

Early Learning

Water Safety Policy

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Providing opportunities for children to explore their natural environment including through water play
- Ensuring that children understand and are protected from the risks associated with drowning or non-fatal drowning experiences
- Ensuring that curriculum planning incorporates water safety awareness
- Providing information to educators, staff, parents, volunteers, and others at the service about water safety.

Executive Summary

Water safety relates to access to water in a building, a playground or when on excursions, and to the availability of drinking water for children.

Swimming pools are prohibited in Tasmania for all education and care services.

All staff at the service have a responsibility to ensure the indoor and the outdoor learning environments are safe around water related hazards (such as nappy buckets, pools, outdoor equipment, puddles, and waterways). Water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times must be isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence, or if a receptacle, then emptied of water.

Where there is a Nature program in place, risks associated with waterways should be managed by implementing an approved risk assessment plan. Adequate supervision of all children at the service must be always ensured and in keeping with duty of care responsibilities. An educator with a current approved first aid qualification will be in attendance and immediately available at all times children are attending the service.

Current Environmental Context

Children's Voices A principled framework for children and young people's participation as valued citizens and learners 2013

Children's safety and wellbeing is paramount and children will be actively involved in decision-making to provide an environment that encourages them to reach their potential whilst being safe.

A safe environment is a place where children feel comfortable and safe to play, talk, or relax. A safe environment is also a place that is safe from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional harm or abuse.

Children's right to be heard and have their views taken seriously was established via Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) and is embedded in practice.

Allowing children to have a voice fosters the development and understanding of: social development, democracy, independence, resilience, and self-esteem and confidence.

Learning spaces and environments should offer an array of possibilities and connect children with natural materials. Water is one experience that offers children sensory-rich, open-ended experiences that engage their curiosity and imagination. Children may encounter these resources in the service environment and/or when on excursions. These experiences, especially those conducted with and near water, will be carefully supervised ensuring the safety of children and adults. It is imperative that educators remain vigilant in their supervision of children in and around water and are alert to potential risks in everyday practice in the learning environment.

Drowning is a leading cause of death for children in Victoria, with infants and toddlers the group most at risk. Non-fatal drowning incidents can result in permanent brain damage and disability. Knowledge of potential hazards associated with water will assist educators to provide a safe, stimulating environment for preschool children.

Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams, and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including nappy buckets, water containers, outdoor equipment, pet water bowls and

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| Document Author | EL Practice Manager | Document Version | V 6.0 | Policy No. 037 |
| Date Published | 28/11/2022 | Revision Due Date | 28/11/2023 | |

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poor drainage which allows water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children. Children can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water.

Keep Watch is a public education program of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, aimed at preventing the drowning deaths of children under 5 years of age in all aquatic locations. The program has four key actions:

- Supervise children constantly around water
- Restrict access to water hazards by using child-proof barriers and fences
- Provide water awareness training to children
- Resuscitation saves lives – ensure that staff have completed current first aid training.

Parents should be informed about the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment; they also have a responsibility to inform themselves about water safety, ensuring their children understand the risks associated with water.

Principles to inform policies (add to the policies/procedures)

- Viewing the child as a valued citizen and social actor
- Educators ensure a safe and secure context in which interactions and conversations occur and demonstrate a genuine interest in what the child is expressing
- Planning will include an understanding about why and how the child is being invited to take part, what the purpose is, and how the child might contribute
- Children have the right for their privacy and confidentiality to be maintained, including agreement to any artwork being displayed or shared
- Children have the right to be assured that their engagement will be worthwhile and enjoyable.
- Educators will have meaningful conversation with and among children through give-and-take dialogue. Exploring with children what they mean
- Educators will co-construct experiences with children and providing scope for children to do for themselves, thereby letting the child’s agency do its work
- For inclusivity and cultural considerations, it is important to understand the environment children have come from and what they deem as safe and accessible spaces
- When engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, educators will seek advice from the local community, elders or family members about the best ways to be culturally safe, relevant and respectful. Experiences, stories, surveys, toys will be culturally relevant.
- When engaging with children whose first language is not English, educators will ensure learning is culturally relevant
- Educators will ensure the space is accessible and suitable for all children (mobility, sign language, developmentally appropriate, less stimulation for children with autism etc)
- Educators will ensure the learning environment is safe, inviting and developmentally appropriate.
- Educators will ensure all language is respectful, inclusive of all races, sex, gender, age, sexual identity and religion.

Attachment 37a – Responsibilities relating to the water Safety Policy

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Reference/Sources

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Uniting Child Safety Policy – Uniting adopts the Uniting Church Australia National Child Safety Policy Framework, 2019 and the principles of this Policy Framework

This protocol is shared with the whole service community with opportunities to provide feedback/input

- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events Policy
- Nutrition, Oral Health, and Active Play Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness Policy
- Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- [Children's Services amendment Act 2019](#)
- [Children's Services Regulations 2020](#)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 99, 101, 102,123, 136, 168(2)(a)(iii)
- [Kid safe – Water Safety Fact Sheet: kidsafevic.com.au/water-safety/](http://kidsafevic.com.au/water-safety/)
- [National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety](#)
- Royal Life Saving Society – Australia: www.royallifesaving.com.au
- [Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care \(2014\) Standard 10](#)
- Water Safety Victoria – Water Safety Guide: Play it Safe by the Water <https://www.vic.gov.au/water-safety>
- Uniting Nature Program Guidelines

Authorization This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 28/11/2022

Review This policy is to be reviewed by: 28/11/2023

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Attachment 37a: Responsibilities relating to the Water Safety policy Approved Provider

- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met
- Keep a child safe environment
- Ensure that there is adequate supervision provided given the ages and developmental needs of children undertaking water activities (including ratios)
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken and water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities are taken into consideration
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that the policy and procedures are current, reviewed regularly, and communicated to educators, staff and stakeholders
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators, staff and volunteers follow the policy and procedures
- Ensure copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, educators, staff and volunteers, and available for inspection
- Ensure a risk assessment is conducted in relation to any water hazards on or near the premises, or when on an excursion that may be accessible to children (refer to Form 3.1).
- Ensure permission is obtained from parents for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Ensure increased levels of supervision for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Ensure any water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised always are isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence (particularly large bodies of water including swimming pools, rivers, ponds etc.), or emptied of water if a receptacle.
- Report serious incidents or notifiable complaints/incidents ([refer to Glossary](#)) alleging a child's health, safety or wellbeing has been compromised to DET within 24 hours.
- Ensure that all educators' current approved first aid qualifications meet the requirements of the National Regulations and are approved by ACECQA
- Provide current information to parents about water safety

Responsible Person

- Assist the Approved Provider to implement the *Water Safety Policy*
- Ensure that water safety awareness is embedded in the curriculum
- Ensure that children are adequately always supervised including when near water hazards (refer to Glossary)
- Ensure that water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities are considered in a risk assessment prior to conducting excursions and other offsite events (*refer to Form 3.1*)
- Ensure that educator-to-child ratios are always maintained
- Obtain permission from parents for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard
- Ensure increased levels of supervision for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard
- Ensure that an educator with a current approved first aid qualification is in attendance and immediately available at all times children are attending the service
- Ensure parents are informed of the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment
- Ensure that details of current approved first aid qualifications are filed with each staff member's record.
- Ensure first aid and CPR qualifications and requirements are met at all times
- Undertake risk assessments for excursions near water and for water-based activities
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that the policy and procedures are current, reviewed regularly, and communicated to educators, staff and stakeholders
- Take reasonable steps to inform and support educators and staff of their responsibilities in implementing the policy and procedures at all times
- Guide and mentor educators and staff to be able to follow the policy and procedures.

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Educators

- Consider water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities in a risk assessment prior to conducting excursions and other offsite events (*refer to Form 3.1*).
- Follow reporting procedures outlined in the *Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness Policy* and inform the Approved Provider immediately if a serious incident or notifiable complaint/incident (*refer to Glossary*) occurs at the service.
- Adjust supervision strategies to suit the activities being undertaken.
- Ensure that children are adequately always supervised including when near water hazards (*refer to Glossary*).
- Check that permission is obtained from parents for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Maintain a current approved first aid qualification.
- Ensure gates and other barriers restricting access to water hazards are always closed and that fences are always kept clear.
- Ensure that containers of water (including nappy buckets and cleaning buckets), both indoors and outdoors are sealed with child-proof lids or emptied when unsupervised.
- Ensure wading/paddling pools, water play containers and portable water courses are emptied immediately after each use, can be easily emptied by one person, and stored in a manner that prevents the collection of water when not in use.
- Ensure all buckets/receptacles, indoor and outdoor are empty of water if left unsupervised.
- Ensure information on water safety (*refer to glossary*) is incorporated into the educational program.
- Check the outdoor learning environment at the beginning and end of each day for puddles or filled containers that could pose a potential risk to small children and drain and/or remove.
- Provide water safety education as a part of the service's program.
- Conduct a regular safety check of the service premises.

Parents

- Supervise children in your care, including siblings, while attending or assisting at the service.
- Ensure that doors, gates, and barriers, including playground gates, are closed after entry or exit to prevent access to water hazards.
- Be informed about water safety and ensure their children understand the risks associated with water.
- Recognise when resuscitation is required and obtain assistance.
- Consider undertaking approved first aid qualifications, as resuscitation skills save lives.
- Keep informed of any current service Risk Assessments around water play programs and complete any signed permissions of excursions children will be attending that include any water hazards or risks.

Note: *Volunteers, contractors, and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.*

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