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PROMOTING POSITIVE RISK IN PLAY

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

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National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precaution 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, practices and implemented

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law Act	
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
100	Risk assessment must be conducted before excursion
101	Conduct risk assessment for excursion
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
353	Physical environment requirements

Introduction

Children learn through opportunities to engage in risk play “The term ‘risk-taking’ often has negative connotations, the reality is that the willingness to engage in some risky activities provides opportunities to learn new skills, try new behaviours and ultimately reach our potential. Challenge and risk, in particular during outdoor play, allows children to test the limits of their physical, intellectual and social development”. – Helen Little and Shirley Wyver

Woden Early Childhood Centre (WECC) is inspired by the work of Claire Warden. The educators have attended numerous training opportunities to hear her speak and value her thinking. Claire has inspired WECC’s philosophy to be “hazard-aware and not risk-averse, and to employ a sense of perspective when assessing play-based situations. The adult role is to remove hazards that the children do not see, not the risk within the play. For example, unseen spikes or sticks in jumping areas. But it is not our role to remove the challenges that children see and choose to undertake”. (Claire Warden, Rattler)

Children attending WECC are supported in enjoying childhood and engaging in risky play with “the adults scaffolding the activity while the children gain confident and become more competent both in self-risk assessing and in mastering the activity”. (Claire Warden, Rattler)

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Service.

Goals – What are we aiming to do?

WECC will implement procedures to support children in exploring risky play and becoming risk aware. “A key point is that safety is the responsibility of all staff and children. No one person could possibly take it all on board and be effective. Children are encouraged to be their own risk assessors and they are good at it”. (Claire Warden, Rattler)

Strategies – How will it be done?

The Nominated Supervisor or Director will:

- Consult with educators on the subjects of risks and hazards and the benefits for children being in their own risk assessors
- Develop a Risk Benefit Assessment form to be used for assessing the observed risks in the environment and weighing them against the benefits of taking the risks. Risk benefit assessments should be completed in partnership with the children and their voices recorded on the form
- Encourage families to understand that WECC promotes positive risk taking
- Conduct a risk benefit assessment for perceived risky play within WECC taking into account the merits and consequences of the risky play. A risk rating of very high would mean that risky play would not be undertaken
- Ensure a risk assessment is undertaken and lodged with the Nominated Supervisor, Director or Education Leader prior to excursions (see *Excursions* policy)
- Ensure that families are aware that we have walking excursions in the local area and complete risk benefit assessments for them
- Liaise with educators to ensure that they are hazard aware rather than risk averse. Discuss scaffolding children’s risky play whilst being available to help if needed. If help is not needed they are not to interfere
- Ensure that information about positive risky play and a training strategy is part of the induction and ongoing professional development for all educators

- Inform families, during orientation and enrolment, about WECC's *Promoting Positive Risk in Play* policy and the need to maintain all emergency contact details. Written consent will be obtained from families for permission to access urgent medical, dental, hospital and ambulance assistance
- Ensure that educators and families are informed of WECC's *Promoting Positive Risk in Play* policy and associated policies and procedures and ensure that educator role and responsibilities are clearly defined. These include:
 - Critical Incident Policy
 - Medical Conditions Policy
 - Excursions Policy
 - Risk Management Procedures
 - Workplace Health and Safety checklists that must be completed to ensure a safe environment
- Ensure that at any time WECC is operational at least one educator who holds a current approved first aid qualification, and at least one educator who has undertaken anaphylaxis management training, and at least one educator who has undertaken emergency asthma management training, is in attendance and available. The same person may hold all of these qualifications
- Contact relevant contactors to repair or maintain the environment or to remove potential hazards when required

Educators will:

- Complete daily Safety Checklists of the environment before children and families enter WECC. Educators will identify any potential hazards and note these on the checklist and will rectify any risk immediately where possible. Any identified hazards that cannot be immediately removed or rectified must be reported to the Nominated Supervisor or Director immediately
- Complete risk benefit assessments in partnership with children when they see a new risk associated with children's positive risky play. In doing this, children are supported in becoming their own risk assessors. If a risk benefit plan results in a Very High rating, then the play will not be encouraged
- Support children in taking risks in their play and trying new things. This will be done by being nearby and available to help (scaffolding) if needed. If help is not needed they will not interfere
- Challenge themselves to think seriously before saying "no" to risky play without a risk benefit assessment. Let children try to do something if they think they can
- Not put children into a position that they can't get into on their own e.g. place them up a tree or at the top of a ladder. If a child wants to engage in risky play they need to practice and develop the skills to do so. Educators are attentive to the skills of the children and remain close at hand when skills are being learned
- Use photographs to document children's exploration of positive risk in play then share them with the children for the purpose of the children talking about what they did, how they felt doing it, etc. It is important to have the child's voice in the documentation
- Not put themselves or others at risk at any time when seeking to reduce or remove potential hazards
- Have current first aid training and be encouraged to participate in professional development to increase their awareness of risk management

Evaluation

Educators act in a professional and sensitive manner when identifying the difference between risky play and a hazard. They respond quickly and effectively to minimise or remove hazards to promote a safe environment free from harm and respond appropriately when incidents or emergencies occur. Educators support the children in choosing the positive risky play and are available when needed.

Related policies /documents

- *Active play*
- *Emergency and evacuation*

- *Enrolment and orientation*
- *Excursions*
- *First aid*
- *The indoor and outdoor environment*
- *Incident, injury, trauma and illness*
- *Medical conditions*
- *Safe storage of dangerous good*
- *Workplace health and safety*

Statutory legislation and considerations

- The NSW Work Health and Safety Act and the NSW Work Health and Safety Regulations
- The Education and Care Services National Law
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations

Sources and references

- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- WorkCover NSW – www.workcover.nsw.gov.au
- St John Ambulance – www.stjohnnsw.com.au

Authorisation

Jennifer Hayes
President
2019 WECC Management Committee