ADVENTUROUS (RISKY AND NATURE) PLAY POLICY

Our Service recognises that adventurous, risky and nature play provides significant benefits for children's psychological, social, perceptual and physical development. Challenging experiences help children develop confidence, resilience, problem-solving skills, decision-making and sound judgement as they learn to identify and manage risks with appropriate support.

We also recognise the importance of connecting children with the natural environment and their local community. Through nature play, children investigate, create and learn using natural materials, develop an appreciation of the natural world, and build respect for the environment and sustainable practices.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 1: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE		
1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	
S. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S. 165A	Offence relating to children leaving the education and care service premises unauthorised
S. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
4	Definitions: "excursion"; "regular outing"
73	Educational program
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
136	First aid qualifications
161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy	Health and Safety Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy

Child Protection Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy Delivery of Children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premises Policy Educational Program Policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Emergency and Evacuation Policy Excursion/Incursion Policy	Medical Conditions Policy Physical Environment Policy Safe Transportation of Children Policy Snake Awareness Policy Sun Safe Policy Supervision Policy Water Safety Policy Work Health and Safety Policy

PURPOSE

To ensure children have opportunities to engage in adventurous, risky and nature play that supports their learning, development and wellbeing. We encourage educators to create safe and supportive environments where children can explore, make decisions and engage in managed risk-taking. We aim to provide open-ended, dynamic and challenging learning experiences that support children's confidence, resilience and overall development.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

WHAT IS ADVENTUROUS AND RISKY PLAY?

Adventurous and risky play refers to child-led play that is exciting, exploratory and challenging and involves uncertainty or managed risk. It provides opportunities for children to explore, test their abilities, make decisions and solve problems in ways that are appropriate to their age, development and capabilities. Adventurous and risky play may include climbing, balancing, running at speed, rough-and-tumble play, using age-appropriate tools, exploring natural environments, and engaging with natural elements such as water, mud, rocks and uneven terrain.

WHAT IS NATURE PLAY?

Nature play refers to children's play, exploration and learning in natural environments such as parks, gardens, beaches, bushland and other outdoor settings. It includes both structured and unstructured experiences where children engage with natural elements such as plants, water, sand, rocks, soil and other natural loose parts. While nature play most commonly occurs outdoors, it can also occur indoors through experiences using natural materials, such as loose parts play, sensory activities, gardening, nature collections and other creative experiences. Nature play is a key part of adventurous play,

supporting children in exploring natural environments and connecting with the natural world through hands-on experiences.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to ensuring that children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and practices. These are supported through opportunities for nature play and adventurous and risky play within environments where risks are assessed and managed.

Children encounter risk as part of everyday play. Rather than eliminating all risk, our Service uses a risk–benefit approach. Educators use professional judgement to balance the potential benefits of learning and development with identified risks, ensuring children are protected from foreseeable harm.

Educators intentionally support nature play and adventurous and risky play through appropriate supervision, risk assessment and planning. They use positive language to encourage exploration, problem-solving and decision-making, while supporting children to recognise and manage risk appropriate to their age and development.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE:

- that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met
- all educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy and relevant policies and procedures
- risk assessments are conducted to identify potential hazards, assess and minimise any risks that could harm children, but they also consider the benefits for children's development
- daily inspections of the indoor and outdoor learning environment are undertaken to identify any potential risk of harm to children as per our *Physical Environment Policy*, *Health and Safety Policy* and related procedures
- 'active' supervision techniques are implemented. This may include maintaining awareness of the children, effective positioning of educators, and the level of their involvement in the experience, as well as completing regular headcounts and attendance checks.
- educators provide direct, constant and active monitoring of children undertaking activities that involve some risk, and recognise when the ratio of educators to children needs to be increased, or group sizes reduced to maintain safety (e.g., carpentry, water, climbing and other risky or nature play activities)

- where the experience involves children going outside the Service premises:
    - all educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers adhere to other relevant policies, including *Excursion/Incursion Policy* and *Safe Transportation of Children Policy*
    - *an Excursion/Incursion Risk Assessment* is conducted to identify potential hazards, assess and minimise any risks that could potentially cause harm or injury to children, and is approved by the approved provider prior to the experience taking place
    - if the experience is a 'regular outing', a risk assessment is conducted every 12 months, with a new risk assessment developed if the circumstances relevant to the risk assessment change
    - all risk assessments will be reviewed regularly, at least once every 12 months
    - parent/guardian written authorisation for excursions and regular outings is provided prior to the experience taking place. If the experience is a regular outing, written authorisation is only required once every 12 months, unless the circumstances of the regular outing change
- the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and related policies and procedures are always followed
- the regulatory authority is notified of any serious incident within 24 hours of the incident through the NQA IT System
- parents/guardians are notified as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours if their child is involved in a serious incident-at the Service. Details of the incident are to be recorded on the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record.*
- a review of practices is conducted following an incident, including an assessment of areas for improvement.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- have knowledge of and adhere to this policy and relevant procedures
- provide children with opportunities to safely engage in adventurous and risky play experiences
- ensure children are supported to participate in discussions about risk (where appropriate), helping them build awareness of hazards and develop skills to assess and manage risk, make decisions, and problem solve
- intentionally plan and implement in-nature programs that support children to explore local environments, use natural materials, and learn in a variety of environments
- support children to develop environmental awareness and responsibility, including understanding how natural environments are cared for and protected
- foster respect for and connections with Country, plants, animals and natural systems

- use positive guidance to support children's confidence, independence and willingness to engage in new and potentially challenging experiences
- not deny valuable learning experiences solely due to perceived risk that can be controlled
- undertake daily safety checks of indoor, outdoor and nature play environments and manage or report any hazards
- contribute to the review of risk assessments for indoor and outdoor environments and experiences, as well as risk assessments for excursions/incursions
- know children's skills and abilities, actively supervise children and provide additional support where experiences are new, involve a higher level of challenge or risk
- respect children as competent learners, scaffold their learning, and recognise when additional supervision, support or modifications are required to ensure their safety and wellbeing
- report hazards, incidents, injuries and near misses in accordance with Service procedures
- respond to changing environmental conditions by modifying, postponing or ceasing experiences where necessary to maintain children's health and safety
- work collaboratively with families to promote understanding of the benefits of adventurous, risky and nature play experiences.

FAMILIES WILL:

- have knowledge of and adhere to this policy and relevant policies and procedures
- provide written authorisation for excursions/incursions and regular outings in accordance with Service requirements
- support their child's participation in adventurous, risky and nature play experiences (where appropriate)
- ensure their child is dressed appropriately for planned experiences and weather conditions
- ensure their child has any items required for their safe participation in planned experiences
- work collaboratively with educators to support children's confidence, independence and participation in adventurous, risky and nature play experiences.

PLANNING FOR IN-NATURE PROGRAMS

An in-nature pedagogy incorporates time spent by children and educators outside the approved children's education and care service premises, with a focus on nature. Our Service will conduct a risk assessment prior to the in-nature program, with consideration given to the following:

- awareness of animals in different environments (e.g., dogs in parks or wildlife in bushland)

- risks associated with natural environments, such as snakes and ensuring appropriate first aid supplies (e.g., suitable bandages)
- educator first aid qualifications and additional first aid training requirements
- guidance to children about safe interactions with unfamiliar adults and seeking assistance from trusted adults when required
- what emergencies may occur, and what educators need to be prepared for
- sun safety, including appropriate clothing and sunscreen
- water safety (if applicable)
- weather conditions
- travel arrangements and possible unexpected delays or changes
- maintaining educator to child ratios in both the Service and during the excursion/regular outing
- supervision requirements appropriate for children's developmental and health care needs
- children's medical conditions and their medical management plans
- any other requirements in line with our *Excursion/Incursion Policy* and related procedures.

ITEMS TO BE TAKEN AS PART OF THE IN-NATURE PROGRAM

The approved provider/nominated supervisor must ensure that the following items are taken as part of the in-nature program, and as per the risk assessment:

- appropriate number of suitably equipped first aid kits
- fully charged and operating service-supplied mobile phone
- emergency contact information details for all children participating
- medication for children requiring medication and relevant medical management and risk minimisation plans
- experience-specific items required, such as sunscreen, hats, change of clothes, wet weather gear, and other relevant equipment
- attendance record for participating children
- food and water as required
- nappy change/toileting facilities and equipment if required
- emergency supplies relevant to the environment (e.g., additional water, thermal blankets, insect repellent, etc.)
- any other items identified in the risk assessment as necessary to ensure children's health, safety, and wellbeing.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Adventurous (Risky and Nature) Play Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service or the family's ability to utilise the Service.

RELATED RESOURCES

Excursion/Incursion Risk Assessment Risk Assessment – Blank Template	Risk Assessment Guide and Procedure

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2013). *Talking about practice: Adventurous play—Developing a culture of risky play* (NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 58).

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2019). *QA1 – The legislative requirements of an in-nature program.*

Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0).*

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Nature Play Australia. (n.d.). *Nature Play Australia*.

Play Australia. (2025). *A risky play position statement for young Australian children.*

Speldewinde, C. (2024). *Dipping your toes in the water: Early childhood science learning at a beach kindergarten.* Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education.

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	[NAME] Amy Flockhart	[POSITION] office admin	[DATE] 04/08/2026
POLICY REVIEWED	AUGUST 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	AUGUST 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V9.08.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • added paramount consideration statement • strengthened alignment with risk-benefit assessment approach • clarified that in-nature and adventurous play principles apply across programs • reorganised and streamlined content, removing duplications, e.g., benefits of risky play and quotes • highlighted headings to identify new content		

	• added educators' and families' responsibilities and related resources section, and updated sources
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	
AUGUST 2025	• policy maintenance • addition of a position statement for risky play from Play Australia • additional information added re: regular outing/written authorisation required • sources checked and repaired as required