

Providing a child safe environment policy

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY

Date Created: July 2011 Date to be reviewed: February 2024 Version No: 8

Policy Statement:

Yarrunga Early Learning Centre Inc. has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the rights and best interests of the child are paramount and that we will provide training, resources, information, and guidance to support this to:

* ensure that the health, safety, and wellbeing of children at Yarrunga is protected at all times. ensure that people educating and caring for children at Yarrunga act in the best interests of the child.
* protect and advocate the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, always.
* maintaining a culture in which children’s rights are respected.
* encouraging active participation from families at Yarrunga, supporting a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children’s health, safety, wellbeing, and development.

Background:

All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that promotes opportunities to thrive with adults who safeguard and advocate for their health, safety, security, and wellbeing including the right to:

* be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults.
* feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people; and
* understand, as early as possible, what is meant by ‘feeling and being safe.’

Scope:

This policy applies to all educators and children at Yarrunga Early Learning Centre

Relevant legislation:

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 99, 158-159, 168 (f), 176

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 165, 167

Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment (Miscellaneous) Regulation 2013

Crimes Act 1900

Ombudsman Act 1974 – Part 3A

Australian Privacy Principles – https://www.oaic.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0009/1125/app-guidelines-july-2019.pdf

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner – [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)

Smoke Fee Environment Act 2000

Location of information:

This information is provided to educators and families on Yarrunga’s web page and available on request.

Reference sources:

Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)

**M**andatory Reporter Guide & training including e-learning presentation – [www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au)

eReporting is available at https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/

Working With Children Check – https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the [Child](http://Child) – [www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au)

Australian Human Rights Commission – [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

Australian Childhood Foundation – www.childhood.org.au

Country Fire Australia- (02) 6043 8820

Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian National Flag protocols [www.pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-flag-protocols](../www.pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-flag-protocols)

Strategies:

**The Physical Environment**

In order to promote a safe physical environment, we will:

* Ensure all equipment and materials used at Yarrunga meet relevant safety standards.
* Ensure that educator’s clean floors and toilets as required and after lunch. (Centre cleaning procedure) A contracted cleaner is employed to thoroughly clean the Centre each evening.
* Remove, repair, or replace worn and damaged buildings, structures, equipment, and resources which may provide a safety risk for children in a timely manner.
* Ensure learning environments are established that provide appropriate child groupings, sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment.
* Organise indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure risk to the health and safety of others are minimised.
* Conduct a risk assessment of Yarrunga’s environment on an annual basis to determine any risks to children’s health and safety.
* Analyse and evaluate the risks associated with identified hazards.
* Determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control identified hazards.
* Review risk assessments after any serious incident report is made to the Regulatory Authority, or annually if no incidents occur.
* Perform daily yard safety checks.
* Ensure smoking is banned within the grounds of, and within four meters of any entrance of an enclosed public space.
* Ensure alcohol and recreational drugs are not consumed on Yarrunga premises at any time while children are being educated and cared for. Small amounts of alcohol may be permitted on specific occasions outside of business hours if approved in advance by the Management Committee, for example the Annual General Meeting (AGM) or staff pack up day but no recreational drugs at any time.
* Performing daily yard checks and monthly indoor checklists.

**Flag Poles:**

The top yard will have three 6 metre flag poles to fly the Australian and First Nations Peoples flags of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island.

* Flags will be raised and lowered following Australian National Flag Protocols from the Australian flags booklet, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
* Poles, flags and ropes will be kept in safe operational condition.

**Yarning Circle and Fire pit**

* The yarning circle contains a fire pit for Indigenous learning and cultural celebration, including bush tucker cooking and smoking ceremonies. All staff and children will adhere to the extensive risk assessment set in place when the fire is in use.
* The CFA (Country Fire Australia) and Local Fire Stations will be contacted to monitor weather and fire recommendations when preparing for a fire experience.
* Ensure children participate in fire safety learning such as “Stop, drop and roll” and “Get down low and go, go ,go” fire evacuation will be practiced in addition to regular drills.
* Staff will ensure extensive supervision and small group ratios are maintained during a fire experience.
* When the fire is out but still hot a barrier will remain up until the fire pit is cool to touch
* When cooking, only one child at a time will be present at the fire with an Educator. Long tongs will be provided for the child to use to ensure they aren’t directly over the heat
* Children aged 0-2yrs will not be in immediate distance of the fire experience.
* Water will be ready for access during the experience.
* Families will sign a permission form in acknowledgement of participation in any fire experience.

**Staffing and Supervision**

* Ensure that enough educators are employed to always ensure adequate supervision of children.
* Manage rosters to not only ensure that adequate numbers of educators are on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements, but that duty of care implications are considered to always ensure adequate supervision.
* Ensure screening and suitability of staff, and volunteers as per the legislation and policy at the time of employment and as part of an ongoing process.
* Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns.

**Child Protection**

* All educators and volunteers of Yarrunga are Mandatory Reporters and are required to report to the Child Protection Helpline (Phone: 133 627 or Report at : https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/) or [www.childstoryreporter.com](http://www.childstoryreporter.com) for Victoria <https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au> or Vic DHHS East Division Intake 1300360391.
* If they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concern about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.
* **See Child Protection Policy.**

**The Approved Provider will ensure that:**

Yarrunga always operates in line with the Education and Care Services National law and National Regulations 2011 regarding the delivery and collection of children.

* All staff have access to relevant professional development.
* The Nominated Supervisor and staff members at Yarrunga who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84).
* Fencing and barriers which enclose outdoor areas used by children at Yarrunga are maintained to ensure they are of a height and design that prevent children from going through, over or under the structure. Considerations about minimising access to Yarrunga by unauthorised people and animals will also influence the height and design of fencing and barriers.
* Sufficient furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment are provided and maintained at Yarrunga in order to support all children to engage and access the program and develop their emerging skills and independence.
* Laundry facilities are maintained in a way that does not pose any risks to children or staff.
* Adequate space requirements are maintained in both the indoor and outdoor environments.
* Toilet, hand washing, and drying facilities are developmentally and age appropriate and located and designed in a way that support safe use and convenient access by children.
* The nappy change areas support safe access and hygienic nappy change routines, and educators and children have ready access to hand washing facilities.
* Yarrunga is well ventilated and has adequate natural light.
* Indoor temperatures are maintained at levels that support children’s safety and wellbeing.
* The play spaces at Yarrunga provide children with opportunities to explore and experience the natural environment.
* The outdoor environment has adequate shaded areas to protect children from ultraviolet radiation from the sun.
* The environment seeks to support convenient access to both indoor and outdoor play activities and to toilet and nappy change facilities according to supervision requirements, children’s independence, and developmental needs.
* Where possible, gardens reflect the local natural habitat and encourage native wildlife into Yarrunga.

**The Nominated Supervisor will:**

* Provide all staff and educators working directly with children a copy of the Mandatory Reporters Guides to assist them in their reporting.
* Ensure that screening and suitability processes are maintained to meet policy and legislated requirements.
* Keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
* Co-operate with other services and/or professionals in the best interest of children and their families.
* Ensure that families are made aware of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide.
* Ensure that all staff who work with children are supported to implement this policy at Yarrunga.
* Protect the rights and dignity of children and families and encourage their participation in decision making at the service.
* Ensure that plants are selected to minimise risks to children. No poisonous or dangerous plants will be included in Yarrunga’s environment. See fact sheet on Poisonous Plants – [www.kidsafensw.org](http://www.kidsafensw.org)
* Collaborate with educators to carefully select and provide adequate numbers of resources in order to contribute to children’s sense of belonging and to provide new learning opportunities that extend and challenge children’s learning and development and social awareness.

**Educators will:**

* Act in accordance with obligations outlined in this policy.
* Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people’s safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service.
* Follow all record keeping requirements.
* Identifying any potential for risk and harm to a child at the service and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the approved provider and Nominated Supervisor.
* Ensure that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student, or parent/guardian at the service.
* Notify the nominated supervisor immediately on becoming aware of any concerns, complaints or allegations regarding the health, safety, and welfare of a child at Yarrunga.
* Equally value both the outdoor and indoor learning environments as places that support children’s learning, creativity, social engagement, and sense of belonging.
* Seek to develop learning environments that are secure and predictable and that support children to take increasing responsibility for their health, hygiene, and personal care.
* Design learning environments that are welcoming and accessible for all children and families, considering cultural diversity, social and physical inclusion.
* Design environments that reflect children’s different cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles.
* Design environments that support small group work in ways that minimise the risk of injury, minimise disruption between activities, minimise conflict between children and reduce prolonged exposure to excess internal and external noise.
* Design outdoor learning experiences that complement and extend the indoor activities and learning experiences.
* Ensure that outdoor environments provide opportunities to learn through play, enabling access to materials that stimulate investigation and reflection, and enriched with natural resources and opportunities to connect with nature.
* Offer children opportunities to be active, messy, and noisy and play on a large scale.
* Encourage and nurture children’s interest in the world around them by providing children with materials, resources, and information.
* Help children to appreciate and respect the beauty of their natural and built environments.
* Select resources and design learning environments that foster children’s connections with the natural environment.
* Select natural materials and fibres, if possible, when purchasing new equipment and resources. These include items such as wooden shelving and natural materials. Such resources enhance the look and feel of nature within the environment.
* Natural and flexible play materials such as sand, leaves and water will be available for children.
* Encourage children and families to collect and bring recycled equipment and natural resources into the environment.
* Encourage children to care for plants by growing plants from seeds and seedlings.
* Design areas for appreciation of nature, where educators and children can observe the natural play environment and reflect on nature. This will include the introduction of indoor plants into indoor area. Educators and children will be responsible for the care of these plants ensuring they have enough sunlight and water. As in the outdoor garden, plants will be selected to minimise the risk to children.
* Keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation this policy.

Evaluation:

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, Yarrunga will review this Policy every 18 months.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved. Families will be informed on changes to policies at least 14 days before making any change that will impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at Yarrunga.

Yarrunga has aesthetically pleasing, safe, flexible, and functional play and learning environments. Educators, children, and families are supported to consider environmentally sustainable practices. Children’s emotional, physical, social, cognitive, and spiritual wellbeing are supported by the design and functions of the indoor and outdoor environments. The environment complements the education and care goals of Yarrunga, supporting children to have a strong sense of being and belonging, as well as facilitating their growth and development.