

Water, Sun and Heat Policy



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DCC Network/All Organisation Information/DCC Policies/Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health & Safety			

1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education has a commitment to providing children and workers with a safe environment that provides shade and other sun protection to support children’s learning and opportunities for play, and procedures to keep children safe in and around water and during hot weather.

2. Rationale

Education and Care Services National Regulations require Approved Providers to have policies and procedures relating to sun protection and water safety, including safety during water-based activities to ensure children are protected from harm, and for these policies and procedures to be followed, kept available, and for families to be notified of changes. Regulations also require water hazards and water-based activities to be included in risk assessments where relevant and adequate supervision to be provided. In addition, NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation requires businesses to ensure workers have a safe work environment, including in extremes of heat and cold.

This policy gives guidance on requirements of how educators and staff are to manage any risks around water, how children are to be protected from exposure to UV radiation from the sun and extremes of temperature whilst maintaining indoor and outdoor play experiences. The policy also provides parameters for modifying or cancelling services during extreme heat.

For more information about:

- The provision of shade in the physical environment, refer to *NQS3.20 Physical Environment Policy*, and
- Managing bushfire risk during extreme heat events, refer to *NQS2.21 Bush Fire Policy*.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including students and trainees, volunteers, and Board members.

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board as Approved Provider to ensure that:

- Risk assessments for excursions include consideration of any water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities,
- Risk assessments for the transportation of children other than for excursions include consideration of water hazards,

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- Outdoor spaces provided at centre-based premises include adequate shaded areas to protect children from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun,
- There is no swimming pool on the service premises unless the swimming pool existed on the premises before 6 November 1996,
- Copies of this policy and procedures are readily accessible to employees and volunteers, and are available for inspection by families,
- Reasonable steps are taken to ensure that employees and volunteers understand their responsibilities and follow the requirements of the policy and procedures, and
- Families are notified at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or significantly impact the service's education and care of children or significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service.

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to:

- Carry out or delegate the responsibilities of the Board as listed above,
- Ensure SunSmart membership is maintained every three years by updating and submitting this policy,
- Ensure regular servicing and maintenance of the Mobile truck to minimise risk of breakdown during extreme heat,
- Implement a check-in system for educators travelling during extreme heat,
- Authorise the cancellation of services during extreme heat,
- Support nominated supervisors to find education and care options for children in other services where service is cancelled,
- Support nominated supervisors to allocate alternative work for educators where service is cancelled,
- Support nominated supervisors to contact families and for children to be safely collected where service is cancelled, and
- Notify the Regulatory Authority where service is cancelled.

It is the responsibility of Nominated Supervisors or Responsible Persons to:

- Include consideration of water hazards and water-based activities in risk assessments for excursions and the transportation of children in line with *NQS2.90 Excursion Policy* and *NQS2.23 Safe Transport and Arrival Policy*,
- Support educators to understand the risks to children associated with water hazards and water-based activities and how to implement and maintain effective controls,
- Ensure children only participate in swimming, wading or paddling activities with written authorisation from a parent or guardian and appropriate educator to child ratios in place and adequate supervision,
- Ensure regular checks are completed that include access to water hazards in the indoor and outdoor environment,
- Support educators to implement sun safe practices,
- Incorporate sun protection into learning programs, including encouraging children to take leadership roles in managing sun safety,
- Provide sun protection information to families on enrolment, including information about appropriate clothing, hats and sunscreen,
- Support educators to follow extreme heat principles when the temperature is 35°C or higher, including staying hydrated, modifying physical activity, and taking rest breaks,

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- Notify the General Manager if internal building temperatures reach and remain for one hour at 37°C or higher, and
- Implement emergency response as outlined in *NQS2.80K Emergency Management Plan* and *NQS2.80 Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy* and procedures if there is a power outage during extreme heat.

It is the responsibility of Mobile Service Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person to:

- Notify the General Manager if the forecast or actual temperature is 43°C or higher,
- Where Mobile Service is cancelled due to extreme heat, support educators to complete rostered hours in another service or to complete allocated office tasks, as instructed by the General Manager,
- Notify families to collect children where the service has been cancelled after service commences,
- Ensure the mobile truck is stocked with sufficient water and a satellite phone, and
- Use a check-in system when travelling during extreme heat to notify the General Manager or Administration of departure, expected arrival and safe arrival times.

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- Complete a risk assessment before any children engage in water-based activities at the service or on excursion and ensure all risks are eliminated or minimised,
- Closely supervise children at all times during water-based activities or near a water hazard and never leave any child unattended near water,
- Support children to maintain good hygiene during water-based activities and wear appropriate clothing that protects them from UV radiation,
- Be alert to water hazards in the education and care environment, including uncovered water containers and opportunities for children to access water hazards,
- Share and promote sun protection information and resources and daily UV information with educators, families, and children,
- Check the UV level before organising or supervising outdoor activities and implement sun protection measures when the UV level is 3 or higher,
- As part of Workplace Health and Safety and role modelling, demonstrate sun safe practices by wearing sun-protective clothing and hats, applying SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen and promoting the use of shade when working outdoors,
- Discuss sun protection with children and demonstrate a positive and proactive approach to the management of sun protection in the service,
- Provide information to families about sun safe practices and encourage them to provide suitable hats and clothing for each day their child is at the service and to demonstrate sun safe behaviours when outside,
- Follow principles for managing extreme heat when the temperature is 35° or higher, including staying hydrated, modifying physical activity, and taking rest breaks,
- Maintain an understanding of the signs of heat stress in children and adults and how to respond, and
- Provide information to families from November to March about staying safe during extreme heat, including the dangers of leaving children in vehicles.

5. Definitions

Swimming pool – Defined in the NSW Swimming Pools Act 1992 as an excavation, structure, or vessel that is capable of being filled with water to a depth greater than 300 millimetres, and that is solely or principally used for the purpose of swimming, wading, paddling or any other human aquatic activity, Does not include anything situated in a bathroom.

Extreme heat or heatwave – A period of unusual and uncomfortable hot weather that could negatively affect human health, community infrastructure (such as power supply and public transport) and other services. For the purpose of this policy, extreme heat is defined as temperatures of 35°C or higher.

6. Guidelines

a) Water Safety

River Region Early Education’s approach to water safety is guided by the following principles:

- Children do not have access to bodies of water without direct supervision,
- Fences and gates are adequate to ensure children cannot access bodies of water,
- Regular safety checks are conducted to identify water hazards and implement controls, including hot water hazards,
- Risk assessments for excursions, the transportation of children, and water-based activities include consideration of water hazards,
- Educators have current first aid training that includes Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and a CPR Guide is displayed near any body of water,
- Any container being used for paddling, wading, or swimming is filled to less than 300mm depth, and
- Water containers are securely covered or immediately emptied after use and hygienically cleaned and stored so they cannot collect water.

Regular safety checks are identified in *NQS3.20 Physical Environment Policy* and include Building and Equipment Checklist, Hot Water Checklist and Daily Safety Checklists. These include checks of:

- Items or objects near fences that could allow a child to climb over the fence and access a water hazard or be unsupervised,
- Gates and locks to ensure they are in working order,
- The outdoor environment after rain or watering to ensure water has not collected in containers or holes,
- Water containers, such as nappy buckets, ponds, wading pools, or water troughs to ensure they are securely covered or emptied, and
- The temperature of hot water is below 45°C from taps accessible to children.

Swimming activities

Where a water-based activity is to be organised where children will be swimming, paddling, or wading in a swimming pool, the following is required:

- A risk assessment is completed that includes supervision requirements based on the ages and stages of development of the children and hygiene requirements,
- Children only participate with written authorisation from a parent or guardian,

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- Children are closely supervised at all times and are never left unattended in or near water,
- All children wear appropriate clothing, including sun protection,
- Children are supported to use toilets before entering the water and to understand correct hygiene practices,
- If a child passes a bowel motion in the pool, pool management are notified, or the pool is cleaned and disinfected (whichever is applicable).

Children who have diarrhoea, nasal infections, or open sores should be excluded from the activities.

b) Sun Safety

UV radiation from the sun can cause sunburn, skin and eye damage and skin cancer, with infants and toddlers up to four years of age being particularly vulnerable to UV damage due to lower levels of melanin and a thinner stratum corneum (the outermost layer of skin). UV damage accumulated during childhood and adolescence is strongly associated with an increased risk of skin cancer later in life.

River Region Early Education partners with Cancer Council NSW through their SunSmart program to reduce exposure to UV and future skin cancer risk, meet sun protection regulatory and duty of care requirements, and influence good sun protection behaviours through education. SunSmart status is maintained by updating and submitting this policy to the Cancer Council NSW every three years.

River Region Early Education's approach to sun safety is guided by the following principles:

- The UV Index is monitored daily, and sun protection measures implemented for all children when the UV Index is 3 or higher, including while on excursions,
- Infants under the age of 12 months are kept out of direct sun when UV levels are 3 or higher and their clothing, hats and shade positioning is checked regularly,
- Outdoor learning spaces have adequate shade and children are encouraged to use them during play,
- UV levels and daily sun protection times are promoted to educators, children and families and are used to plan outdoor experiences, for example minimising time outside during the middle of the day,
- Sun protection is incorporated into learning programs and children are encouraged to take leadership roles in sun protection measures where able, including putting on hats and sunscreen,
- Families are provided with information about sun safety and encouraged to provide sun-protective clothing and hats for their child and demonstrate sun protection behaviours when outdoors, and
- Employees role model sun safe practices by wearing sun-protective clothing and hats and applying SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen when working directly with children outdoors.

Checking UV levels

In NSW, UV levels are:

- High enough (UV 3 or above) to damage unprotected skin most months of the year,
- Particularly high during the summer months, and

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- Highest in the middle of the day.

Educators are responsible for checking UV levels for the day and ensuring sun protection measures are implemented whenever UV levels are 3 or higher.

UV levels can be checked through most weather apps or the Bureau of Meteorology website <http://www.bom.gov.au/> and UV levels and daily UV times can be monitored with the Cancer Council Victoria SunSmart app.

Sun protection measures

Sun protection measures can be implemented at any time and are required whenever UV levels are 3 or higher.

Seek shade

Services implement this sun protection measure by:

- Providing sufficient shade in outdoor areas of the service and undertaking a shade audit at least once a year (see *NQS3.20 Physical Environment Policy*),
- Considering the availability of shade when planning outdoor experiences, including during excursions, and relocating resources if needed as shade areas move during the day,
- Encouraging children to understand the benefits of shade and to use it for sun protection,
- Encouraging children who do have appropriate hats or sun-protective clothing to choose shaded areas while outside, and
- Including checking of hot surfaces during Daily Safety Checks.

Slip on sun-protective clothing

Services implement this sun protection measure by:

- Requiring educators and children to wear loose fitting clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible, especially shoulders, back and stomach,
- Recommending children wear shirts with sleeves and collars and having River Region Early Education polo shirts available for sale to families,
- Recommending children wear knee-length or longer style shorts, skirts and dresses, and
- Providing additional clothing if a child does not have suitable clothing, for example a polo shirt to cover a singlet top or dress or encouraging that child to remain in shaded areas.

Slap on a hat

Services implement this sun protection measure by:

- Requiring educators and children to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears, either:
 - broad-brimmed hats (with a brim size of at least 6cm and 7.5cm for adults),
 - bucket hats with a deep crown (and brim size of at least 5cm and 6cm for adults),or
 - legionnaire-style hats,
- Providing suitable hats for educators as part of the optional River Region Early Education uniform,
- Having suitable River Region Early Education hats available for sale to families, and

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- Providing a hat if a child does not have a suitable one or encouraging that child to remain in shaded areas.

Slop on sunscreen

Services implement this sun protection measure by:

- Requiring educators and children aged 6 months or older to apply SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapplying it every 2 hours or more frequently if sweating or swimming,
- Including authorisation for applying sunscreen during enrolment and enrolment updates using NQS2.30 A3 Authorisation of Preventative Remedies Form (see NQS2.30 Administration of Medication Policy)
- Requiring families to provide an alternative sunscreen where a child has an allergy or sensitivity or encouraging the child to remain in shaded areas if the alternative is unavailable,
- Storing sunscreens in a cool, dry place and monitoring expiry dates, and
- Encouraging children aged 3 years or older to apply their own sunscreen under supervision by an educator to help develop independent skills to ready them for school.

Additional measures to protect babies and infants

Babies and infants aged under 12 months are more sensitive to UV radiation.

- All infants under 12 months are kept out of direct sun when UV levels are 3.0 or higher.
- Physical protection such as shade, clothing and broad-brimmed hats are the best sun protection measures.
- If babies are kept out of the sun or well protected from UV radiation by clothing, hats and shade, then sunscreen need only be used occasionally on very small areas of a baby's skin.
- The widespread use of sunscreen on babies under 6 months old is not recommended.

c) Extreme Heat

Heat is a hazard in Australian workplaces and poses a potential health risk to children and adults.

- Hot weather can affect a baby or child because their bodies cannot adjust to changes in temperature as efficiently as adults.
- Babies and children sweat less, reducing their bodies' ability to cool down,
- Babies and children generate more heat during physical activity than adults and are at risk of overheating and developing a heat-related illness, and
- Heat can make existing illnesses worse and working in heat can lead to workers suffering serious illness and lead to increased accidents.

River Region Early Education considers extreme heat to be an outside temperature of 35°C or higher. During extreme heat, the following principles apply:

- Encourage children and adults to drink water frequently, even if they do not feel thirsty,
- Keep indoor spaces cool by reducing direct sunlight and using fans or air conditioners to regulate temperature,
- Limit vigorous physical activity to cooler parts of the day,

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- Slow the pace of outdoor tasks, increase the frequency of breaks and/or share tasks between educators,
- Ensure educators know how to recognise signs of heat stress in children and adults and how to appropriately respond to minimise harm,
- Cancel services if internal temperatures reach and remain for one hour at 37°C or higher, and
- Cancel Mobile service if the forecast or actual temperature for the day is 43°C or higher.

Keep hydrated

Encourage and remind children and adults to drink water regularly, even if they do not feel thirsty.

- Older children often forget to drink because they are busy playing. Encourage older child to drink water regularly.
- Breastfed and bottle-fed babies less than six months of age will need to be fed more often in hot weather. Water or other drinks are not needed for babies under 6 months old unless recommended by a medical practitioner.
- Babies six months of age or older can be offered small amounts of cooled boiled water, after or between milk feeds.

Keep the indoor environment cool

- Where possible use blinds or curtains to reduce direct sunlight and turn off lights.
- Set air conditioners between 21-26°C or use fans if available to increase air circulation.
- For the Mobile service, contact the venue representative to turn on air conditioning prior to arrival.
- When feeding babies, place a towel, sheet or a nappy between the adult and the baby to minimise discomfort.

Modify physical activity

- Limit vigorous physical activity to cooler parts of the day,
- Spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings,
- Conduct outdoor physical tasks at a slower pace, such as loading the Mobile truck, raking sandpits, or packing up outdoor resources, and take regular 5-minute breaks every:
 - 0-32°C – 60 minutes,
 - 33-35°C – 40 minutes,
 - 36-38°C – 30 minutes,
 - 39-40°C – 20 minutes,
 - 41-42°C – 10 minutes,
 - 43°C and over – 5 minutes,
- Share or rotate jobs between workers, and

Where high temperatures mean tasks cannot be completed within working hours, additional paid rest time will be provided.

Additional measures for the Mobile Service

There are additional risks for educators and children in our Mobile Service during extreme heat as workers are travelling longer distances and premises are not purpose-built.

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Safety while travelling during extreme heat is maintained by:

- Maintaining a supply of water bottles in the truck with a minimum of one litre per educator,
- Carrying a satellite phone while travelling, and
- Sending a text message to the General Manager or Administration when leaving a venue to notify them of the departure time and expected arrival time and again on safe arrival. If the truck does not arrive within 10 minutes of the expected arrival time, an employee will be directed to drive to retrieve educators.

Power outage in extreme heat conditions

- Power outages will be reported to Electricity Provider Essential Energy 132080. Ensure that the fact that young children are being cared for at the address is emphasised.
- Strategies such as closing doors and windows and closing window coverings will be implemented. Where possible children will be limited to quiet and non-vigorous activities and cool, wet cloths used to keep children cool.
- Internal building temperatures will be monitored using thermometers in the service during power outages by the Nominated Supervisor / Responsible Person.
- If the internal building temperature rises to and remains at 37°C or more for 1 hour, the General Manager or Approved Provider will be notified and the service will be cancelled for the day.

Cancellation of service due to extreme heat

See NQS2.25 Water, Sun and Heat Procedures

Service will be cancelled where extreme heat poses a significant risk to the health, safety, and wellbeing of children and educators. The following conditions are considered sufficient for cancellation:

- Internal building temperatures reach and remain for one hour at 37°C or higher, and
- For the Mobile Service only, the Bureau of Meteorology forecast temperature or actual temperature is 43°C or higher.

Cancellation of service is approved and managed by the General Manager and includes:

- Ensuring families are notified and asked to collect their children if service has already commenced,
- Supporting nominated supervisors to find education and care options for children in other services or premises where it is available,
- Supporting nominated supervisors to allocate alternative work for educators where service is cancelled, and
- Notifying the Regulatory Authority.

Where Mobile Service is unable to proceed at its venue:

- The service may be relocated to Deniliquin Preschool facilities if they are available with excursion procedures implemented as per *NQS2.90 Excursion Policy* and Mobile fees applied,
- Individual children may be able to access casual vacancies at Deniliquin Childcare if they are available, and

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- Educators can complete office duties or work in other services, as directed by the General Manager, Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person.

7. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Education and Care Services National Regulation	
78	Food and beverages
101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
102C	Conduct of risk assessment for transporting of children by the education and care service
114	Outdoor space – shade
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures - a) health and safety, including matters relating to ii) sun protection, and iii) water safety
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of changes to policies and procedures
175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
274	Swimming pools (NSW)
Work Health and Safety Regulation (NSW)	
40	Duty in relation to general workplace facilities – f) workers carrying out work in extremes of heat or cold
41	Duty to provide and maintain adequate and accessible facilities
National Quality Standards	
2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
Child Safe Standards	
7	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe, through continual education and training
10	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe
Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes	
Early Years Learning Framework Principles	

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Early Years Learning Framework Practices	
	Play-based learning and intentionality
	Learning environments

8. Related Documents

Doc #	Attachments
NQS2.25A	Water, Sun and Heat Procedures
NQS2.25B	Indicators of Heat Stress Guide

Doc #	Intersections with other key documents
NQS3.20	Physical Environment Policy
NQS2.21	Bush Fire Policy
NQS2.80	Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy
NQS2.80K	Emergency Management Plan
NQS2.30	Administration of Medication Policy
NQS2.30 A3	Authorisation of Preventative Remedies Form
NQS2.90	Excursion Policy
NQS2.23	Safe Transport and Arrival Policy

9. Document Control

Doc #	Doc Title	Version	Approved	Next Review
NQS2.25	Water, Sun and Heat Policy (formerly NQS7.65 Extreme Heat Policy and part of NQS3.20 Physical Environment Policy)	1	March 2024	March 2027
NQS2.25	Water, Sun and Heat Policy (minor changes made at the request of NSW Cancer Council for SunSmart registration)	1a	May 2024	March 2027