

Preschool water safety policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

The purpose of this policy is to support and protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children attending Department for Education (department) early childhood education and care services and guide educators' daily practice.

This policy addresses obligations of the department under the [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011 \(SA\)](#) and the [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) (National Regulations). Under the National Regulations, the department must ensure that education and care services for which it is the approved provider have policies and procedures in place for managing water safety including during any water based activities. (Regulation 168 (2) (a) (iii)). The department must also take reasonable steps to ensure policies and procedures are followed (regulation 170).

This policy also addresses certain obligations for the department under the [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011 \(SA\)](#) (EECS Act) and the [Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Regulations 2011 \(SA\)](#) (EECS regulations), which regulate residual early childhood services. The department operates residual early childhood services that are internally referred to as 'occasional care'.

This policy follows best practice recommendations from [Kidsafe SA](#) (the State-wide authority on the prevention of injuries in children). Compliance with this policy will ensure leaders, educators, staff, and volunteers effectively manage the risk of, and provide adequate supervision for water hazards and water-based experiences in the learning environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees who work in a department preschool service including occasional care services and rural care programs (services).

It is recommended that integrated services providing a long day care service on a department site, where the department is not the approved provider also adopt this policy to provide consistent practices across both services.



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Detail

The legislative and policy context

Services must comply with requirements relating to managing water safety under the EECS Act. This includes the National Law and National Regulations (including the National Quality Standard (NQS)), which are elements of the National Quality Framework (NQF)

The National Law sets out legislative requirements for ensuring services maintain high standards of competence and conduct and recognises that all children should have access to high quality education and early childhood facilities and services that support, promote and contribute to their health, safety and wellbeing. This includes managing children's safety around water including during water-based activities.

The NQS sets a benchmark for the quality of education and care services nationally. Standard 2.2 (element 2.2.1) of the NQS requires that all children are protected and that educators take reasonable precautions and actively supervise children to safeguard them from harm and hazard. Education and care services (nationally) are also required to have incident and emergency management practices in place (element 2.2.2) and have systems to effectively manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service (element 7.1.2).

The department is an approved provider of education and care services that fall within the NQF. The department also provides residual early childhood services which are regulated under the EECS Act and the EECS Regulations. The EECS Regulations provide that Chapter 4 of the National Regulations applies to certain residual early childhood services E.g. occasional care, including the requirement for services to have policies and procedures in place under regulation 168 of the National Regulations.

Water safety procedure

Services must develop their own local (service-specific) procedures that outline how they will manage children's safety around water. A [template for local water safety procedures \(DOCX 50KB\)](#) (staff login required) is available to support early childhood services' compliance with the National Regulations. Local (service-specific) procedures must align with the preschool water safety policy and other department policies related to children's safety, health and wellbeing.

Services must also complete the [WHS general risk assessment template \(DOCX 612KB\)](#) (staff login required) to inform their local (service-specific) procedure (see managing water hazards).

Service leaders must also consider water safety and potential water hazards when undertaking a risk assessment for an excursion, including a routine excursion ([Education and Care Services National Regulations R 101 \(2\) \(b\)](#)). Refer to the [camps and excursions](#) page (staff login required) and the [risk management plan for sports, adventure, camps and excursions \(DOCX 1.7MB\)](#) (staff login required).

Service leaders must refer to the [Water safety for preschools](#) page (staff login required) for information to help develop their local (service-specific) water safety procedure.

Water hazards

A water hazard is defined as anything that can hold 3cm of water and fit a child's nose and mouth.

Water hazards in children's learning environments include:

- sinks, basins, fish tanks, fishbowls, baths
- swimming pools, portable pools, spas
- water courses, ponds, sandpits, clam shells
- water troughs, containers and buckets used for play, animal drinking containers
- pooling water.

Managing water hazards

Service leaders must complete risk assessments that identify and assess risks associated with any water hazards and water-based activities. Risk assessments must address:

- Active supervision – children must be actively supervised at all times when there is a risk of access to any water hazard. Active supervision includes the following 6 steps:
 1. Set up the environment
 2. Position educators
 3. Scan and count
 4. Listen
 5. Anticipate behaviour
 6. Engage and redirect

For further guidance on the above 6 steps, refer to [Active supervision in 6 steps | ACECQA](#)

- Eliminating hazards – water must be emptied immediately after use and stored in a manner that prevents the vessel filling with water when not in use. All aspects of the environment must be designed to ensure adequate drainage of water to avoid pooling.
- Restricting access – compliant fencing or barrier. Refer to [water safety in education and care settings fact sheet \(PDF 211KB\)](#) (staff login required).
- Educating children about water safety – Education is an important function of prevention when used in conjunction with the above risk management processes.

Roles and responsibilities

Executive Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services

The Executive Director, Preschools and Early Childhood Services has approved provider responsibilities under the EECS Act.

Preschool Policy and Advice

Monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in consultation with Work Health and Safety and other key stakeholders in accordance with the departments operational policy framework.

Preschool directors and school principals

Comply with the requirements of this policy.

Develop a local (service-specific) water safety procedure based on a completed risk assessment.

Educators

Comply with this policy and the local (services-specific) water safety procedure.

Report identified hazards and notify other people in the immediate vicinity that a hazard is present.

Definitions

adequate supervision

That an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation. In addition, knowing where all children are at all times, and monitoring their activities actively and diligently, and implementing their duty of care responsibilities.

preschool

An approved early childhood educational program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year before they start schooling, or as defined within the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Preschools may also be referred to as a kindergarten, school-based preschool, children's services centre or integrated children's centre.

occasional care

An approved residual early childhood service where education and care is provided to children under school age and the department is the approved provider.

rural care

An approved education and care service where long day care is provided to the local community under the host preschool's service approval.

risk assessment

The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation.

hazard

An object, situation or behaviour that has the potential to cause physical or psychological harm or injury.

water hazard

Anything that can hold 3cm of water and fit a child's nose and mouth.

In addition, a water hazard is any water body that poses a potential drowning risk to children and could include:

- large bodies of water, such as rivers, creeks, dams, ponds, swimming pools, jetted bathtubs (or jacuzzis), in-ground spas, above ground portable spas (or hot tubs) or any container with poor drainage that allows water to pool
- smaller bodies of water, such as baths, nappy buckets and pet water containers

Supporting information

[Camps and excursions](#) (staff login required)

[Risk management plan for sports, adventure, camps and excursions \(DOCX 1.7MB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Critical incidents, injury and hazard reporting](#) (staff login required)

[Incident Management System \(IMS\)](#) (staff login required)

[Is your swimming pool kid safe? What you need to know about swimming pool fencing \(PDF 3.7MB\)](#)

[Preschool policy implementation tool](#) (staff login required)

[Safety management procedure \(PDF 621KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[The Early Years Learning Framework \(PDF 24.9MB\)](#)

[Water safety in education and care settings \(PDF 211KB\)](#) (staff login required)

Related legislation

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011 \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

Related policies

[Camps and excursions policy \(PDF 665KB\)](#)

[Camps and excursions procedure \(PDF 856KB\)](#)

[Outdoor learning environments standard \(PDF 2.1MB\)](#)

[Reporting critical incidents, injuries, hazards and near misses procedure \(PDF 234KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Safety management procedure \(PDF 621KB\)](#) (staff login required)

Record history

Published date: October 2025

Approvals

OP number: 187

File number: 25/12740

Status: approved

Version: 1.7

Policy officer: Principal Policy Adviser, Preschool Policy and Advice

Policy sponsor: Director, Quality Preschools

Responsible Executive Director: Preschools and Early Childhood Services

Approved by: Director, Quality Preschools

Approved date: 8 October 2025

Next review date: 8 October 2028

Revision record

Version: 1.7

Approved by: Director, Quality Preschools

Approved date: 8 October 2025

Review date: 8 October 2028

Amendment(s): Conversion from procedure to policy and updates to align with changes to the definition of a water hazard and staff position titles.

Version: 1.6

Approved by: Director, Early Childhood Services and Strategy

Approved date: 24 February 2024

Review date: 24 February 2027

Amendment(s): Updated hyperlinks.

Version: 1.5

Approved by: Director, Early Childhood Services and Strategy

Approved date: 21 January 2022

Review date: 21 January 2025

Amendment(s): Minor edit to update contact details and to align titles with the new Office for the Early Years.

Version: 1.4

Approved by: Director, Early Childhood Services

Approved date: 14 July 2021

Review date: 14 July 2024

Amendment(s): Updated hyperlinks and a new preschool policy compliance resource added under Related supporting information

Version: 1.3

Approved by: Director, Early Childhood Services

Approved date: 7 January 2020

Review date: 31 December 2021

Amendment(s): New branding applied to document, published as HTML document on EDi, edited for plain English in consultation with Communications Directorate.

Version: 1.2

Approved by: Director, Early Childhood Services

Approved date: 22 March 2019

Review date: 1 April 2021

Amendment(s): Minor edits to update template, hyperlinks and supporting information.

Version: 1.1

Approved by: Executive Director

Approved date: 15 April 2015

Review date: 15 April 2018

Amendment(s): Minor edit to incorporate information into new template.

Version: 1.0

Approved date: 1 December 2012

Review date: 1 December 2014

Amendment(s): First publication.

Contact

Preschool Policy and Advice

Email: education.PreschoolPolicyAndAdvice@sa.gov.au

Phone: 8226 0812