



PENNANT HILLS WAR MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE

3-7 Shields Lane, Pennant Hills NSW 2120. Telephone: 9484 1133
Postal Address: PO Box 537, Pennant Hills NSW 1715
Email: phwmcc@inet.com.au
ABN 85 129 536 459

PENNANT HILLS WAR MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S CENTRE (PHWMCC) PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Introduction

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations has been endorsed by all governments in Australia, which give effect to law and regulations relating to the Child Safe Standards, and provide guidance on key actions and performance measures in implementing the standards.

Our service has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the rights and best interests of the child are paramount and that we will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this in order to:

- ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times;
- ensure that people educating and caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child;
- protect and advocate the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times;
- maintain a culture in which children's rights are respected;
- encourage active participation from families at the service, supporting a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development;
- ensure the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are implemented and regularly reviewed.

Aim

At PHWMCC we are committed to creating and maintaining an environment that promotes the safety of all children. This includes encouraging a culture where the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged. All staff and volunteers are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children.

All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that promotes opportunities to thrive with adults who safeguard and advocate for their health, safety, security and wellbeing including the right to:

- Be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults;
- Feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children; and
- Understand, as early as possible, what is meant by 'feeling and being safe'.

Educators must consider all of the elements of wellbeing, and ensure that programs also acknowledge the importance of risk management to provide a safe environment and reasonably protect children from potential harm.

Procedure

The Physical Environment

In order to promote a safe physical environment PHWMCC will:

- Ensure all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant Australian safety standards.

- Ensure learning environments are established that provide appropriate child groupings, sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment.
- Remove, repair or replace worn and damaged buildings, structures, equipment and resources which may provide a safety risk for children in a timely manner.
- Organise indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure risks to health and safety are minimised.
- Ensure spaces allow for children to be in sight at all times.
- Conduct a service wide risk assessment and review this at least annually. Other risk assessments such as Sleep and Rest, Excursions and spontaneous experiences with children will also be risk assessed.
- Conduct annual safety inspections and maintenance in order to minimise risk to children – electrical tagging, pest inspection, playground inspection, hot water testing, tree inspections (as required).
- Conduct an inspection of the preschool on a quarterly basis to determine any risks to children’s health and safety.
- Conduct an inspection of each room weekly, and of the outdoor area each day.
- Report any risks or hazards within the preschool to the Nominated Supervisor as soon as possible, so that repairs and maintenance can be carried out.
- Maintain an equipment and building maintenance register.
- Analyse and evaluate the risks associated with identified hazards.
- Determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control identified hazards.
- Review risk assessments after any serious incident report is made to the Regulatory Authority.
- Ensure smoking is banned within the grounds of, and within 4 metres of any entrance of the preschool.
- Ensure secure storage of hazardous products including chemicals and medications.
- Make sufficient allowance within budgets to allow for the replacement of worn and damaged equipment and resources which may pose safety risks for children.
- Make sufficient allowance within budgets to allow the adequate maintenance of all indoor and outdoor environments.

Digital Technologies and the Online Environment

All stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure online safety, as their children grow up in digital contexts. Children will be provided information about online safety.

Services are recommended to be following the four fundamental principles and recommended practices:

1. Young children’s relationships with adults and peers matter in digital contexts
2. Young children’s health and wellbeing is actively supported in digital contexts
3. Young children’s citizenship is upheld and fostered in digital contexts
4. Play and pedagogy promotes young children’s exploration, social interaction, collaboration and learning in digital contexts

Source: Early Childhood Australia: Statement on young children and digital technologies

<https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Digital-policy-statement.pdf>

Supervision

PHWMCC will:

- Ensure that sufficient numbers of educators are employed to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times.
- Manage rosters to not only ensure that adequate numbers of educators are on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements but that duty of care implications are considered to ensure adequate supervision at all times.

- Ensure that staff will be made aware of the need for adequate supervision of children at all times. This may include the development of supervision charts for outdoor or indoor areas.

Staff

- Ensure screening and suitability of staff and volunteers as per the legislation and policy at the time of employment, and as part of an ongoing process.
- Working with vulnerable people/children check details must be included on volunteer staff records.
- Ensure rigorous induction processes for staff, volunteers and students that embed Child Safe Standards and practices of a child safe culture.
- Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns.
- Ensure that no staff member, volunteer or visitor is ever out of sight of other staff when working with children.
- Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns.

Child Protection

- Refer to the *PHWMCC Child Protection Policy*.
- Ensure that all staff including educators, students and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent as required by state or territory specific legislation.
- Ensure that all staff are given information and/or training about child protection law and any obligations they have under that law.
- All educators and volunteers of our service are required to familiarise themselves with child protection legislation in their state/territory and take appropriate measures according to state/territory specific protocols if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concern about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- Complaint handling policies include policies and procedures for managing complaints about children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.
- Complaint handling policies and procedures are child focussed, in accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Staff will undertake training in order to effectively:
 - make appropriate responses to all disclosures of abuse and any allegation of abuse against staff members of the service;
 - understand the responsibilities and processes as a mandatory reporter;
 - be able to recognise the factors that increase a child's vulnerability to maltreatment;
 - be aware of the vulnerabilities which may indicate a need to assess, monitor or curtail the behaviour of individuals in relation to children and young people within the preschool; and
- Staff will implement procedure for releasing children only into the care of authorised persons.

Mandatory Reporting

- All educators, staff and volunteers of our preschool are Mandatory Reporters and are required to report to the Child Protection Helpline (Phone : 132 111) or eReport at <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/> if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- The *Mandatory Reporter Guide* will be used to guide decision making and determine whether or not to report to the Child Protection Helpline under the risk of significant harm reporting threshold.
<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

Preventing other harms and hazards

- At a governance level, Approved Providers/Nominated Supervisors identify and manage risk that align with the Child Safe Standards.
https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/resources?combine=risk&field_topic_target_id%5B175%5D=175&field_published_date_value=
- Risk assessments are conducted regularly for excursions and transportation provided or arranged by the service in conjunction with the service's Excursions and/or Transportation of Children policies.
- Risk minimisation practices are in place for the management of medical conditions in conjunction with the service's Medical Conditions policy.
- Emergency evacuation plans specific to the service are implemented in conjunction with the service's Emergency and Evacuation policy.
- If staff consume hot drinks, they are made and consumed away from children.

Child Safe Standards

The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. The Standards provide tangible guidance for organisations to create cultures, adopt strategies and act to put the interests of children first, to keep them safe from harm.

The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) is committed to making organisations safer for children and have developed a guide to support organisations.

https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/g_CSS_GuidetotheStandards.pdf

PHWMCC is committed to providing a child safe environment and will adopt the principles in the above guide:

Standard 1

Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

- The organisation publicly commits to child safety and leaders champion a child safe culture
- Child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of the organisation
- Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children
- Staff and volunteers comply with a code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children
- Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping

Standard 2

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

- Children are able to express their views and are provided opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and be less isolated
- Children can access abuse prevention programs and information
- Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns

Standard 3

Families and communities are informed and involved

- Families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and participate in decisions affecting their child
- The organisation engages in open, two-way communication with families and communities about its child safety approach and relevant information is accessible
- Families and communities have a say in the organisation's policies and practices
- Families and communities are informed about the organisation's operations and governance

Standard 4

Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

- The organisation actively anticipates children's diverse circumstances and responds effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- All children have access to information, support and complaints processes
- The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Standard 5

People working with children are suitable and supported

- Recruitment, including advertising and screening, emphasises child safety
- Relevant staff and volunteers have Working with Children Checks
- All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligations
- Supervision and people management have a child safety focus

Standard 6

Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child-focused

- The organisation has a child-focused complaint-handling system that is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families
- The organisation has an effective complaint-handling policy and procedure which clearly outline roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report
- Complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly and thoroughly, and reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met

Standard 7

Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe, through continual education and training

- Relevant staff and volunteers receive training on the nature and indicators of child maltreatment, particularly organisational child abuse
- Staff and volunteers receive training on the organisation's child safe practices and child protection
- Relevant staff and volunteers are supported to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures

Standard 8

Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse or other kinds of harm to occur.

- Risks in the online and physical environments are identified and mitigated
- The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's code of conduct and relevant policies

Standard 9

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved

- The organisation regularly reviews and improves child safe practices
- The organisation analyses complaints to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement

Standard 10

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

- Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards
- Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand
- Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development of policies and procedures
- Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures
- Staff understand and implement the policies and procedures

Other resources are available on the Office of the Children's Guardian website

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme>

Roles and Responsibilities

Approved Provider

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times.
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor, staff members and volunteers at the preschool who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law.
- Ensure all members of the Management Committee, the Parents Club, all staff of the preschool and students on placement have current Working With Children Checks and that these are verified annually.
- Ensure that families are aware of and have access to the *PHWMCC Complaints Handling Policy*.
- Ensure that there is a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process when employing new staff.
- Ensure that the premises are maintained at a high standard, in order to minimise risk.
- Ensure that the premises provide clear visibility between classrooms, bathrooms and outdoors so that staff can always be seen, thereby minimising any risk to children. Staff are never to be out of sight with a child / children.
- Ensure that records are kept for 45 years relating to child abuse that has, or is alleged to have occurred.

Nominated Supervisor

- Ensure all staff complete regular approved Child Protection Training.
- Ensure all staff are aware of how to access the *Mandatory Reporter Guide*.
- Ensure all staff have access to the *Child Wellbeing and Child Protection NSW Interagency Guidelines*.
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/interagency-guidelines>
- Ensure all staff receive training and have access to the resources in the Child Safe Standards
- Ensure screening and suitability processes are maintained to meet policy and legislated requirements.

- Identify and provide appropriate resources and training to assist staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy (refer to Useful Resources at the end of this document).
- Keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Co-operate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.
- Ensure that families are made aware of support services available to them.
- Ensure that staff are supported to implement this policy.
- Protect the rights of children and their families.

Early Childhood Educators

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the preschool.
- Keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Follow all record keeping requirements.
- Undertake appropriate training and education on child protection.
- Identify any potential for risk and harm to a child at the preschool and develop and implement effective prevention strategies in consultation with the Approved Provider and the Nominated Supervisor.
- Co-operate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.
- Inform families of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Ensure that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the preschool.
- Implement the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse.
- Notify the Nominated Supervisor or the Approved Provider immediately on becoming aware of any concerns, complaints or allegations regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at the preschool.
- Offer support to the child and their family, and other staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of children.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Adhere to all service policies that adhere to the Child Safe Standards.

Families

- Comply with this policy.
- Report any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor, or another trusted staff member.

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 preschool 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 way 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: Sections 18, 20, 162A, 165, 166, 167
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 82, 83, 84, 99, 103, 115, 122, 123, 158-159, 165, 168(2)(h), 175, 176
Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
Children's Guardian Act 2019
Australian Privacy Principles
Privacy Act 1988
Smoke Free Environment Act 2000

Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks

National Quality Standards
Quality Area 2 Children's Health and Safety – Standard 2.2
Quality Area 3 Physical Environment – Standard 3.1, 3.2
Quality Area 7 Governance and Leadership – Standard 7.1, 7.2
National Principles of Child Safe Organisations

Sources

Community Early Learning Australia – Providing a Child Safe Environment Sample Policy
Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe Sample Policy
Guide to the Child Safe Standards

Relevant Documents

PHWMCC Alcohol, Drugs and Smoking Policy
PHWMCC Child Protection Policy
PHWMCC Cleaning and Maintenance Policy
PHWMCC Complaints Handling Policy
PHWMCC Delivery and Collection of Children
PHWMCC Excursion Policy
PHWMCC Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
PHWMCC Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
PHWMCC Risk Management Policy
PHWMCC Sleep and Rest Policy
PHWMCC Staff Code of Conduct Policy
PHWMCC Staff, Management and volunteer Child Safe Standards Code of Conduct Policy
PHWMCC Staff Interactions with Children Policy
PHWMCC Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy
PHWMCC Volunteers, Students and Visitors Policy
PHWMCC WHS Policy
PHWMCC Working Together Policy and Agreement

PWHMCC Enrolment Form

Useful Resources:

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – www.acecqa.gov.au

Mandatory Reporter Guide & training including e-learning presentation
www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au
eReporting is available at
<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

Working With Children Check –
<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check>

Child Safe Standards
<https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards>

Childsafety Australia
www.childsafetyaustralia.com.au

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child –
www.unicef.org.au
The Supporting young children's rights: Statement of intent (2015-2018)
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Australian Human Rights Commission
www.humanrights.gov.au

Australian Childhood Foundation
www.childhood.org.au

Families NSW - Supporting Families to Raise Children -
www.families.nsw.gov.au

Policy Reviewed:

September 2023

Next Review Date:

September 2026