islander People
- develop an understanding of First Nations connection to land, water, plants, animals, Mother Earth and Father Sky
- develop a personal connection and understanding with nature
- help to make future appropriate decisions for our world
- develop a sense of wellbeing, inner strength and confidence from nature

Related Policies

- Administration of First aid Policy
- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisation Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Delivery of Children to and Collection from Education and Care Services Premises Policy
- Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Excursion/Incursion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Physical Environment Policy
- Snake Awareness Policy
- Sun Safety Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

Policy Review

- The Service will review the Adventurous (Risky and Nature) Play Policy and related documents regularly or as current information arises.
- Families are encouraged to collaborate with the Service to review the Policies and Procedures.
- Educators and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

Policy Version

Version	Version changes
1.0	New policy
2.0	Minor grammatical changes
3.0	• policy maintenance • addition of position statement for risky play from Play Australia • additional information added re: regular outing/written authorisation required • sources checked and repaired as required

Source Acknowledgments

- Consultation with management, educators, staff, and families
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