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THE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT POLICY

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment		
3.1	Design	The design on the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
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 to support 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
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law	
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
107	Space requirements – indoor space
108	Space requirements – outdoor space

109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
110	Ventilation and natural light
111	Administrative space
112	Nappy change facilities
113	Outdoor space – natural environment
114	Outdoor space – shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision

Introduction

Woden Early Childhood Centre's (WECC) physical environment can contribute to children's wellbeing, happiness, creativity and developing independence. It can contribute to and express the quality of children's learning experiences. The choices made in WECC about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air and light quality and access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor environments have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

Scope

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

Goals – What are we aiming to do?

WECC will ensure the environment is safe, clean and well maintained. Children's awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions. The physical environment, both indoors and outdoors will support children's learning, safety, levels of engagement and access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships.

Strategies – How will it be done?

The Nominated Supervisor or Director will ensure that:

- fencing and barriers which enclose outdoor areas used by children in WECC are maintained to ensure they are of a height and design that prevents children up to preschool age from going through, over or under the structure. Considerations about minimising access to WECC by unauthorised people and animals will also inform the height and design of fencing and barriers
- sufficient furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment is provided and maintained in order to support all children to engage and access WECC's program to support their developing skills and independence
- any laundry facility in the premises is located and maintained in a way that does not pose any risks to children
- adequate space requirements are maintained in both the indoor and outdoor environments
- toilet, washing and drying facilities are developmentally and age appropriate and are located and designed in a way that support safe access and hygienic nappy change routines and that educators and children have ready access to hand washing facilities
- education and care environments are well ventilated and have adequate natural light
- indoor temperatures are maintained at levels that support children's safety and wellbeing
- the play spaces provide children with opportunities to explore and experience the natural environment
- the outdoor education and care environment has adequate shaded areas to protect children 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 the education and care environment
- plants are selected to minimise risks to children. No poisonous or dangerous plants¹ will be included in the education and care environment, and no nut trees will be planted
- there is collaboration 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

The Educational Leader will collaborate with educators to:

- 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
- design indoor environments that are enriched by natural resources and opportunities to engage with nature
- offer children opportunities to be active, messy and noisy and play on a large scale
- encourage and nurture children's interests in the world around them. By providing children with materials, resources and information, educators can 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
- 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 the 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 risks to children

Evaluation

WECC has aesthetically pleasing, safe, flexible and functional play and learning environments. Educators, children and families are supported to consider environmentally sustainable practices. Children's holistic wellbeing is supported by the design and functions of the indoor and outdoor environments. The environment

¹ http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/dangerous_plants_checklist.html

compliments the education and care aims of WECC, supporting children to have a strong sense of being and belonging, as well as facilitating their growth and development.

Related policies /documents

- *Child protection*
- *Cleaning and maintaining the environment*
- *Environmental sustainability*
- *Interactions with children, families and staff*
- *Sun (UV) protection*

Statutory legislation and considerations

- The Education and Care Services National Regulations
- The Education and Care Services National Law

Sources and references

- Guide to the National Quality Standard
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Kidsafe NSW Inc – www.kidsafensw.org.au
- Raising Children website – http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/dangerous_plants_checklist.html

Authorisation

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2019 WECC Management Committee