WATER SAFETY

QUALITY AREA 2 – CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

PURPOSE

This policy will outline the procedures that apply to managing water safety, including safety during any water-based activities at Sparkways.

POLICY STATEMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sparkways is committed to:

- the safety, health and wellbeing of children. All water-based activities will be adequately supervised and no child will be left unattended when in proximity to water
- ensuring that the approved provider, educators and all other staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to water safety
- providing opportunities for children to explore their natural environment including through water play
- ensuring that children are protected from the risks associated with drowning or non-fatal drowning experiences
- ensuring that curriculum planning incorporates water safety awareness
- providing information to educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and others at the service about water safety

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Sparkways, including during offsite excursions and activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensuring that obligations under *the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations* are met	R	√	√		√
Ensuring parents/guardians are informed of the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment *(Regulation 168(2)(a)(iii), 171)*	R	√	√		√
Assisting the approved provider to implement the *Water Safety Policy (Regulation 170)*		R	√		√
Ensure that there is adequate supervision *(refer to Definitions)* provided given the ages and developmental needs of children undertaking water activities (including ratios) *(National Law: Section 165, Regulation 115)*	R	√	√		√
Adjusting supervision strategies to suit the activities being undertaken *(refer to Supervision of Children Policy)*		√	√		√
Ensuring risk assessments are undertaken and water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities are taken into consideration both at the service and prior to conducting excursions and other offsite events *(National Law: Section 16, Regulation 101)*	R	√	√		√
Conducting a risk assessment in relation to any water hazards on or near the premises that may be accessible to children *(National Law: Section 165)*	R	√	√		√
Ensuring permission is obtained from parents/guardians for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard *(Regulation 102) (refer to Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events Policy)*	R	√	√		√
Ensuring increased levels of supervision for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard *(refer to Supervision of Children Policy) (National Law: Section 165)*	R	√	√		√
Conducting a regular safety check of the service premises *(refer to Occupational Health and Safety Policy) (National Law: Section 167)*	R	R	√		√
Ensuring doors, gates and other barriers restricting access to water hazards are closed at all times and that fences are kept clear at all times *(National Law: Section 167)*	R	R	√	√	√
Ensuring that containers of water (including nappy buckets and cleaning buckets) are sealed with child-proof lids *(National Law: Section 167)*	R	R	√		√
Ensuring wading/paddling pools, water play containers, portable water troughs and pet water containers are emptied immediately after each use and stored in a manner that prevents the collection of water when not in use *(National Law: Section 167)*	R	R	√		√

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Checking the outdoor learning environment at the beginning and end of each day for puddles or filled containers that could pose a potential risk to small children after heavy rain *(National Law: Section 167)*	R	R	√		√
Ensuring any water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times are isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence (particularly large bodies of water including swimming pools, rivers, ponds etc.) *(National Law: Section 167)*	R	R	√		√
Ensuring that an educator with a current approved first aid qualification *(refer to Definitions)* is in attendance and immediately available at all times children are being educated and cared for by the service *(Regulation 136)*	R	√			
Ensuring that all educators' current approved first aid qualifications meet the requirements of the National Regulations and are approved by ACECQA *(refer to First Aid Policy)* *(Regulation 136)*	R	√			
Ensuring that details of current approved first aid qualifications *(refer to Definitions)* are filed with each staff member's record	R	√			
Reporting serious incidents *(refer to Definitions)* to DE *(Regulation 174, 175)*	R	√			
Informing the approved provider immediately if any serious or notifiable incidents *(refer to Definitions)* occur at the service.		√	√		√
Reporting notifiable incidents *(refer to Definitions)* to WorkSafe Victoria	R	√			
Providing current information to parents about water safety		√	√		√
Providing water safety education and information as a part of the service's program		√	√		√

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

The supervision and safety of children with and around water is of paramount importance.

Learning spaces and environments should offer an array of possibilities and connect children with natural materials. Water is one experience that offers children sensory-rich, open-ended experiences that engage their curiosity and imagination. Children may encounter these resources in the service environment and/or when on excursions. These experiences, especially those conducted with and near water, will be carefully supervised ensuring the safety of children and adults. It is imperative that educators remain vigilant in their supervision of children in and around water and are alert to potential risks in everyday practice in the learning environment.

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Water safety relates to access to water in the building, the playground or on excursions, and to the availability of drinking water for children. It is important for services to have detailed risk assessments that consider any water hazards and associated risks, including water-based activities and excursions near water. The service's policy and procedures should outline quality practices relating to water safety that align with the NQS.

It is imperative that educators remain vigilant in their supervision of children in and around water and are alert to potential risks in everyday practice in the learning environment.

Drowning is a leading cause of death for children in Victoria, with infants and toddlers the group most at risk. Non-fatal drowning incidents can result in permanent brain damage and disability. Knowledge of potential hazards associated with water will assist educators to provide a safe, stimulating environment for preschool children.

Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including nappy buckets, water containers, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allows water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children. Children can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water.

Keep Watch is a public education program of Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, aimed at preventing the drowning deaths of children under 5 years of age in all aquatic locations. The program has four key actions:

- **supervise** children constantly around water
- **restrict access** to water hazards by using child-proof barriers and fences
- provide **water awareness** training to children
- **resuscitation** saves lives – ensure that staff have completed current first aid training

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) (Part 2: Principles for Children)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the Sparkways policy catalogue.

Hazard: A source or situation with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill health, damage to property, damage to the environment or a combination of these.

Water hazard: (in relation to this policy) can lead to drowning or non-fatal drowning incidences. Drowning hazards include large bodies of water such as swimming pools, rivers, creeks, dams and ponds. Smaller bodies of water, including nappy buckets, water containers, pet water bowls and poor drainage which allow water to collect can also present drowning hazards for young children.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- FUSE: www.fuse.education.vic.gov.au
- Kidsafe – Water Safety Fact Sheet: www.kidsafevic.com.au
- Life Saving Victoria - School Swimming and Water Safety Toolkit: www.lsv.com.au/toolkit/
- Royal Life Saving Society – Australia: www.royallifesaving.com.au
- Victoria Government – Water Safety: www.vic.gov.au/water-safety

RELATED POLICES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Emergency and Evacuation
- Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events
- First Aid
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Supervision of Children

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- seek feedback from people affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2)*.

ATTACHMENTS

- Nil

AUTHORISATION

This policy was confirmed by Sparkways on 03/10/2025

REVIEW DUE: October 2026