



HEALTH & SAFETY: Water Safety

PURPOSE

This policy provides clear guidelines and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children during water-based play and activities at Essential Early Learning. We are committed to providing safe, supervised, and developmentally appropriate water play experiences while preventing water-related incidents and injuries.

Our service will:

- Provide constant active supervision during all water-based activities
- Conduct comprehensive risk assessments for all water play activities
- Maintain appropriate educator-to-child ratios during water activities
- Ensure all water play equipment is safe, clean, and age-appropriate
- Educate children about water safety in developmentally appropriate ways
- Empty and store water containers safely after each use

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All children enrolled at the service
- The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and staff
- Students on placement, volunteers and visitors
- All water-based activities including shallow trough play, water sprinkler play, and any other water play

Water Activities at Our Service:

Essential Early Learning does not have swimming pools, wading pools, or deep water features. Water play at our service is limited to:

- Shallow water trough play (water depth not exceeding 15cm)
- Water sprinkler play on hot days
- Small containers for water exploration and sensory play

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This policy is based on the following legislation and standards:

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

- Section 167: Protection from harm and hazards

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

- Regulation 100: Risk assessment must be conducted before excursion
- Regulation 101: Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
- Regulation 113: Outdoor space - Natural environment
- Regulation 115: Premises designed to facilitate supervision



- Regulation 117: Glass (prohibits glass containers in areas accessible to children)
- Regulation 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures

National Quality Standard

- Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
- Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Element 2.2.1: At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
- Quality Area 3: Physical environment

NSW-Specific Legislation:

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW)
- Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)

KEY DEFINITIONS

Water-Based Activity: Any activity involving water play, including shallow trough play, sprinkler play, or sensory water exploration.

Shallow Water Play: Water play in containers where water depth does not exceed 15cm.

Active Supervision: Intentional, focused observation where educators actively scan, position themselves strategically, and remain alert to children's activities.

Risk Assessment: The process of identifying potential hazards, assessing the level of risk, and implementing control measures to minimize harm.

Drowning: Respiratory impairment from submersion or immersion in liquid. Children can drown in as little as 5cm of water.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Risk Assessment and Planning

Before any water-based activity, educators will:

- Conduct a risk assessment specific to the planned water activity
- Identify potential hazards (slippery surfaces, water depth, temperature, equipment safety)
- Assess the likelihood and severity of potential risks
- Implement control measures to minimize identified risks
- Consider weather conditions (particularly for outdoor sprinkler play)
- Consider the developmental stage and abilities of participating children
- Ensure adequate supervision can be maintained
- Check that first aid equipment is readily accessible

Risk assessments will be documented and reviewed regularly, and updated following any incident or change in circumstances.

2. Supervision Requirements

All water-based activities require constant active supervision.



Educators will:

- Maintain visual contact with all children engaged in water play at all times
- Position themselves to have a clear view of all children in the water play area
- Remain within immediate reach of children during water activities
- Never leave children unattended near water, even for a moment
- Ensure educator-to-child ratios are maintained or exceeded during water play
- Actively scan the area and count children regularly
- Minimize distractions (mobile phones, conversations with other adults) during water supervision
- Immediately respond to any safety concerns or hazards

Additional Supervision Measures:

- Water play areas will be clearly defined and separated from other play spaces
- The number of children participating in water play at any one time will be limited to ensure effective supervision
- At least one educator supervising water play must hold current first aid qualifications including CPR

3. Shallow Water Trough Play

Setup and Safety Requirements:

- Water depth in troughs must not exceed 15cm
- Water troughs must be placed on stable, level surfaces
- The area around water troughs will be checked for slip hazards before and during play
- Water temperature will be checked to ensure it is comfortable and safe (tepid to warm, not hot)
- Only child-safe, non-toxic materials and toys will be provided for water play
- No glass containers or sharp objects will be used near water play areas
- Water troughs will be positioned where educators can maintain clear sightlines

Hygiene and Maintenance:

- Fresh, clean water will be used for each water play session
- Water will be changed immediately if it becomes dirty or contaminated
- Children will wash their hands before and after water play
- Water troughs and equipment will be cleaned and sanitized after each use
- Water troughs will be emptied completely after each use
- Empty water troughs will be stored upside down or in a way that prevents water accumulation

Child Safety Rules:

- Children will be taught not to drink water from the trough
- Children will be instructed to keep water in the trough and not splash excessively
- Children showing signs of illness (particularly diarrhea or vomiting) will not participate in shared water play
- Children with open cuts or wounds will have them covered with waterproof dressings or will not participate in water play

4. Water Sprinkler Play

When and How Sprinklers Are Used:



- Water sprinklers will only be used on hot days when temperatures are high and sun protection measures are in place
- Sprinkler play area will be inspected before use to ensure it is free from hazards
- Surfaces will be checked for slip hazards
- The sprinkler system will be tested to ensure appropriate water pressure (not too strong)
- Boundaries for sprinkler play will be clearly defined and communicated to children

Parent Notification and Consent:

- Families will be informed when sprinkler play is planned
- Families will be asked to provide appropriate change of clothes
- Children will only participate in sprinkler play with parent/guardian consent
- Alternative activities will be provided for children who do not participate

Safety Procedures:

- Constant active supervision will be maintained throughout sprinkler play
- Children will be taught safe play behaviours (no running, pushing, or rough play)
- The duration of sprinkler play will be limited based on weather conditions and children's needs
- Children will be monitored for signs of cold or discomfort
- Sun protection measures will be implemented (hats, sunscreen, shade when not in sprinkler)
- Sprinklers will be turned off immediately when play concludes

5. General Water Safety Measures

Prevention of Water Accumulation:

- All water containers, buckets, and troughs will be emptied immediately after use
- Storage areas will be checked regularly to ensure no water has accumulated
- Outdoor areas will be inspected after rain to empty any containers that have collected water
- Buckets and containers used for cleaning will be emptied and stored upside down

Equipment Safety:

- All water play equipment will be age-appropriate and in good condition
- Equipment will be regularly inspected for damage, sharp edges, or wear
- Broken or damaged equipment will be removed immediately and repaired or replaced
- Only non-toxic, child-safe materials will be used in water play

Environmental Considerations:

- Water will be used responsibly and not wasted
- Where possible, water from trough play will be reused for garden watering
- Contaminated water will be disposed of appropriately

6. Emergency Procedures

In the Event of a Water-Related Emergency:

- Remove the child from the water immediately
- Assess the child's condition and administer first aid as required
- Call emergency services (000) if required
- Contact parents/guardians immediately
- Complete an incident report



- Notify the Regulatory Authority if the incident meets the criteria for a serious incident
- Review the incident and update risk assessments and procedures as necessary

First Aid for Water-Related Incidents:

All educators supervising water activities will be trained in:

- Current approved first aid including CPR
- Recognition of and response to drowning or near-drowning
- Appropriate emergency response procedures

7. Water Safety Education

Children's Learning:

Water safety will be incorporated into the educational program in age-appropriate ways, including:

- Teaching children to respect water and understand basic water safety rules
- Discussing safe behaviours during water play
- Encouraging children to ask for help when needed
- Teaching children not to drink water during play activities
- Reading books and engaging in discussions about water safety

Family Education:

The service will:

- Provide families with information about water safety at home upon request
- Share resources about drowning prevention via OWNA
- Communicate our water safety procedures and requirements
- Encourage families to enrol children in swimming lessons

EDUCATOR AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Nominated Supervisor/Person in Day-to-Day Charge:

- Ensure all staff understand and follow this policy
- Approve and review risk assessments for water-based activities
- Ensure adequate supervision is maintained during all water activities
- Monitor compliance with water safety procedures
- Ensure all water play equipment is safe and age-appropriate
- Investigate and respond to any water safety incidents or concerns
- Ensure educators have current first aid qualifications

All Educators and Staff:

- Conduct risk assessments before setting up water play activities
- Maintain constant active supervision during all water activities
- Never leave children unattended near water
- Ensure water depth does not exceed 15cm in troughs
- Empty all water containers immediately after use
- Clean and sanitize water play equipment after each use
- Teach children water safety rules
- Respond immediately to any safety concerns



- Report and document any water safety incidents
- Participate in water safety training and professional development

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Families are responsible for:

- Providing consent for their child to participate in water-based activities
- Informing educators of any medical conditions or concerns that may affect their child's participation in water play
- Providing appropriate spare clothing for water activities
- Supporting the service's water safety procedures
- Teaching their child water safety at home
- Supervising their child around water at all times when at home or in the community

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- ACECQA: Guide to the National Quality Framework
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Royal Life Saving Society Australia: www.royallifesaving.com.au
- Kidsafe NSW: www.kidsafensw.org
- NSW Health: Staying Healthy - Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently if required due to:

- Legislative changes
- Changes in best practice
- Following a water safety incident
- Feedback from families, educators or staff



- Following regulatory assessment and rating
- Changes to water play activities or equipment

Date policy was last reviewed: 05/01/2026

Date for next review: 05/01/2028

Reviewed by: Director & Staff