

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Policy | Community Services Delivery

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with Education and Care Services National Regulations.

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1 Background

1.1 Title of the Policy and Commencement Date

The Children's Services Policy takes effect from upon adoption by Council.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Children's Services are compliant with the Education and Care Services National Regulations. This policy applies to Colleen Gale Children's Centre, Singleton Mobile Preschool and Singleton Out of School Hours.

2 Objective

The objectives of the policy are to meet the requirements of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012* specifically Regulation 168 which requires the approved provider of an education and care service have in place policies and procedures relating to matters set out in sub-regulation (2).

3 Application

The policy applies to staff and users of Council's Childcare Services and is supported by processes and procedures.

4 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Term	Meaning
Approved Learning Frameworks	Services are required to base their educational program on an approved learning framework. There are two nationally which outline practices that support and promote children's learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia; • My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia.
Child-related work	Face-to-face contact with children in a child related sector, or work in a stipulated, child related role.
National Quality Framework (NQF)	Operates under an applied law system, comprising the <i>Education and Care Services National Law</i> and the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations</i> .



Term	Meaning
National Quality Standard (NQS)	Key aspect of the NQF and sets a high, national benchmark for early childhood education and care, and outside school hours care services in Australia.
National Regulations	The <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations</i> support the NWF and provide detail on a range of operational requirements for an education and care service.
Regulatory Authority	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 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 improving outcomes for children.
Working with Children Check Clearance	An authorisation to engage in child-related work.

5 Principles/Body

The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets a high national benchmark for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services in Australia.

The NQS includes 7 quality areas that are important outcomes for children.

Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the NQS and given a rating for each of the 7 quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.

The principles on which Council operates its Children's Services are defined within the 7 quality areas of the NQS as follows.

5.1 Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice

Educational program and practice of educators are child-centered, stimulating and maximise opportunities for enhancing and extending each child's learning and development.

Council will use approved Learning Frameworks to inform and underpin the programs and practice in our services. We are committed to supporting the inclusion and participation of every child and their family. Our educational programs and practices will value and respect Indigenous cultures, identities and connections to community and country. The important role families have in children's childhoods and in supporting a child to identify with and make meaning of themselves and their world is recognised.

Our commitment to supporting participation contributes to children having a strong sense of identity and wellbeing, being a confident learner; and being an effective communicator. By listening to children, our educators support children's active participation, and it is incorporated into all daily routines and learning opportunities. Our educators reflect deeply about the way they implement the approved learning framework in our services and also helping them to adopt holistic practices, be responsive to children, and to plan and implement learning.



Educators are skilled in recognising opportunities in the learning environment and deliver the curriculum using a number of teaching strategies in order to extend and assess children's learning development and well-being. Educators promote each child's agency, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence their experience. This approach builds children's communication and literacy skills, as well as self-efficacy, confidence and promotes them to be active participants within their learning environment.

5.2 Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety

Children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that safeguards and promotes their health, safety, and wellbeing.

Council is committed to ensuring that each child's health and safety needs are met, including identifying the risks and hazards of emergency and evacuation situations. Children, educators, and staff regularly practice our emergency and evacuation procedures to maximise their safety and wellbeing in the event of such situations.

We recognise and respect individual health and comfort requirements, through the implementation of effective hygiene practices to control the spread of infectious diseases, and the prevention and management of injuries and illness. Staff promote the importance of healthy eating and physical activity by ensuring children's nutritional and physical health needs are met and that opportunity for learning about healthy lifestyles underpins everyday routines and experiences. We believe that all children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that provides for their protection through adequate supervision, safe experiences and environments, and emergency preparedness.

Council is committed to ensuring that staff understand their legal and ethical obligation in acting to protect any child who is at risk of abuse or neglect. Council is committed to fulfilling its duty of care by endeavouring to ensure that all workers act in the best interests of a child and take all reasonable steps to ensure a child's safety. Council complies with current child protection legislation to protect children and young people in the workplace.

Council complies with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)* which stipulates that employers should not employ new workers, or continue to employ existing workers, in a child-related role if they do not hold a valid Working with Children Check clearance. Council will ensure that upon enrolment of their child, all parents/guardians must provide:

- Birth Certificate; and
- An Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) Immunisation History Statement which shows that their child is up to date with their scheduled immunisations, or;
- An ACIR Immunisation Exemption – Medical Contraindication Form (IMMU11) which has been certified by an immunisation provider; or
- An ACIR Immunisation History form on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule.

Parents/guardians who fail to provide the required documentation will not be permitted to enrol their child.

Excursions and incursions are an important part of our educational program, providing opportunities for children to build connections with the local community and



contributing to their sense of belonging and connection. We conduct risk assessments and ensure authorisations are obtained from families. Council requires written authorisations from parents or authorised nominees ensuring the health, safety, wellbeing, and best interests of all children are met. Through the authorisation process, parents are informed of risks associated with a situation and can make an informed choice whether to proceed.

We are committed to the safe delivery of children to, and collection from, our services and have detailed processes and procedures in place, proactively implementing them.

5.3 Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment

Physical environment is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

Council is committed to providing safe and comfortable physical environments at its services that actively promote children's wellbeing, learning and development outcomes. The design and location of our premises are appropriate for their purpose. Our environments will promote children's competence and independent exploration and enrich children's learning and development through play. We take an active role in caring for the environment and will contribute to a sustainable future.

Council is committed to ensuring that all outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities, and resources are suitable for their purposes. Premises, furniture, and equipment is safe, clean, and well maintained. Resources, materials, and equipment are sufficient and appropriate, and support the flexibility of our children's programs and experiences.

Council facilities will be designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child and employee in the service and to allow flexible use and interaction between indoor and outdoor space.

Sustainable practices will be embedded in the operations of our services, including the use of environmentally friendly products where practicable. Children are encouraged to respect the environment and participate in experiences that build their understanding of the responsibilities necessary for a sustainable future. We offer children and families inviting, flexible, inclusive, and interactive indoor and outdoor environments that provide opportunities to engage with both built and natural elements.

5.4 Quality Area 4 – Staffing Arrangements

Qualified and experienced educators, who develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create predictable environments and encourage children's active engagement in the learning program.

Council is committed to its employees and to ensuring its workforce is appropriately qualified, motivated, and experienced for its critical role in enhancing children's learning and development through:

- The development of warm, respectful relationships with children.
- The creation of safe environments for children.
- Encouraging children's active engagement in their learning programs.



Council is committed to establishing and maintaining effective, ethical, and efficient practices in all aspects of its operations. All childcare employees are required to always maintain, effective working relationships with each other that are based on the principles of mutual respect, integrity, equity, fairness and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.

Council is committed to always maintaining required educator to child ratios and qualifications. Staffing arrangements are optimised so that children's learning, development, safety, and wellbeing are prioritised at all times. To protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of children at our services, all staff, work experience students or volunteers are required to meet screening requirements and copies of all results and relevant working with children checks are in secure records management systems.

Council will maintain professional standards in all aspects of its operations, including in respect of its staffing and employment practices and plans. All childcare staff will use ethical principles and professional standards to guide their decision making and practice in Council workplaces. All childcare staff will work collaboratively and challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships. Council encourages the appropriate engagement of both work experience and volunteer persons in our services. Work experience students are generally studying towards an early childhood qualification and are placed in services to acquire practical knowledge through interaction with staff and children. Council may also support approved persons for volunteer work in our services to gain experience in the sector.

5.5 Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children

Relationships with children are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging.

We recognise that children are central to everything that we do and that the relationship between the child and the educator is critical to children feeling valued, competent, capable, safe, and secure. We know that children benefit from positive relationships. By listening to children and being responsive and respectful to children, we are promoting children's well-being, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging. Our educators sensitively engage and guide children's interactions with others as they explore their own identity and develop more complex social skills and relationships. Educators will also give due regard to the size and composition of groups when arranging children's spaces, resources, and routines to minimise times when individual children are likely to experience stress or frustration. Our educators positively guide children and support them to develop skills in regulating their own behaviour.

Council does not condone any form of corporal punishment or unreasonable discipline which is an offence under Section 166 of the Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010). Children are provided with support, guidance, and opportunities to regulate their own behaviour. Where challenging behaviours exist or develop, we promote proactive partnerships with families to positively support children's behaviour. Behaviour guidance strategies will not under any circumstances involve the use of any physical punishment, isolation, humiliation, intimidation, or negative labelling by childcare staff. Should behaviour guidance strategies prove to be ineffective and there is a continuing risk of harm to others Council may exclude the child from the service.



5.6 Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

Collaborative relationships with families are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children, and community partnerships based on active communication, consultation and collaboration are essential.

We recognise that families are our primary partners in our work. Council recognises that every child belongs within their family, their cultural group, neighbourhood, and wider community. Council believes that a child's earliest development and learning takes place through their relationships, particularly with their family, who are a child's first and most influential educators. Council commits to respectful and collaborative relationships with families and communities, as we work together to create a positive environment for our children – both where they live and where they learn – to actively promote children's wellbeing, learning and development. Council respects our children, staff, and families' rights to a safe and positive environment at their services. Educators are required to ensure practices in the service respect families' rights and responsibilities. We expect our families to:

- Have a responsibility to be in control of their behaviour at all times and conduct themselves in a lawful, safe, and responsible manner that respects the rights of others, and;
- Use appropriate language and volume of speech.

The following behaviours toward any person are unacceptable:

- all forms of bullying;
- harassment;
- abuse;
- discrimination;
- actions that put another person at risk of harm;
- threats of any kind.

Should families fail to comply with these responsibilities Council may exclude them from the service.

5.7 Quality Area 7 – Governance and Leadership

Effective leadership and governance of the service contributes to quality environments for children's learning and development. Effective leaders establish shared values for the service and set clear direction for the service's continuous improvement.

Council is committed to ensuring that all its services have effective leadership which promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning environment. Council will pursue continuous improvement in all aspects of its operations, and this objective is central to each service's Philosophy Statement.

Council believes that efficient administrative support systems are essential enablers for the effective management and delivery of quality services and is committed to providing and improving those systems. Protecting the privacy of children, families and staff is of utmost importance. Council is therefore committed to the preservation of the confidentiality, integrity, and appropriate use of information it is entrusted with.



Council will ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place to manage all aspects of its business.

All childcare staff will be properly inducted with easy access to induction tools and supports provided. Every effort will be made to ensure continuity of key service staff. Qualified and experienced staff will lead the development of the curriculum and will ensure the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.

The Australian Government's Priority of Access Guidelines sets out three levels of priority, which Council must follow when filling vacant places when the demand for childcare exceeds supply:

- Priority one – a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect;
- Priority two – a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test under section 14 of the *New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999*;
- Priority three – any other child.

Within these main categories, priority should be given to the following children:

- Children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- Children from families that include a disabled person;
- Children from families that include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold or whose partner is on income support;
- Children from families with a non-English speaking background;
- Children from socially isolated families;
- Children of single parents;
- Under the Priority of Access Guidelines, if there are no vacant places and we are providing care for a child who is a priority three, the services may require that child to vacate the place in order to provide a place for a child in priority one or two.

Fee levels will be assessed and set each year for Long Day Care, Mobile Preschool, Out of School Hours Care and Vacation Care in accordance with Council's annual budget process. Council reviews its Operational Plan and Budget annually. The proposed fees and charges for Council operated Education and Care Services will be notified to parents utilising the services as well as to the wider community. The proposed fees and charges will be open to community comment and submissions. The schedule of fees and charges will be provided to all parents on enrolment and throughout any review period.

Council aims to ensure that the enrolment and orientation process meet the unique needs of each child and family. This supports them during their transition to the service, helps develop collaborative partnerships, and promotes a sense of belonging to the service community. Council recognises that families, educators, other staff, and the community need to feel confident any concerns or issues raised will be handled promptly and professionally. An effective complaints management process is provided to meet families'/carers' needs.



6 Relevant Legislation

- *Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Local Government (State) Award 2020*
- *Children's Guardian Act 2019*
- National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care

7 Document Information

Related documents and reference information in this section provides a single reference point to develop and maintain site compliance information.

7.1 Related Documents

Related documents, listed in **Table 7-1** below, are internal documents directly related to or referenced from this document.

Number	Title
17/36488	Children's Services Manual Procedure
17/95449	Children's Services Emergency Management Plan Procedure

Table 7-1 – Related documents

8 Responsible Officer/Policy Owner

Ownership of this policy rests with the Coordinator Community Services.

9 Responsibilities

Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and ensure compliance with this policy. • Provide ongoing training for staff within identified areas of need. • Be alert to possible signs of child abuse and neglect in children.
Responsible Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a duty of care to ensure all operations within their area of responsibility comply with current legislation. • Stay up to date with legislative changes, reviewing and updating the Service Unit's operations, policies, procedures, and actioning improvements when non-compliance is identified or reported.



Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be alert to possible signs of child abuse and neglect in children.
Staff/Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required to comply with legislation and Council policies, protocols, and procedures. • Staff shall report through their Supervisor any areas of non-compliance they become aware of. • Provide a supportive and responsive environment that fosters children's skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing social competence and feeling of self-worth; ○ Expressing emotions in a socially acceptable manner; ○ Communicating with others, both as an active listener and effective talker; ○ Responding sensitively to the needs of others; ○ Acknowledging and learning how to deal with frustration; ○ Learning how to negotiate and solve problems in non-threatening ways; ○ Respecting diversity. • Model the above behaviours in their own daily interactions with the children, their families, and fellow staff members. • Be alert to possible signs of child abuse and neglect in children.

10 Approval

As per cover sheet.

11 Monitoring

This policy will be monitored by Children's Services People Leaders to ensure compliance.

12 Review Date

This policy, once adopted, is to remain in force until it is reviewed by Council. This policy is to be reviewed approximately every two (2) years to ensure that it meets legislative requirements.

13 Last Review Date

This policy was last reviewed on 17 February 2020.



14 Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy

This policy is to be made available for public viewing as required under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, NSW*.

15 Breaches and Sanctions

Any breaches of this Policy will be referred to the General Manager for appropriate action.

16 Document History

The below table provides a summary of changes and amendments to this document.

Version.	Date Amended	Author	Comments (e.g. reasons for review)
4	20 March 2022	Nicole Lonsdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biennial review• Policy ownership details updated.• Inclusion of current applicable regulation.• Inclusion of regulatory authority specific to the policy.• Minor wording updates.

