

## POLICY – PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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### 1. National Quality Standards

| <b>Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety</b> |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Area</b>   | <b>Concept</b>                    | <b>Descriptor</b>  |
| 2.1   | Health                            | Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.   |
| 2.1.1   | Wellbeing and comfort             | Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s needs for sleep, rest and relaxation. |
| 2.1.2   | Health practices and procedures   | Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.  |
| 2.1.3   | Healthy Lifestyles                | 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.                                  |
| 2.2.2   | Incident and emergency management | Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.          |

| Quality Area 3: Physical Environment |                 |   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Area                                 | Concept         | Descriptor  |
| 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. |
| 3.1.2                                | Upkeep          | Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.  |

See Appendix 1 for Education and Care National Services Regulations

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 Baringa Child Care Centre Association Incorporated (Baringa) is committed to providing an environment that is safe, 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.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of Baringa.

## 4. Duty of Care

- 4.1 Baringa has a legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to provide:

1. a safe environment free from foreseeable harm and
2. adequate supervision for all children.

## 5. Background

- 5.1 The physical environment can contribute to children's wellbeing, happiness, and creativity as well as promoting the development of independence. It can contribute to and make visible the quality of children's learning and involvement in experiences. The choices made in an education and care service about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air, and light in combination with access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor areas, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

## 6. Implementation

- 6.1 Appropriate resources and equipment will be provided to promote safety and enhance children's learning and development as follows:

1. Appropriately sized furniture and equipment will be provided in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age ranges represented at Baringa.
2. Centre Management will be responsible for any large purchases of equipment and is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of Baringa.
3. Educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of their classroom.
4. Educators will complete a log for the Nominated Supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis.
5. Baringa will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment.
6. Resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of the Baringa community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

7. Children will be provided with resources and equipment that encourages appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level.
8. The environment will be organised to ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing, with appropriate supervision at all times.
9. Specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment.
10. Climbing equipment will be set up in a safe way and compliant with Australian Safety Standards. For example, incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
11. Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazards (appendix 2).
12. An environment will be provided that allows different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas).
13. A natural environment for children to explore and experience will be provided which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water.
14. Educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment.
15. Baringa will work within our Sun Safety policy and procedures, providing adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities.
16. All required fencing will be maintained in good condition and is compliant with current regulations.
17. A variety of indoor and outdoor experiences will be provided, catering for children's interests and abilities.
18. Children will be supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment. These resources will be adequate in number for the number of children attending Baringa and be developmentally appropriate.
19. A developmentally appropriate environment will be provided where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking.
20. An environment will be provided that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously.
21. The environment will incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity.
22. Sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating, and sleeping facilities will be available.
23. Toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments.
24. Adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety.
25. Natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air will be incorporated into the building.
26. Appropriate areas for food preparation are provided.
27. A separate indoor space for children who are under two years of age is available.
28. An area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur is available.
29. 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.
30. Educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children.
31. Where appropriate children are involved in setting classroom guidelines.

32. Families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats, etc.

33. A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained.

34. All equipment, including resources, equipment, car seats, booster seats, etc. meet relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly.

6.2 Baringa will keep a record on Storypark of any changes that are made to the physical environment of the service, such as rearranging of rooms etc. to show continuous improvement and will document the links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment, and the children's learning in the program.

6.3 An appropriate sleep/rest environment will be provided for the children that meets the following requirements:

1. All cots must meet the mandatory Australian Standard for Cots- (AS/NZS 2172)
2. Mattresses should be in good condition- clean, firm and flat and fit the cot base with no more than 20mm gap between the mattress sides and ends.
3. Cots and beds will be positioned to encourage a calm and relaxing environment. There will be a minimum space of 300mm between each cot to reduce the possibility of cross infection.
4. Cots and beds will be regularly checked to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe.
5. Beds will be located in an area that is easy to access for all educators and other staff.
6. Beds will be stored in a dry area.
7. Educators will ensure to use correct manual handling techniques when moving the beds.
8. Beds should not be placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks.
9. Light bedding will be used for cots and beds.
10. Checks will be made to identify any hazards to ensure a safe environment
11. Hanging cords, strings from blinds, curtains or electrical devices will be away from cots and mattresses.

6.4 Baringa will engage in ongoing maintenance as follows:

1. 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.
2. Centre Management will document required maintenance in a maintenance plan/log for Baringa as required. Repairs and maintenance will be conducted throughout the year according to priority including, hazard removal, safety precautions and any relevant policies.
3. Centre Management is responsible for completing a building safety checklist of Baringa and its grounds bi-annually and ensure any work deemed necessary is completed to Australian standards.
4. Centre Management will also ensure that Baringa and its grounds comply with Local Government and BCA regulations in regard to fire-fighting requirements, ventilation, natural and artificial lighting, and safety glass.

6.5 Baringa will ensure that in grouping of children:

1. Children are grouped according to their age and/or developmental stage. Within that space, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences.
2. Each age group has different legally required adult to child ratios, which are adhered to at all times in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
3. Our indoor and outdoor environment provides opportunities for developmentally appropriate planned experiences, intentional teaching, and spontaneous play throughout the day.

6.6 Safety Checks

1. A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children begin to arrive in order to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds, ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals. This inspection will include the:
  - Service perimeters
  - Fences/Fence Line
  - Gates
  - Paths
  - Buildings
  - All rooms accessible by children
  - Fixed equipment
  - Sand Pit
  - Mud Kitchen Area
2. In the event of a sharp object being found (for example a syringe) educators will wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the object and place it in the 'sharp object box'. This box will be disposed of as per the recommendations of our local council.
3. Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead, or dangerous looking branches as well as checked for any infestations.
4. Non-fixed play equipment in the Baringa grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an Educator.
5. Baringa 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.
6. The Outdoor and Indoor Daily Safety Checklists (appendix 2) will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept and Centre Management will make the appropriate arrangements to have any necessary repairs carried out as soon as possible. Appendix 2 also includes on-going guiding principles for managing the safety of the indoor and outdoor environment.

6.7 Cleaning of buildings, premises, furniture and equipment will be carried out as follows:

1. Baringa will use structured cleaning schedules to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly.
2. Educators will clean the premises at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.
3. Accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the premises always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.

6.8 When purchasing, storing and/or using any dangerous chemicals, substances, medicines or equipment, Baringa will:

1. Adhere at all times to manufacturer's advice and instructions when using products to clean furniture and equipment at Baringa.
2. Store all dangerous chemicals, substances and medicines in their original containers provided by the manufacturer. All labels and/or use by dates should be kept intact at all times.
3. Any substance found to be stored in a different container than originally provided, or with destroyed labels and/or unknown use by dates where applicable will not be used under any circumstances.
4. Containers will be disposed of correctly following local council guidelines, and not reused under any circumstances.
5. All dangerous chemicals, substances and equipment must be stored in a locked place or facility that is labelled, secure and inaccessible to children. These materials may include, but are not limited to, all cleaning materials, detergents, poisonous or dangerous substances, dangerous tools and equipment including those with sharp and razor edges and toiletries.

6. Educators will follow the instructions of manufacturers, particularly of any product that may need to be stored in a refrigerated environment as per instructions.
7. Any substances that need to be refrigerated must be stored in a labelled, child resistant container, preferably in a separate compartment or in a part of the refrigerator inaccessible to children.
8. All hazardous chemicals must be supplied with a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) formerly called a Material Data Safety Sheet. Baringa will adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for use, storage, and first aid instructions recorded on the SDS.
9. Baringa will keep a register of all hazardous chemicals, substances and equipment used at Baringa. Information recorded should include where they are stored, their use, any risks, and first aid instructions and the current SDS. The register will be readily accessible.
10. Appropriate personal protective clothing should be worn in accordance to the manufacturer's instructions when using and disposing of hazardous substances or equipment.
11. Seek medical advice immediately if poisoning or potentially hazardous ingestion, inhaled, skin or eye exposure has occurred, or call the Poisons Information Line on 13 11 26, who may advise you to call an Ambulance on 000.
12. In the case of any child or educator becoming injured by a chemical, substance, or equipment, Baringa will initiate our emergency, medical and first aid procedures, immediately notify the appropriate authority that administers workplace health and safety and any other person or authority as required by regulations or guidelines.
13. In any major emergency involving a hazardous chemical or equipment, a hazardous gas or a fire or explosion hazard, call the emergency services, dial 000 and notify the appropriate authority that administers workplace health and safety and any other person or authority as required by regulations or guidelines.
14. The Poison Safety Checklist will be used in order to ensure we are consistently meeting requirements.

#### 6.9 Children's Bathroom

1. Supervision in the bathroom is vital when in use.
2. Educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing.
3. Bathrooms will be cleaned after each routine toileting time and at other times as required.
4. Bathroom floors will be mopped at least daily.
5. Signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that children, educators and other staff and families are aware that the floor is wet.
6. Educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure.

#### 6.10 Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment

1. Baringa ensures that electrical equipment is regularly inspected and tested by an accredited person if the electrical equipment is supplied with electricity through an electrical socket and used in conditions where it could be damaged, including exposure to moisture, heat, vibration, mechanical damage, corrosive chemicals or dust.
2. A record of all electrical testing and tagging must be attached and kept until the equipment is next tested or disposed of and must specify:
  - The name of the tester.
  - The date and outcome of the testing.
  - The date on which the next testing must be carried out.

### 6.11 Maintenance of Fire Equipment

1. All fire equipment at Baringa will be maintained as per the legal standards.
2. External agencies will be employed to assist Baringa with this maintenance if no currently employed staff or educators are qualified to complete the maintenance checks.

### 6.12 Service Closure

1. Two Educators must close the Baringa premises each night.
2. Both Educators 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.
3. Educators are to follow Service-closing procedures each night.
4. In the case where a parent has omitted to sign their child out, and the Educators did not witness the child leave Baringa, the Educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left Baringa.
5. 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 Baringa.
6. Individuals visiting Baringa must also sign in when they arrive at Baringa and sign out when they leave.
7. Details of absences during the day must be recorded.

## 7. Feedback

Families and staff may provide feedback about this document by emailing [admin@baringa.org.au](mailto:admin@baringa.org.au).

## 8. Approval and Review Details

| Approval and Review | Details           |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Approval Authority  | Centre Management |
| Administrator       | Centre Director   |
| Next Review Date    | February 2024     |

| History                              | Details         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Original Approval Authority and Date | 8 February 2021 |
| Amendment Authority and Date         | N/A             |
| Modifications made                   | N/A             |

## Appendix 1 Education and Care Services National Regulations

| <b>Education and Care Services National Regulations</b> |   |
|---|---|
| 73  | Educational programs  |
| 74  | Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program |
| 75  | Information about the educational program to be kept available                      |
| 76  | Information about educational program to be given to parents                        |
| 80  | Weekly menu   |
| 82  | Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment   |
| 86  | Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness                     |
| 99  | Children leaving the education and care service premises                            |
| 102   | Authorisation for excursions  |
| 103   | Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair              |
| 104   | Fencing and security  |
| 105   | Furniture, materials and equipment  |
| 106   | Laundry and hygiene facilities  |
| 107   | Space requirements—indoor   |
| 108   | Space requirements—outdoor space  |
| 109   | Toilet and hygiene facilities   |
| 110   | Ventilation and natural light   |
| 111   | Administrative space  |
| 112   | Nappy change facilities   |
| 113   | Outdoor space—natural environment   |
| 114   | Outdoor space—shade   |
| 115   | Premises designed to facilitate supervision   |
| 156   | Relationships in groups   |
| 168   | Education and care service must have policies and procedures                        |
| 171   | Policies and procedures to be kept available  |



## Appendix 2 Outdoor and indoor safety inspection checklist

### CHECKLIST: OUTDOORS

#### Daily Checklist

- Hazardous equipment, machinery, chemicals, and any other materials are inaccessible to children.
- First aid kit is approved, maintained, and accessible throughout outdoor play.
- Garbage – safe and prompt disposal. Lidded secure bins are used that prevent child access and are maintained in a clean and safe condition.
- Garden and renovation debris removed. Branches and bushes are trimmed.
- Garages and sheds are keep locked.
- Hazardous Plants are identified and removed or made inaccessible to children.
- Heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting – is comfortable, safe, maintained, guarded and kept out of reach of children.
- Machinery, tools and equipment – all engine operated or other hazardous equipment, tools or machinery are stored securely and are inaccessible to children.
- Pet and animal droppings are cleared or inaccessible to children in outdoor areas
- Play equipment that is higher than 50cm has soft fall installed underneath at least 25cm in depth and extends 1.9m from the perimeter of the equipment. Outdoor play equipment is placed away from paths and solid garden edging.
- Security - unauthorised access is minimised with appropriate fencing and locks.
- Fences – securely and effectively provide a suitable barrier to all sides of outdoor play areas from roads, water hazards, and driveways. Fences have correct height for the purpose. Childproof self-locking devices are installed on gates.
- Under Service access (including buildings on stilts and footings) – access is blocked or locked.

#### On-going guiding principles

- Bikes and wheeled toys – correctly fitted helmets are worn every time children use 'bikes' and wheeled toys. Further information is available from the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program on (02) 9850 9882.
- Building maintenance – regularly maintain and check for hazards, check building is in a safe, clean and hygienic condition. Records of any damage and subsequent repairs are kept.
- Doors – have finger jam protectors.
- Dust mites, pet allergens – regular dusting and vacuuming.
- Educator's personal items – Educator's personal items such as bags, sharp instruments, toiletries and medicines are kept secure and are inaccessible to children.
- Ensure children are visible and supervised at all times. High-risk areas and climbing and other outdoor play equipment are supervised at all times.
- Finger entrapment – all holes or openings in playground equipment are between 8-25 mm to avoid finger entrapment.
- Non-slip floors, stairs, and steps are used and nonporous indoor floors for easy cleaning.
- Renovation - dangers e.g. lead, asbestos, holes and excavations –risks are minimised according to the situation.

- Pesticide residue - dangerous chemicals are not be used to remove vermin.
- Dogs are excluded from children's play areas, pet interactions with children are supervised.
- Pool safety, fencing and gate compliance, paddling pools are emptied immediately after use, turned upside down, and disinfected if soiled.
- Safe play rules and adequate safe play areas – we talk with children about how to play safely. We maintain safe layouts for outdoor play areas to avoid collisions between children.
- Safety glass is installed according to the Australian Standards on all glass doors and windows accessible to children, and safety decals on both sliding doors and plate glass doors at child and adult eye level.
- Sandpits – are covered when not in use, regularly cleaned, raked, and sand soiled by faeces or blood is removed. Sandpits are hosed and disinfected after removing contaminated sand and material.
- Baringa car park – we ensure family members are aware of pedestrian safety rules such as holding their child's hand and alighting children from the safety door. Families must always supervise their children in the car park to prevent accidents and injuries, which could occur as a result of reversing vehicles.
- Spills – are cleaned up as they occur
- Sun protection - clothing, hats, and sunscreen, for un-shaded areas – we minimise play at peak sun exposure times. A sunshade or natural shade covers sandpits and play areas.
- Surfacing used underneath and around equipment complies with Australian and New Zealand Standards AS/NZS 4422, 1996, and is maintained regularly; materials may need to be raked, redistributed and checked weekly for spiders, sharp objects or animal litter.
- Soft fall - appropriate ground cover under outdoor climbing and play equipment, meets standards.
- Window fly screens are securely fitted, maintained, and permanent.
- Water hazards – are covered and made inaccessible to children, e.g. ponds, dams, spas, creeks, nappy buckets.
- Water troughs are used under adult supervision only and will not be used without a stand, keeping it off the ground. Children remain standing on the ground whilst using the water trough.

## **CHECKLIST: INDOORS**

### **Daily Checklist**

- Barriers - age appropriate, child proof, self-locking barriers are in place for balconies, stairways, kitchen, bathroom, laundry, garage, front and back garden.
- Choking hazards – the environment is monitored for small toy parts, beads, nuts, blind and curtain cords, plastic bags, sandwich bags and balloons.
- Decorations and children's artwork – are not placed near ceiling fans, air conditioners or heaters. The use of tacks, pins, and staples is avoided.
- Emergency evacuations – an evacuation plan and emergency contact numbers are displayed, families are informed, and evacuation procedures are regularly practiced.
- First aid kit with approved contents is maintained and accessible. First Aid certificates are current for relevant educators.
- Furniture and nursery equipment - stable, maintained and meets safety standards.
- Guard and make inaccessible to Children: heaters, coolers, fireplaces, stoves, microwaves, power points, and office equipment. Heaters are away from children's cots.

- Hazardous indoor plants are identified or removed.
- Toys – meet safety standards, age appropriate, maintained, and non-toxic.
- Machinery, tools and equipment – all office and classroom machinery, tools, and equipment is stored securely and inaccessible to children.

### **On-going guiding principles**

- Access for children and adults with disability - safe access is provided into, within and out of Baringa. Toilet and washing facilities, are checked for hazards for people with impaired sight, hearing or mobility.
- Children at risk – we maintain extra security and supervision for children at special risk.
- Educator’s personal items –educator’s personal items such as bags, sharp instruments, toiletries and medicines are kept secure and are inaccessible to children.
- Fire – fire blanket, extinguisher, fire exits, smoke detectors, electrical safety switch are checked regularly and serviced as required.
- Heaters –children cannot come in contact with hot surfaces. It is preferable to use heating where combustion products are ducted outside. If gas heating is used ensure there is adequate ventilation while the heater is operating.
- Record details - Parents are notified of any child accident.
- Noise – we reduce excessive exposure.
- Non-slip, non-porous floors and stairs are in the building.
- Pets and animals –families are informed of pets being kept on the premises and plans to obtain new pets. Pets are vaccinated, wormed, don’t have fleas, are clean, and healthy. Pet accessories such as pet food, litter boxes, and pet toys are kept away from children. Dogs are excluded from children’s play areas. Children-pet interactions are minimal and supervised at all times.
- Safe play rules and adequate play spaces: we discourage running indoors and provide safe furniture layout to avoid collisions.
- Nappy changing- nappy changing arrangements are adequate and appropriate hygiene facilities are provided for nappy changing
- Hot water - the hot water supply is regulated so as to keep it below the temperature at which a child can be scalded (the current KidSafe NSW Inc. recommendation is below 43.5°C).
- Safety glass used and installed according to Australian Standards, and Australian Building Codes on all glass doors and windows accessible to children, safety decals on sliding doors and plate glass doors at child and adult eye level.
- Security - all entry doors are locked at all times and doorbells are on doors.
- Smoke free environment in all areas.
- Stairways, ramps, corridors, hallway, external balcony are enclosed to prevent a child falling.
- Store in locked cabinet any unsafe items, e.g. chemicals, medicines, razors, knives and electrical equipment.
- Supervision and visibility of children – children are visible and supervised at all times. High-risk areas requiring extra supervision include children in high chairs, playpens and play areas, on change tables, and in nappy change and toilet areas. At least two educators are on the premises at all times within sight of each other and the children. During nappy changes or washing children two educators are present or within sight.

### Appendix 3 Source

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services.*

Red nose Safe environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*