

## Physical Environment

### Policy Statement

Meerilinga is committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of people attending our Service and to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children and young people from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

### Policy Purpose

Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our service policies and procedures, where all workers are committed to identifying possible risks.

We will ensure the environment is safe, stimulating, clean, and well maintained for children, families, educators, and visitors. Children’s awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions.

The physical environment will support children’s participation and engagement, development, learning, and safety, and will provide supervised access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships.

### Scope

This policy applies to the Board of Governors, Executive, all workers, volunteers, students and those employed on a fee for service or contract basis while conducting Meerilinga business.

### Exclusions

### Policy Review

Biennial or from time to time when the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations and customer service.

<b>Policy Reviewed</b>	<b>7 October 2024</b>	<b>By</b>	<b>Advisor Policy &amp; Compliance</b>
<b>Approved By</b>	<b>CEO</b>		
<b>Previous Review</b>	<b>14 November 2023</b>		

## Implementation

To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor service policies and procedures that uphold:

- Work Health and Safety Act (WA) 2020
- Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations (WA) 2022
- Education and Care Services National Law (WA) 2012  
Under this Law we will ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012
- Standards Australia
- Safe Work Australia - Codes of Practice

Achieving safe environments requires a number of policies and procedures including but not limited to policies on:

- Supervision - Water Safety
- Excursions and Transportation
- Child Protection
- Dealing with Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- First Aid
- Sun Protection
- Emergency Management
- Health, Hygiene and Infection Control
- Medical Conditions
- Food Safety
- Maintenance
- Sleep and Rest

The service has a risk management system where hazards are identified and managed within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards in the environment
2. Assess the risk of each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk
4. Monitor and improve safety

All Meerilinga premises and service venues provide an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

The Approved Provider / Nominated Supervisor / Workers responsibilities include the following:

**Ensure the physical environment is designed to:**

- Maximise children's engagement and positive experiences
- Provide space where children can experience quality care in a safe and healthy environment
- Meet licensing requirements for buildings, space requirements, fencing, light, ventilation, firefighting equipment, emergency evacuation exits and safety glass for National Regulations, Building Codes of Australia, WA Department of Planning and Environment, local councils and regulatory authorities.
- It is the responsibility of all workers at the service to implement the risk management system and to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion.
- Refer to the following policies *Incursion, Excursion and Transportation, Sleep and Rest, Emergency Management* for further information.
- Provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the Service.
- Provide sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating, and sleeping facilities.
- Ensure adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety (Reg 112).
- Provide appropriate areas for food preparation.
- Provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur (Reg. 111).
- Incorporate natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air into the building/premises (Reg. 110).
- Facilitate adequate supervision of children at all times including toilets and nappy change facilities.
- Ensure immediate communication is available at all times to and from parents and emergency services (Reg. 98)
- Provide a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences, catering for children's interests and abilities.
- Provide adequate shade in the form of trees or physical shade structures for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities.
- Provide a natural environment for children to explore and experience which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water.
- Ensure all required fencing is compliant with current regulations and is maintained to ensure it is in good condition (including self-closing gates with safety locking mechanisms and boundary fencing).
- Provide a developmentally appropriate environment where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking.
- Provide an environment that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously.

- Ensure safety of children at all times. Non-fixed play equipment in the Service grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an educator.
- Power points not in use have safety caps, all double adaptors and power-boards are out of reach of children, and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling.

### **Choose appropriate resources and equipment:**

- Appropriately sized furniture and equipment will be provided in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age ranges represented in the Service.
- The premises, all equipment and furniture used within the service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; Educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular checks occur within the service to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.
- Children will be supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment that encourage appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level.
- Resources will be adequate in number for the number of children attending our Service and be developmentally appropriate.
- Specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment.
- Resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of the Service's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Large purchases of equipment will be the responsibility of the Approved Provider.
- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the service.
- Educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of children in their particular room.
- Educators will complete a log for the nominated supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis (see *Equipment and Maintenance Record*).
- Children's ideas and suggestions in planning the indoor and outdoor environments will be facilitated.
- Children will be encouraged to make decisions about the use of equipment and resources.
- The Service will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment.
- Climbing equipment will be installed according to manufacturers' recommendations and compliant with Australian Safety Standards eg: incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
- Incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity.

- All equipment and resources meet relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly.
- Families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats etc.
- Educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children.
- Educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment.
- A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained by Meerilinga Finance and Administration, together with the Nominated Supervisor and educators at the Service location.

### **Grouping of Children:**

- The children in our Early Learning Programs are grouped according to their age and/or developmental stage, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences.
- Our indoor and outdoor environment provides opportunities for developmentally appropriate planned experiences, intentional teaching, and spontaneous play throughout the day.
- The Service will ensure there is an adequate number of educators employed and on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements. Appropriate supervision of children must be maintained at all times in both the indoor and outdoor environment.

### **Child Protection:**

- Our Service is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount and that we continue to improve our child safe culture and practices.
- Refer to the *Child Safe Environment – Child Protection Policy* for further information.

### **Daily Safety Checks:**

- A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children arrive. The *CCS Daily WHS Schedule* is completed when conducting the safety check and kept at the Service.

This inspection will include the:

- Service perimeters
- Fences and fence line
- Gates

- Paths
  - Buildings
  - All rooms accessible by children
  - Fixed equipment
  - Sand pit
- This must be completed in order to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals. In the event of a sharp object being found (for example a syringe), workers will use the *Sharps and Foreign Objects Kit* to safely dispose of the object.
  - The Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have any identified repairs carried out as soon as possible.
  - All fences and barriers that enclose outdoor spaces used by children are of a height and design that children cannot go through, over or under. (Reg. 104).

### **Sleep and Rest Environment:**

- Educators and staff will strictly adhere to the *Sleep and Rest Policy* and procedures.
- Where cots are used, the cot and mattress must meet the mandatory Australian Standard for Cots- (AS/NZS 2172).
- Cots and beds will be regularly checked to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe
- Beds will be stored in a dry area and located where they are easy to access for all educators and other staff, and not placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks.
- Educators will ensure to use correct manual handling techniques when moving the beds.
- Light bedding will be used for cots and beds.
- Hanging cords, strings from blinds, curtains or electrical devices will be away from cots and mattresses.

### **Ongoing Maintenance:**

- The Service will continuously reflect on its environment and put in place a plan to ensure that the environment reflects our ideology of providing an environment that is safe, stimulating, and engaging for all who interact within it.
- Safety checks maintain basic standards of safety within our Service. Workers will complete and record a daily inspection of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be identified and controlled to prevent harm or injury to service users.
- Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazards.

- The nominated supervisor will document required maintenance in a maintenance plan/log for the Service as required. Repairs and maintenance will be conducted throughout the year according to priority including, hazard removal, safety precautions and any relevant policies.
- Meerilinga together with location building owners will complete and have a record of regular inspection of:
  - The building and premises safety check and
  - All emergency response equipment, in accordance with Australian standards, manufacturer's instructions, industry standards and relevant building codes.
- The Service will have regular pest inspections carried out by an accredited pest control company. Documentation of these inspections will be kept and any further recommended treatments as a result of the findings from the pest control check will be carried out in a timely manner.
- Test and tag of electrical equipment is conducted and recorded annually by a qualified electrician.
- Stay up to date with banned/recalled products and remove these immediately from the Service if required.
- Workers will adhere to the *Maintenance policy* for further information.

#### **Laundering of soiled items:**

- Laundry and hygienic facilities are located and maintained in a way that do not pose a risk to children.
- Adequate storage is provided.
- Soiled content on clothing will be removed as far as practicable and placed in a plastic bag labelled with child's name. Items will be stored securely in a sealed container and are returned to a child's home for laundering.
- Workers will adhere to the *Health, Hygiene and Infection Control policy* for further information.

#### **General Cleaning:**

##### Building, Premises, Furniture and Equipment

- The *CCS Daily WHS Schedule* is used to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly.
- Workers will clean the Service at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed
- Accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the Service always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.

- Chemicals and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately. A register of hazardous chemicals used at the service, including Safety Data Sheets.
- Workers will adhere to the *Health, Hygiene and Infection Control policy* for further information.

### **Children's Bathroom:**

- Clear supervision is provided to children when in use (having regard to the need to maintain the rights and dignity of children).
- Educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing, toileting.
- Bathrooms will be cleaned at least twice a day and at other times as required.
- Signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that children, educators and other staff and families are aware that the floor is wet.
- Educators will ensure the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure is followed.
- Workers will adhere to the *Health, Hygiene and Infection Control policy* for further information.

### **Sun Protection:**

- Workers will adhere to our *Sun Safety policy* and procedures at all times.
- A combination of sun protection measures will be implemented whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above.
- Educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day.
- Temperature of outdoor equipment and surfaces will be monitored during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play.
- Refer to the *Sun Safety policy* for further information.

### **Water Safety:**

- At all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water
- All water containers/water troughs etc. used for activities will be immediately emptied after every use: storage will prevent the collection of water e.g., upright/inverted.
- During daily checks of the premises, particularly after rain or watering, water that has collected in holes or containers will be emptied/removed.
- Cleaning containers, including mop buckets are not accessible to children and emptied/removed immediately after use.
- Refer to the *Supervision – Water Safety* and the *Health, Hygiene and Infection Control policies* for further information.



### **Child Collection and Service Closure:**

- Children's attendance is recorded for each daily session of care. Each child is signed in and out by the parent/guardian or authorised person on the child's enrolment record.
- Children must not leave the Service premises unauthorised.
- Two workers must close the Service at the end of day.
- Both workers are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed by checking sign in and out sheets for all rooms and physically checking all rooms and areas.
- In the case where a parent has omitted to sign their child out, and the educators did not witness the child leave the service, the educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the Service
- If unable to contact the family, the educators are to contact other educators present on that day for confirmation that the child has been collected. The Nominated Supervisor is to then be notified before leaving the Service
- Individuals visiting our Service must also sign in when they arrive at the Service and sign out when they leave.
- Refer to the *Child Delivery and Collection – Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations policy*.