WATER SAFETY POLICY GUIDELINES

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations,* an approved provider must ensure that an education and care service has policies and procedures in place for managing water safety, including during any water-based activities (Regulation 168(2)(a)(iii)). This will help keep children safe in and around water and support children's learning in a safe environment.

For centre-based services, a copy of the service's proposed water safety policy must be included in the application for service approval if there is a swimming pool or other water hazard (Regulation 25(1)(c)). For family day care (FDC) residences or venues, a copy of the service's proposed water safety policy must be included in the application for service approval if the approved provider permits a residence or venue with a swimming pool or something that may constitute a water hazard (Regulation 26(1)(l)).

Services must conduct risk assessments in relation to water-based activities and water hazards. This includes at service premises, FDC residences, FDC venues and for excursions.

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, education and care services must have policies and procedures in place for water safety. These guidelines are part of a series and are intended to assist in the development of your *Water safety policy*. They have been designed to guide you in the development of your policy and are not an exact format.

1. Title

Water safety policy

2. Policy statement

The policy statement will reflect your service's philosophy about dealing with water safety with children.

For example:

Children's safety and wellbeing will be protected in and around water through supervision and education.

3. Background

Your policy needs to include a statement of why this requirement is in place.

For example:

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require policies and procedures to be in place for managing water safety, including safety during any water-based activities.

According to Kidsafe (the recognised authority on the prevention of injuries in children), drowning continues to be one of the main causes of fatalities of Australian children. Every year a number of children die by drowning and hundreds more are rescued from near drowning situations. Non-fatal drowning incidents can have potential long-term effects, including brain damage and permanent disability.

The most common factor in childhood drowning is lack of supervision. A child can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water. Items such as nappy buckets, pet drinking bowls, baths, ponds, pools, water features, dams, water troughs and water tanks are potential drowning hazards.

4. Legislative requirements

Your policy must be consistent with and refer to legislative requirements for managing water safety. Examples include, but are not limited to:

Reg 25(1)(c)	Additional information about proposed education and care service premises
Reg 26(1)(l)	Application for service approval – family day care – swimming pool
Reg 101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
Reg 116	Assessments of family day care residences and approved family day care venues
Reg 168(2)(a)(iii)	Education and care service must have policies and procedures – Water safety, including safety during any water-based activities
Reg 169	Additional policies and procedures – family day care service
Reg 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Reg 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Reg 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

When writing your policy, you will need to break down what is required under each Regulation and how your service will meet these requirements. How these work in practice will be contained in your procedures.

As you reflect on your *Water safety policy*, it might highlight the need to split its various areas into different policies and procedures that can be readily accessed by all educators and staff to follow in relation to the service's philosophy and their roles and responsibilities. For example, you may wish to have separate policies for *Water play* and *Excursions that involve water.*

5. Principles to inform your policy

All decision-making should be carried out in accordance with the principles of your service's *Water safety policy.* Examples of principles could include, but are not limited to:

- The health, safety and wellbeing of children is our number one priority. All water-based activities will be adequately supervised and no child will be left unattended when in proximity to water.
- Water-based play is an important part of our children's healthy growth, learning, wellbeing and development. Our educators and staff ensure that all precautions are employed to safeguard children during these experiences.
- Clear roles and responsibilities ensure that management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to water safety.
- We create opportunities for children to learn and develop. This includes incorporating water safety awareness into the educational program.

Considerations for family day care

Regulation 116 requires approved providers to assess each proposed FDC residence or venue before education and care is provided and at least annually, to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of children. They must consider its suitability according to the number, ages and abilities of the children. This includes any water hazards, e.g. spas, water features, waterways, ponds or swimming pools.

Regulation 136 requires that FDC educators and FDC educator assistants hold a current approved first aid qualification. The cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) component of a first aid qualification generally requires annual updating to keep that qualification current.

Considerations for regional, remote and rural services

In addition to creeks, rivers and canals that may be found at all locations, services or any FDC educators located in regional, remote or rural areas may need to consider additional water hazards such as dams, waterways, water troughs, and animals accessing water or drinking containers. These may require extra care in assessing and managing risk.

6. Key terms

To make it easier for your audience, provide definitions of key terms that may not be used every day. For example:

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	
Adequate supervision	Means: - knowing where children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently - an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation	Guide to the NQF (Operational Requirements – Quality Area 2)
Approved first aid qualifications	A qualification that includes training in the matters set out below, that relates to and is appropriate to children and has been approved by ACECQA and published on the list of approved first aid qualifications and training on the ACECQA website. Matters are likely to include: Emergency life support and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation; convulsions; poisoning; respiratory difficulties; management of severe bleeding; injury and basic wound care; and administration of an auto-immune adrenalin device.	National Regulations (Regulation 136)
Risk assessment	A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.	

Serious incident	For the purposes of the definition of serious incident in section 5(1) of the Law, each of the following is prescribed as a serious incident:	National Regulations (Regulation 12)
	(a) the death of a child -	
	(i) while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service; or	
	(ii) following an incident occurring while that child was being educated and cared for by an education and care service;	
	(b) any incident involving serious injury or trauma to a child occurring while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service -	
	(i) which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or	
	(ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital;	
	Example: A broken limb.	
	(c) any incident involving serious illness of a child occurring while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital;	
	Example: Severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis reaction.	
	(d) any emergency for which emergency services attended;	
	(e) any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service—	
	(i) appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for; or	
	(ii) appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service premises in a manner that contravenes these Regulations; or	
	(iii) is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.	
Hazard	A source of potential harm or a situation that could cause or lead to harm to people or property. Work hazards can be physical, chemical, biological, mechanical or psychological.	https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/work-health-and-safety-in-education-and-care-services.pdf?sfvrsn=8

Water hazard	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 allow water to pool - smaller bodies of water, such as baths, nappy buckets and pet water containers.	https://www.communities.wa.gov.au/media/1727/pools-and-water-hazards-in-fdc-c-ris.pdf

7. Links to other policies and procedures

Refer to related policies and procedures, for example:

- Providing a child safe environment
- Administration of first aid
- Emergency and evacuation
- Excursions
- Incident, injury, trauma and illness

8. Induction and ongoing training

State information about induction training and frequency of ongoing training and information sharing to assist managers, coordinators, educators and staff to fulfil their roles effectively.

9. Policy created/reviewed

Include the date the policy was created, reviewed or changes were made.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and review

State when the policy will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.

11. Checklist

☐ Have you referenced the relevant Regulations and are these reflected in the policy?
☐ Does the title provide a clear and concise statement identifying the intent of the policy?
☐ Have you checked the policy requirements and referenced related legislation that applies to your service type?
☐ Does your policy statement provide a framework for decision-making and ensure consistent practice?
☐ Does your policy statement reflect your service philosophy?
☐ Is it clear why this policy exists?

WATER SAFETY PROCEDURES GUIDELINES

The approved provider must ensure the service has procedures in place for managing water safety, including safety during any water-based activities.

Your procedures should be written in clear and concise language, making it easy to read and understand.

The steps and guidelines you document will not only guide your practice, but also inform regulatory authorities and families of educator and staff expectations and responsibilities.

When thinking about your procedures for water safety with children, they need to be practical and achievable. For example, all water dishes for pets will not be accessible to children without adult supervision.

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, education and care services must have policies and procedures in place for water safety. These guidelines are part of a series and are intended to assist in the development of your *Water safety procedures*. They have been designed to guide you in the development of your procedures and are not an exact format.

1. Title

Water safety procedures

2. Reference to policy and philosophy

Here you refer to your *Water safety policy* as seen in your policy documents. You can reference where you will find the policy to help those looking for it.

Your procedures will also reflect your service's overall philosophy, your *Water safety policy*, and evidence-based health and safety best practices.

3. Procedures

This is where you detail the way you will implement the *Water safety policy*.

Some areas that will be outlined here will include:

- where the procedures will be kept
- when they were last reviewed
- how you are using the procedures as part of your educator and staff inductions, including your processes around students and volunteer inductions and family members who might be attending an excursion where water has been identified as a risk
- systems to monitor the implementation of the procedures.

It is the 'How to' in your service and includes specific step-by-step procedures for managing water safety, e.g. outlining the daily responsibilities for educators and staff in relation to safety during any water-based activities.

Among the factors to consider are the age of the children and their physical capabilities, particularly in a service with a mixed age group.

As you reflect on your *Water safety policy*, it might highlight the need to split its various areas into different procedures, which will be displayed or accessed by educators and staff to follow in relation to their actions. For example, you may wish to have separate procedures for *Water play, Cleaning,* and *Risks associated with water filled buckets.*

4. Roles and responsibilities

This is where you will designate specific roles and responsibilities for the different people within the service. This needs to align with the Regulations.

It is important to note that it is the legal responsibility of approved providers to ensure systems are in place to minimise risk and ensure health and safety procedures are implemented by the responsible people in services and, if applicable, in family day care (FDC) residences. Ultimate responsibility lies with the approved provider to ensure their service/s are meeting the requirements under the National Quality Framework.

When developing this section consider:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of the approved provider, responsible person, nominated supervisor, coordinators, educators or other staff in your service in relation to managing water safety?
- How will you clearly define these roles and expectations and where will it be documented?
- Why are clear and robust procedures for water safety important for children's health, safety and wellbeing?
- How will you learn from the administration of these procedures to improve your practices?
- How will you ensure that the necessary tools are available so educators and staff can follow the procedures in relation to managing water safety? How will educators and staff be made aware of the procedures?
- Do the roles and responsibilities reflect your service type?

An example of roles and responsibilities could include, but is not limited to:

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved provider	• must keep a child safe environment • ensure 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 • ensure that educators and staff are continually monitoring and managing the area in and around a water hazard so that it cannot be accessed by children, e.g. preventing children from climbing on a pot plant in order to climb a pool fence • ensure that at least one educator, staff member or nominated supervisor who holds a current approved first aid qualification is in attendance at all times that children are being educated and cared for by the service • 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 regarding their responsibilities in implementing the policy and procedures at all times • 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 • notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will: - affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or - significantly impact the service's education and care of children or - significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service
Nominated supervisor/ Responsible person	• ensure there is adequate supervision provided given the ages and developmental needs of children undertaking water activities (including ratios) • inform families about water safety practices at the service • ensure first aid and CPR qualifications and requirements are met at all times • ensure that at least one educator, staff member or nominated supervisor who holds a current approved first aid qualification is in attendance at all times that children are being educated and cared for by the service • undertake risk assessments for excursions near water • ensure that educators and staff are continually monitoring and managing the area in and around a water hazard so that it cannot be accessed by children, e.g. preventing children from climbing on a pot plant in order to climb a pool fence • 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 regarding 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

Roles	Responsibilities
Centre-based educators	• reinforce water safety messages within the children's education program • make sure water hazards are managed as outlined in your procedures, e.g. water trough is emptied and packed away as soon as play has ended • ensure that the area in and around a water hazard is continually monitored and managed so it cannot be accessed by children, e.g. preventing children from climbing on a pot plant in order to climb a pool fence • ensure there is adequate supervision provided given the ages and developmental needs of children undertaking water activities, or if they are near a water hazard (including above ratios if necessary) • ensure buckets that contain liquids are not accessible to children • empty, safely cover or make inaccessible to children all water containers when they are not in use, e.g. mop buckets, nappy buckets, bathtubs, water troughs, pet water containers • ensure water troughs or containers for water play will be supervised at all times and containers or troughs will be emptied after use
Family day care educators	• ensure risk assessments are undertaken and risks associated with water hazards (e.g. spas, water features, swimming pools), water-based activities and excursions are taken into consideration • implement management strategies for water hazards and excursions • ensure that the area in and around the water hazard is continually monitored and managed so it cannot be accessed by children, e.g. preventing children from climbing on a pot plant in order to climb a pool fence • ensure there is adequate supervision provided given the ages and developmental needs of children undertaking water activities, or if they are near a water hazard (including above ratios if necessary) • empty, safely cover or make inaccessible to children all water containers when they are not in use, e.g. mop buckets, nappy buckets, bathtubs, water troughs, pet water containers • ensure water troughs or containers for water play will be supervised at all times and containers or troughs will be emptied after use • inform families about water safety practices in the home • must hold a current approved first aid qualification

The following table will assist you in developing procedures specific to your needs and context. Referring to the Regulations when you are writing your procedures will assist you to ensure that you are meeting your obligations.

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area (this will be specific to the context of your service)	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures

Preventing and managing water safety incidents
 	
Reg: 168, 170, 171, 172
 	
QA2: 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.2.2
 	
QA3: 3.1
 	
QA4: 4.1.1
 	
QA7: 7.1.2, 7.1.3
	• How best to conduct risk assessments:
	
	  - for water-based activities (at the service premises, FDC residence, FDC venue or on excursions)
	
	  - of any water hazards (at the service premises, FDC residence, FDC venue or on excursions), including the placement of items that could allow children to access the hazard, e.g. to climb a pool fence
	
	• What your management processes are for the risks identified with water-based activities, water hazards, and excursions where water has been identified as a risk
	
	• How you will ensure there are the required first aid trained educators and staff at the service
	
	• The type of water-based activities and how they are led and influenced by the ages and abilities of children
	
	• How you are going to meet and monitor any supervision plans or ratio checks
	
	• How you intend to meet the Regulations related to preventing incidents, injury, trauma and illness in relation to water safety
	
	• The actions needed to manage water hazards as they arise, e.g. water features and pools, water spilt during play
		• Make sure your *policy* and *procedures* are available for all to access
		
		• Ensure risk assessments are carried out, reviewed and updated as required
		
		• Regularly reflect on supervision plans and ratio checks
		
		• Include procedures for water safety, supervision and removal of water hazards in educator and staff induction training, reflect and review in meetings
		
		• Consider creating tools to help educators and staff identify water hazard risks
		
		• Clearly defined role and responsibility statements in respect to specific hazards
		
		• Ensure educators and staff understand their supervision, water play and safety responsibilities, and clearly communicate with each other if handing over the role of direct supervision to another educator
			Providing a child safe environment
			
			Incident, injury, trauma or Illness
			
			Excursions
			
			Health and hygiene
			
			Health and safety
			
			Emergency and evacuation
			
			Interactions with children
			
			Administration of first aid

Areas to include in your procedures	Things to consider and outline in each area *(this will be specific to the context of your service)*	Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures	Related policy and/or procedures
	• Clear procedures for managing the risks around backyard pools and water hazards (e.g. ponds, riverbeds) • Developing a water safety management plan • Actions to be undertaken if child is found unattended in a pool or other water hazard • What local authority or government requirements there may be for pools, spas or other water hazards • Ways to integrate water safety into educational programming and planning		
Documenting and reporting water safety incidents **Reg:** 87, 168 **QA2:** 2.1.2, 2.2.2 **QA3:** 3.1 **QA7:** 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.2.1	• How you will record a water safety incident • What the notification process of an incident is to the regulatory authority • Identify steps taken for managing water hazards and include in documentation • Reflect and identify improvements and or changes to water safety procedures to ensure incident doesn't happen again	• Clearly defined role and responsibility statements or shift descriptions • Ensure all educators and staff understand each step of the procedures	Governance and management Incident, injury, trauma and illness

5. Procedures created/reviewed

Include the date the procedures were created or reviewed.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

Your service, in consultation with educators, staff, families and other stakeholders, should review the effectiveness of these procedures within a set timeframe or earlier if there is a change in relevant legislation.

State when the procedures will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.

7. Checklist

- ☐ Do the procedures align with your *Water safety policy?*
- ☐ Have your procedures been written in plain English and can they be easily implemented by an educator or staff member new to your service?
- ☐ Is it clear who is responsible for the implementation of the procedures?
- ☐ Are all educators and staff aware of the procedures and can implement them if required?
- ☐ Do you need to develop any resources to monitor and record the procedures?

Useful Resources

Include links to useful resources that have helped inform the development of your policy. In addition, be mindful of the existence of any state- or territory-specific content.

Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Assessments of family day care residences - https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/legislationAndGuidelines/PPORresources/Fact%20sheets/assessments-of-family-day-care-residences-fact-sheet.PDF#search=swimming%20pools
- Guide to the National Quality Framework - https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide
- Preschool water safety initiative – https://royalnsw.com.au/EDUCATION/Preschool-Water-Safety-Initiative/Preschool-Water-Safety-Initiative
- Risk assessment and management - https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/29421
- Water safety – https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/kids/preventing-child-injury-death/water-safety
- Water safety - https://www.watersafety.nsw.gov.au/
- Water safety (Kidsafe Victoria) – https://www.kidsafevic.com.au/water-safety/
- Water safety in Australia - https://www.swimaustralia.org.au/swim-safer
- Water safety resources (Kidsafe) – https://kidsafe.com.au/water-safety/