ADDITIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Supporting children with additional needs requires educators to extend upon the strategies they already use in providing quality education and care for children. It is imperative for educators to develop a comprehensive understanding of each child's interests and abilities and implement an inclusive and equitable learning environment that supports their individual needs.

Inclusion is stipulated in the Early Years Learning Framework as '*taking into account all children's, social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographical location) in curriculum decision making processes*.' Belonging, Being and Becoming (V2.0, 2022, p.66).

Our Service will work in partnership with families and other professionals to ensure specific consideration and adaptations/adjustments allow children with additional needs access and participation and achieve positive learning outcomes.

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.
QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
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.
QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.

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. 162B	Child safety training
S.166A	Offence to subject child to inappropriate conduct Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
157	Access for parents
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures are to be followed

RELATED LEGISLATION

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

RELATED POLICIES

Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy	Enrolment Policy
Behaviour Management Policy	Interaction with Children, Family and Staff Policy
Code of Conduct Policy	Medical Conditions Policy
Early Childhood Intervention Practitioner	Orientation of Families Policy
Management Policy	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Educational Program Policy	Respect for Children Policy

PURPOSE

Our Service understands and meets our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to support children with disability and be responsive to each child, irrespective of their additional needs and abilities. We aim to provide a supportive and inclusive environment that supports each child to fully participate in their education and care at the Service. Educators remain encouraging, unprejudiced and supportive, ensuring that all children are treated equally and fairly and have the opportunity to grow and develop to their individual potential.

Our Service is committed to upholding the safety, rights and best interests of every child as the paramount consideration in all decision-making. We recognise that children with additional needs may be more vulnerable to abuse, harm, discrimination, coercion or inappropriate conduct. We therefore implement strengthened child safe practices to ensure:

- equitable protection from harm
- dignity and respect in all interactions
- supported participation in decisions affecting them
- proactive identification and management of risks
- zero tolerance of inappropriate conduct and inappropriate discipline

All staff, educators, students, volunteers and support workers are required to actively promote model child safe behaviours at all times.

SCOPE

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

DEFINITIONS

According to the Inclusion Support Program Guidelines (Australian Department of Education 2025), there is no national definition of '*additional needs*.' This term is used within the policy to describe children who may need or require specific considerations or adaptations to participate fully in our Early Childhood Education and Care Service.

Additional needs may include children who:

- have a disability or developmental delay- (including awaiting disability diagnosis)

- are presenting with challenging behaviours
- have a serious medical or health condition, including mental health
- are presenting with trauma-related behaviours

Meeting the needs and requirements of:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- children from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse background
- may also require specific considerations, such as cultural support, to ensure that these children are able to participate fully in ECEC services and experience positive outcomes

[source: Inclusion Support Program Guidelines. 2025. p. 8]

WHAT IS A DISABILITY

Disability is defined broadly in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and does not rely on formal diagnosis of disability. Disability can be visible or non-visible. Disability in relation to the DDA includes: Physical; intellectual; psychiatric; sensory; neurological and learning disabilities as well as physical disfigurement.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Changes to a policy, practice, procedure, program or environment that enables a person with disability to access and participate in the service on the same basis as others. [ACECQA: The Disability Discrimination Act 2022].

We understand that additional needs may be temporary or permanent with diverse origins, which require different responses. Supporting children with additional needs enables them to have equitable access to resources and participation. This can lead to stronger skills in literacy and numeracy, social and emotional development and understanding of diversity. Strategies for supporting children with additional needs can differ significantly because every child is unique.

IMPLEMENTATION

CHILD SAFE PRACTICES FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Our Service recognises that children with disability or additional needs may:

- rely on adults for personal care
- experience communication barriers
- have difficulty identifying unsafe situations

- be more vulnerable to grooming or coercion
- experience social isolation

To mitigate these risks, educators and support workers will:

- use respectful, age-appropriate explanations before providing personal care
- seek the child's consent (where developmentally appropriate) before physical assistance
- ensure toileting and personal care practices maintain dignity and visibility (e.g. door ajar policy where safe and appropriate)
- document all personal care and behavioural incidents
- avoid unnecessary physical contact
- support children to understand body safety, safe/unsafe touch, and help-seeking strategies in inclusive and accessible ways
- use visual supports, social stories or communication aids to teach protective behaviours
- ensure external therapists or support workers sign in, provide credentials, and are never left unsupervised with children
- immediately report any suspected inappropriate conduct.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE:

- obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law, Education and Care Services National Regulations and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) are met
- child safety and wellbeing are the paramount consideration in all inclusion planning and decision making
- all staff, educators, students and visitors have knowledge of and adhere to this policy; understand and comply with the (DDA) including making reasonable adjustments to the program, practices and environment in collaboration with families and children
- all new employees are provided with a copy of this policy as part of their induction process and ongoing professional practice
- all staff, educators and support workers complete mandatory national child safety training and refresher training every 2 years
- support is provided to educators to make reasonable adjustments to enable children with disability access and participate in the Service on the same basis as others
- privacy and confidentiality are maintained in accordance with Service policies
- children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity is considered to inform curriculum decision-making processes to provide an inclusive education

- completed enrolment forms are used to gather information about children's additional needs and supports that may be required
- risk assessments are conducted where children with additional needs require personal care, medical support, behavioural support or external therapist within the Service environment
- equitable access is provided to support children with additional needs
- families are encouraged to meet with the educators who will be working with the child to ensure an understanding of the child's needs, appropriate methods for communication, and to ascertain that suitable resources and support are provided to both the family and the child
- educators understand their obligations under offences relating to inappropriate conduct, including grooming, coercion or behaviour that causes harm
- they have a thorough understanding of the NDIS plan for each child (if applicable) and assist to help achieve goals and build skills and independence
- they contact their local Inclusion Agency to access information and support about the Inclusion Support Program
- that any barriers preventing a child's inclusion are identified and strategies to make improvements implemented
- they develop a *Strategic Inclusion Plan and Individual Support Plans* in collaboration with the Inclusion Agency (IA) which will identify any barriers preventing a child's inclusion and implement strategies for improvement
- they seek assistance, training, and where possible, financial funding from inclusive support agencies to promote the development of skills in children with identified additional needs
- educators are meeting the needs of each individual child, by providing educators with targeted professional development and opportunities to network with professional agencies
- they access the Inclusion Support Portal (IS Portal) through PRODA
- parents/guardians provide written consent for information about their child to be shared with relevant IA, Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) and the Department if accessing support under the Inclusion Support Program
- the Service works in partnership with Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) professionals, allied health professionals and families to verify the educational program and learning environment is inclusive for each child with additional needs, including children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds
- specific plans and programs provided by external resource providers and professionals for children with additional needs are shared with educators and copies filed in the child's individual record
- children are encouraged to feel safe and secure during their education and care at the Service by developing trusting relationships with educators, other children and the community

- strategies and practices are embedded in daily routines and play based learning
- the indoor and outdoor environment and equipment is designed or adapted/adjusted to ensure access and participation for all children, supporting the inclusion of children with additional needs. This may include the use of:
    - portable ramps
    - use of standing frames and support swings
    - specialised inclusion toys such as sensory or switch toys
    - specialised furniture such as chairs, tables and positioning equipment
    - communication charts and Auslan dictionaries
    - resources and books in languages other than English to support Indigenous children and children from linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the program and curriculum are inclusive and meet the individual needs of children with additional needs, disability or developmental delay
- sensory sensitivities and individual regulation needs are considered.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- treat children equally and fairly and with respect
- create an inclusive program and environment, which is adaptable and supportive for all children to access and participate
- advocate for children's rights
- conduct specific observations on the individual child, outlining their interests, strengths and developmental needs to support programming including open ended learning opportunities
- meet with families of children with additional needs to familiarise themselves with the specific communication needs of each child. Communication could include verbal and non-verbal communication skills and cues and may necessitate the use of systems such as sign language, use of images, and/or learning key words in the child's home language
- establish a means for frequent communication with parents of children with additional needs through a communication book, verbal daily information exchanges, and/or formal and informal meetings
- collaborate with all families to meet children's developmental needs in order to build strengths and capabilities
- develop an Inclusion Support Plan (ISP) in collaboration with Inclusion Agency professionals, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) professionals, other allied health professionals and parents for each child

- collaborate with other professionals who play a role in supporting the child's development
- create a flexible environment, which can be adapted to each child's needs within the Service to support the inclusion of children with additional needs
- implement programming experiences and activities, that are inclusive for all children to access, explore and participate
- listen carefully to all children's concerns and discuss issues of inclusion and exclusion, and fair and unfair behaviour
- avoid practices that may unintentionally isolate or stigmatise children with additional needs
- refrain from any behaviour that may be considered inappropriate conduct, including behaviour that is threatening, intimidating, humiliating, degrading, hostile or otherwise inappropriate
- act as role models by displaying appropriate behaviour and language, being consistently aware of and responsive to children who may require additional support, attention or assistance
- discuss a wide range of emotions, thoughts, and views constructively with the children within a supportive environment
- not judge or compare one child's development with another
- talk to children about differences and acceptance
- provide opportunities for all children to play and learn together, promoting cooperative, caring, and social behaviours.

INCLUSION SUPPORT PROGRAM (ISP)

To assist in the provision of an inclusive environment for children with additional needs, our Service may apply for additional support through the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) if the eligibility requirements are met.

The nominated supervisor and educators will refer to the *Inclusion Support Guidelines* and consult with families to submit an application. The objectives of the Inclusion Support Program include:

- supporting Early Childhood Education and Care Services to increase their capacity and capability to provide quality inclusive practices for all children
- to address access and participation barriers
- support the inclusion of children with additional needs
- provide parents or carers of children with additional needs with access to appropriate ECEC services

HIGH POTENTIAL AND GIFTED CHILDREN

Our Service will collaborate with families to support the needs of high potential and gifted children.

We will:

- respect the uniqueness of each child
- acknowledge the characteristics of high potential and gifted children
- be sensitive to the social-emotional needs of gifted children and assist them to feel a sense of belonging
- develop our capacity to cater for the needs of gifted children through professional development
- support children's transition to school
- assist educators cater for gifted children who also have a disability- 'Twice Exceptional' children.

ENHANCED TRANSITION TO SCHOOL PLANNING

Our Service will promote and support enhanced transition to school programs for children with additional needs by:

- starting the planning for transition to school aged care early and in collaboration with all key stakeholders
- involve the child in making choice during the transition process
- liaising with key representatives at the school and other support services to ensure key dates for applications for support are noted
- sharing information about the child's strengths and completing *Transition to School Statements*
- supporting reciprocal visits to strengthen the transition to school for children and families
- provide continuity of learning between our Service and school aged care.

FAMILIES WILL:

- work collaboratively with our Service
- be informed of their child's right to safety, dignity and protection from inappropriate conduct and inappropriate discipline
- share information about their child's specific needs- their interests, things they do well, strategies that are used at home to support their child, identify routines or situations that may cause physical or emotional challenges
- provide accurate information about their child's additional needs including relevant reports, documentation, NDIS plans, details about support services and other allied professionals
- help to identify possible barriers for inclusion and reasonable adjustments that may be required
- consent to our Service accessing external professional support if required to assist educators manage the diagnosed or undiagnosed additional needs of their child

- collaborate with external professional support agencies and educators to implement plans to support inclusion
- provide written consent for information about their child to be shared on the IS Portal if accessing support under the Inclusion Support Program
- collaborate with the Service to ensure behaviour support and medical plans prioritise the child's safety and wellbeing
- adhere to our policies that should the safety of other children and staff be compromised enrolment may be suspended or terminated.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

The *Additional Needs 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.

RELATED RESOURCES

Additional Needs Procedure

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2022). Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) resources.
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. V2.0.*
Australian Government Department of Education. (2025) *Inclusion Support Program (ISP) Guidelines*. *Version 2.5 July 2023.*
Australian Government. Australian Institute of Families Studies. (2024). *Supporting disability inclusion with children and families.*
Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW)
Early Childhood Australia. (2016). *Code of Ethics*
Early Childhood Australia (ECA), & Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA). (2012). Position statement on the inclusion of children with disability in early childhood education and care.
Early Childhood Intervention Australia *National Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention*
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 South Wales Department of Education. (2019). *High Potential and Gifted Education Policy*.
Raising Children *Supporting gifted and talented learning* https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/play-learning/gifted-talented-children/supporting-learning
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]181/06/2026
POLICY REVIEWED	APRIL 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	APRIL 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V12.04.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • paramount consideration of children's safety added throughout policy • stronger child safe practice expectations added- new section added- Child Safe Practices for Children with additional needs • added mandatory child safety training • added inappropriate conduct to policy • sources checked and updated as required		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		
APRIL 2025	• annual policy maintenance • no major edits • Childcare Centre Desktop related resources section added • sources updated as required		