

## Early Learning

# Water Safety Policy

### Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- providing opportunities for children to explore their natural environment including through water play;
- ensuring that children understand and 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, volunteers and others at the service about water safety.

### Executive Summary

Water safety relates to access to water in a building, a playground or when on excursions, and also to the availability of drinking water for children. All staff at the service have a responsibility to ensure the indoor and the outdoor learning environments are safe with regard to water related hazards (such as nappy buckets, pools, outdoor equipment, puddles, and waterways). Water hazards that are not able to be adequately supervised at all times must be isolated from children by a child-resistant barrier or fence, or if a receptacle then emptied of water. Where there is a Nature program in place, risks associated with waterways should be managed by implementing an approved risk assessment plan. Adequate supervision of all children at the service must be ensured at all times and in keeping with duty of care responsibilities. An educator with a current approved first aid qualification will be in attendance and immediately available at all times children are attending the service.

### Current Environmental Context

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.

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.

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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, outdoor equipment, 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.

Parents should be informed about the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment; they also have a responsibility to inform themselves about water safety, ensuring their children understand the risks associated with water.

**Attachment 37a** – Responsibilities relating to the water Safety Policy

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## Reference/Sources

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Uniting Child Safety Policy – Uniting adopts the Uniting Church Australia National Child Safety Policy Framework, 2019 and the principles of this Policy Framework

- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events Policy*
- *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- Children’s Services amendment Act 2019
- Children’s Services Regulations 2020
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Section 167
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 99, 101, 102,123, 136, 168(2)(a)(iii)
- Kidsafe – *Water Safety Fact Sheet*: [kidsafevic.com.au/water-safety/](http://kidsafevic.com.au/water-safety/)
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- Royal Life Saving Society – Australia: [www.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.royallifesaving.com.au)
- *Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care (2014)* Standard 10
- Water Safety Victoria – *Water Safety Guide: Play it Safe by the Water* [www.watersafety.vic.gov.au](http://www.watersafety.vic.gov.au)
- Uniting Nature Program Guidelines

**Authorisation** This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 29/03/2021

**Review** This policy is to be reviewed by: 01/04/2022

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## Attachment 37a: Responsibilities relating to the Water Safety policy

### Approved Provider

- Ensure a risk assessment is conducted in relation to any water hazards on or near the premises, or when on an excursion that may be accessible to children ([refer to Form 3.1](#)).
- Ensure permission is obtained from parents for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Ensure increased levels of supervision for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Ensure 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.), or emptied of water if a receptacle.
- Report serious incidents or notifiable complaints/incidents ([refer to Glossary](#)) alleging a child's health, safety or wellbeing has been compromised to DET within 24 hours.
- Ensure that all educators' current approved first aid qualifications meet the requirements of the National Regulations and are approved by ACECQA.
- Provide current information to parents about water safety

### Responsible Person

- Assist the Approved Provider to implement the *Water Safety Policy*
- Ensure that water safety awareness is embedded in the curriculum.
- Ensure that children are adequately supervised at all times including when near water hazards (refer to Glossary).
- Ensure that water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities are considered in a risk assessment prior to conducting excursions and other offsite events ([refer to Form 3.1](#)).
- Ensure that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times.
- Obtain permission from parents for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Ensure increased levels of supervision for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Ensure that an educator with a current approved first aid qualification is in attendance and immediately available at all times children are attending the service.
- Ensure parents are informed of the *Water Safety Policy* on enrolment.
- Ensure that details of current approved first aid qualifications are filed with each staff member's record.

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## Educators

- Consider water hazards and risks associated with water-based activities in a risk assessment prior to conducting excursions and other offsite events (*refer to Form 3.1*).
- Follow reporting procedures outlined in the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* and inform the Approved Provider immediately if a serious incident or notifiable complaint/incident (*refer to Glossary*) occurs at the service.
- Adjust supervision strategies to suit the activities being undertaken.
- Ensure that children are adequately supervised at all times including when near water hazards (*refer to Glossary*).
- Check that permission is obtained from parents for an excursion to a location where there is a water hazard.
- Maintain a current approved first aid qualification.
- Ensure gates and other barriers restricting access to water hazards are closed at all times and that fences are kept clear at all times.
- Ensure that containers of water (including nappy buckets and cleaning buckets), both indoors and outdoors are sealed with child-proof lids or emptied when unsupervised.
- Ensure wading/paddling pools, water play containers and portable water courses are emptied immediately after each use, can be easily emptied by one person, and stored in a manner that prevents the collection of water when not in use.
- Ensure all buckets/receptacles, indoor and outdoor are empty of water if left unsupervised
- Ensure information on water safety (*refer to glossary*) is incorporated into the educational program.
- Check 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 and drain and/or remove.
- Provide water safety education as a part of the service's program.
- Conduct a regular safety check of the service premises.

## Parents

- Supervise children in your care, including siblings, while attending or assisting at the service.
- Ensure that doors, gates, and barriers, including playground gates, are closed after entry or exit to prevent access to water hazards.
- Be informed about water safety and ensure their children understand the risks associated with water.
- Recognise when resuscitation is required and obtain assistance.
- Consider undertaking approved first aid qualifications, as resuscitation skills save lives.

**Note:** *Volunteers, contractors, and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.*

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