



PENNANT HILLS WAR MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

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PENNANT HILLS WAR MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE (PHWMCC) ANIMALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Introduction

Responsible ownership of pets, animals or birds that may reside at PHWMCC or visit the premises is vital. Role modelling of appropriate behaviours with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals is beneficial for children. This policy also considers the management of unwanted visitors such as pests and vermin.

The *Guide to the National Quality Framework* recognises the preschools role in supporting children to understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land (p.198 - p.199).

Aim

PHWMCC will:

- Provide a safe, clean and humane environment for all animals and birds that visit or reside at the preschool;
- Ensure that the health and wellbeing of children is being maintained when engaging with animals;
- Ensure pest control measures are regularly undertaken;
- Ensure there are procedures in place for removing unwanted animals, pests and vermin from the premises.

Procedure

Preschool Pets and Invited Visitors

Prior to commencing ownership of or visits by animals, PHWMCC will:

- Consult families in the case of a pet
- Inform families in the case of an invited animal
- Complete a *PHWMCC Risk / Benefit Assessment Form*
- Consider the following questions in the decision making process:
 - Who will pay for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care and cleaning?
 - How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during preschool closure periods?
 - What physical space is available in the preschool? Is it adequate for the animal being considered?
 - Are educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at the preschool?
 - What time will be available throughout the day to care for the animal, or will educators be asked to give up some personal time for this?
 - Are there any children or educators at your preschool who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
 - What changes to PHWMCC's policies and procedures need to be considered? Eg hand washing procedures.
 - What are the health and safety risks?

- Educators will ensure that all pets and their enclosures are kept clean and hygienic. Educators must ensure they have clean bedding and water. Food is available for the pet, but kept out of reach of children at all times.
- Children must be supervised at all times when interacting with pets or animals. Educators will manage any health or safety risk for the children that may be caused by animals, such as asthma and allergies.
- Pets will not have access to children's bedding, toys, food preparation areas, eating surfaces or utensils.
- Animals and birds visiting the preschool as part of the educational program are the responsibility of the owner(s) and can only be brought in on approval of the Nominated Supervisor. Educators will ensure that the environment remains safe and hygienic at all times during the visit. If an animal is brought onto the premises, it has to be either on a leash or contained and it is not to be left unattended. Educators will complete risk assessment paperwork in relation to the visit.
- Appropriate licenses will be obtained as required for any animals / reptiles / birds kept at the preschool.

The following procedures must be followed if a pet is kept in the preschool:

- Children and adults must always wash their hands thoroughly after handling pets.
- Pets should be monitored regularly to ensure they are healthy, and to determine if there are any health or wellbeing issues.
- Children must not be allowed to handle sick pets.

Dogs cannot be left unattended at the preschool gate.

Animals and Birds other than Pets or Invited Visitors

- There are situations that may spontaneously occur involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into the preschool. Educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times they will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.
- If an animal or bird is potentially dangerous, such as a snake or spider, educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance. In NSW this authority is the Office of Environment and Heritage - **131 555** or NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc on **13 000 WIRES - 13 00 094 737**.
- The animal's movements should be monitored to ensure a speedy and efficient capture by a professional, but priority is to be given to educator, child and family safety. At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect or bird to be approached or touched by educators, children or families. If necessary, emergency procedures will be followed.

Pests and Vermin

- Pest control will occur at the preschool on a biannual basis. Educators will monitor any occurrences in the preschool to determine the success of control measures.
- If pests and vermin are seen, educators will advise the Nominated Supervisor. The Approved Provider is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits.
- Where appropriate, educators discuss with children safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin and objects.
- Educators will thoroughly clean all areas that animals or pests have accessed in the preschool with hot, soapy water. If the remains of an animal or animal faeces have been found, the remains will be disposed of and the area where the remains were found will be thoroughly cleaned with hot, soapy water, and then disinfectant.
- Educators will be responsible for assessing any situation in the preschool where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the preschool will review this policy every three years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, the service will ensure that families of children at the preschool are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the preschool; a family's ability to utilise the preschool; the fees charged or the ways in which fees are collected.

Definitions:

Regulatory Authority:	Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate
Approved Provider:	Pennant Hills War Memorial Children's Centre Management Committee
Nominated Supervisor:	Director of Pennant Hills War Memorial Children's Centre
Responsible Person:	Nominated Supervisor or an Educator who has been placed in day-to-day charge of the Preschool
Early Childhood Educators:	Teachers and Child Care Workers

Related legislation:	Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 103, 113, 168, 172
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Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks:	National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3.2.3 Environmentally Responsible
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Sources:	Community Early Learning Australia – Animals in the Environment Sample Policy Guide to the National Quality Framework
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Relevant Documents:	PHWMCC Handwashing Procedure PHWMCC Risk / Benefit Assessment Form
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Policy reviewed:	August 2023
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Next review date:	August 2026
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