EARTHQUAKE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Earthquakes are a unique encounter in Australia. They are unpredictable and transpire without warning. Australia is located away from tectonic plate boundaries where large earthquakes occur more frequently. However, Australia can still experience potentially damaging earthquakes, which are caused by the sudden release of stress that slowly builds up across the plate as it moves northeast. To ensure the safety of children, educators, staff and families, education and care services should be prepared for earthquakes, minimising risks and implementing explicit management strategies if required.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
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
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service that is child safe.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	Paramount consideration
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
S. 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
S. 216D	Regulatory Authority may close services because of emergency event [VIC] [commencing 2026]

4	Definitions “multi-storey building” and “storey”
12(d)	Meaning of a serious incident- any emergency for which emergency services attended
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
136	First aid qualifications
168	Education and Care Services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures are to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
175	Prescribed information to be notified to regulatory authority
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

RELATED POLICIES

Acceptance and Refusal Authorisation Policy Delivery of Children to and Collection from Education and Care Services Premises Policy Emergency and Evacuation Policy Family Communication Policy	Health and Safety Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Lockdown Policy Record Keeping and Retention Policy Supervision Policy

DEFINITION

An earthquake is a shaking of the surface of the Earth’s crust. They strike without warning and can vary in severity. Earthquakes are the result of a sudden release of stored energy in the Earth’s crust that creates seismic waves. The severity of an earthquake is measured using the Richter Scale.

Over the last 80 years, there has been 17 earthquakes registering 6 or more on the Richter Scale.

PURPOSE

Preparing for an earthquake requires our Service to learn what should be done before, during and after an earthquake in order to minimise the risk of children and staff being injured. We believe that children’s safety, rights, and best interests are the paramount consideration for all Service operations, decisions and functions.

SCOPE

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Management will ensure that the Service is as 'earthquake safe' as possible by having clear strategies and procedures in place for implementation before, during and after the earthquake. (Based on geographical location, earthquake history and general logic, adopting the following procedures will be at the discretion of Service Management.) This policy reminds educators, staff, volunteers and students of the procedure to follow in the event of an earthquake emergency.

BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

Preparing for an earthquake will help reduce damages to the Service's structure and prevent injuries to children, families and staff.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ MANAGEMENT/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR AND EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- obligations under the Education and Care National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations are met and understood by all educators and staff
- all educators, including casual/relief educators and staff members, are familiar with our *Earthquake Management Policy*, procedures and regulatory requirements and comply accordingly
- new staff, volunteers and students are provided with information and training about our *Earthquake Management Policy* and procedures during induction
- reasonable steps to support the safety, health and wellbeing of children, families and staff during an emergency event
- emergency and evacuation policies and procedures are available for inspection at the Service's premises at all times
- emergency Contact numbers are displayed in a prominent position within the Service
- an annual risk assessment is conducted to identify, monitor and eliminate any hazards that may occur during an earthquake
- review the risk assessment at least once every 12 months and as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safe evacuation of children
- emergency evacuation plans are displayed in prominent positions near each exit and in the indoor and outdoor learning environments

- earthquake drills are conducted in accordance with the *Emergency Evacuation Rehearsal Procedure*. The drills will be conducted on different days over the week, ensuring that all children participate in the drill.
- emergency evacuation rehearsals (drills):
    - are practiced *every three months*, including identifying safe places within the Service to go with the children in case of an earthquake
    - are conducted on different days over the week, ensuring that all children participate in the drill
    - are recorded using the *Emergency Evacuation Record* and discussed at team meetings to ensure continuous improvement
- families are informed when an emergency evacuation rehearsal or drill has occurred
  each room has an *Emergency Evacuation Kit* located in a prominent position
- to regularly audit and restock the *Emergency Evacuation Kit*
- DROP, COVER and HOLD or DROP AND BE TURTLE SAFE is practiced with children
    - Drop, Cover and Hold or Drop & be a Turtle safe involves children learning to:
        - Drop on your hands and knees, cover your head and neck with your arms, crawl only as far as needed to reach cover from falling objects
        - Hold onto any durable furniture until the shaking stops and you are told it is safe to come out by an adult
- to identify safe places within the Service to go with the children when an earthquake strikes
    a) this may be a strong table that you can hold on to the table legs to keep it from moving away and assist in protecting the children and yourselves
    b) next to an interior wall, away from windows that can shatter cause injury
    c) ensure it is a place that is away from tall furniture that can fall
- the Service's insurance policy is checked for earthquake inclusion
- to seek qualified advice to ensure the Service building is compliant [Vic]
- shelving is secured to the wall and open shelving has 'lips' to prevent equipment sliding off during an earthquake
- equipment is stored securely and safely
- to refer to the *Emergency and Evacuation Policy* for steps to be followed when the Service needs to close in response to an emergency
- to comply immediately with any direction or order issued by the regulatory authority to close the Service due to an emergency event

- the regulatory authority is notified within 24 hours via the NQA ITS if the Service is required to close for a period of time as a result of a local emergency
- the Department of Education is notified within 24 hours if the Service is temporarily closed via CCS Software or Provider Entry Point (PEP)
- a serious incident notification is submitted to the regulatory authority within 24 hours when there has been an emergency that has posed a risk to the safety and wellbeing of the children.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

When an earthquake begins it will happen suddenly with rapid shaking. Management, staff, educators and children are to immediately apply what they have practiced during the drills.

MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATORS WILL:

- Call 'EARTHQUAKE – DROP, COVER & HOLD or DROP AND BE A TURTLE'
- Assist children to get into the correct position

If inside – move away from windows, heavy objects or shelves.

  - Drop Cover and Hold preferably under a sturdy table
  - keep clear of windows and overhead fittings

If outside – move away from trees, powerlines, building and then Drop, Cover and Hold

  - Drop to the ground
  - Cover your head and neck with arms and hands
  - Hold on until the shaking stops

- Protect babies with your body or mattresses if available
- Once the shaking stops and management has confirmed it is safe, educators and children will be given the 'ALL CLEAR'

AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

Once the shaking has ceased, management and educators need to begin implementing a recovery plan as you prepare for the chance of any aftershocks occurring.

MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATORS WILL:

- stay calm and reassure children
- evaluate the need to evacuate if there are fires, gas leaks or other structural damage that requires immediate evacuation

- call 000 for emergency services and seek and follow advice
- implement *Emergency Evacuation Procedures*
- if evacuation is required, move to a safe location and be aware of hazards
- check attendance list to ensure all children, staff and visitors are accounted for
- contact parents if evacuation is required
- turn off electricity, gas and water. Check water, gas and electric lines for damages. If any damages are present, turn off the water and electricity.
- assess any injuries that may have occurred and provide first aid
- do not run outside, unless evacuation of the building is needed due to damage
- report any damages to emergency services
- turn on the radio and listen as emergency services will broadcast the most appropriate advice for the Service
- stay out of the Service building if it is damaged and unsafe
- following the emergency evacuation, an *Emergency Evacuation Record* and an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* will be completed
- the approved provider will make a notification of a serious incident to a regulatory authority (within 24 hours) through the NQA ITS when emergency services have attended an education and care service in response to an emergency, rather than as a precaution or for any other reason.
- The approved provider and nominated supervisor will comply with any direction from the regulatory authority to close the Service resulting from an emergency event [Mandatory for NSW and VIC Services – Commencing early 2026]

DEALING WITH TRAUMA

Emergencies and natural disasters are extremely stressful, and it is normal for children and adults to feel overwhelmed and distressed. People cope with trauma in many different ways. Children look to adults for reassurance, care and opportunities to share their feelings. It is important for educators to understand the impact of disasters and seek help when needed.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will support educators to provide information to parents and families following any emergency or natural disaster including:

- will the service be open in the days and weeks ahead?
- how to find alternative care and education
- how to contact services for support with dealing with trauma

Several organisations offer support for educators in these situations:

Emerging Minds- Understanding and supporting preschool age children who have experienced grief and loss

BeYou- Trauma- informed strategies for educators

BeYou Educator Wellbeing after a natural disaster

PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY

Australian Government Department of Education. Help in an Emergency

Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology

Queensland Fire and emergency services

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

The *Earthquake Management Policy* will be evaluated and 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, and notification of any change to policies will be made to families within 14 days.

CHILDCARE CENTRE DESKTOP RESOURCES

Emergency Evacuation Kit Checklist Emergency Evacuation Procedure Emergency Evacuation Record Emergency Evacuation Rehearsal Calendar Emergency Evacuation Rehearsal Evaluation	Emergency Evacuation Rehearsal Procedure Emergency Support Services Record Emergency Management Plan (EMP) Potential Emergencies - Risk Assessment Action Plan

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
Australian Government –Department of Home Affairs. *Emergency management*
Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW)
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Education and Care Services National Regulations (NSW) (2025) (For NSW services only)
New Zealand Government *Get Ready ShakeOut*
Queensland Government Emergency services and safety. *Earthquakes*
Western Australian Legislation Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012 (WA Services only)
Western Australia Legislation Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 (WA Services only)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	[NAME] Amy Flockhart	[POSITION] office admin	[DATE] 19/06/2026
POLICY REVIEWED	MARCH 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	MARCH 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V8.03.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • small edits within policy • links to National Law and National Regulations updated • sources checked and updated as required		

POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
MARCH 2025	• annual policy maintenance • deletion of repeated statements • Childcare Centre Desktop resource section added • sources checked for currency and repaired as required	MARCH 2026