

Quality Area 3

Physical Environment

Ooranga delivers mobile early childhood education that utilises rural community venues to enable families to access playgroup and preschool where no other services are available. These venues are not purpose built for early childhood programs, however all have access to secure indoor and outdoor facilities to enable appropriate experiences for child development, using both built and natural materials. Educators ensure facilities and resources are safe, hygienic and well maintained.

Educators are experienced and have access to a wide range of resources that are arranged to ensure the environment is engaging for all children, promoting independent exploration, learning through play and collaboration between peers.

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Responsibilities

This policy is to be implemented by all Ooranga staff.

Indoor and Outdoor Environment

Ooranga venues are selected based on the capacity to safely deliver early childhood programs, with adequate facilities for indoor and outdoor activities. Regulatory requirements regarding security and fencing, space, toileting and handwashing, food preparation and sleeping will be maintained where possible. Any risks identified will be addressed through venue management plans, to minimise risk of harm to children, staff and visitors.

Educators maintain routine hygiene and monitoring of all preschool environments and resources for safety and suitability. For children with access limitations, resources will be located to enable effective inclusion in the preschool program.

Educators value both the indoor and outdoor environment to provide a range of developmental experiences for all children. Educators will design and modify environments that reflect children's different cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles. By using a range of natural and built resources, educators will encourage and nurture children's interest in the world around them. Children and their families will be encouraged to bring natural and recyclable products to preschool to be incorporated into the program and design spaces that appreciate the natural world.

Environmental Sustainability

Educators encourage and increase awareness of environmental responsibilities and implement practices that contribute to a sustainable future. Children will be supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment. Environmentally sustainable practices are embedded into the daily preschool program and involve children and their families in order to be successful. Educators make sustainable practices a part of the daily routine through recycling, gardening, water and energy conservation and utilising natural and recycled products where possible.

Smoke Free Environments

All Ooranga services are smoke free environments to ensure all people who access the venues are protected from the effects of tobacco smoke. All staff will be made aware at induction of the Smoke Free Policy and educators will avoid passive smoking environments when on preschool excursions. Families will be notified that all Ooranga services are smoke free environments.

Animals in the Environment

Ooranga recognises that both wild and domesticated animals are common in the local environment. Children and their families are invited to share their experiences and pets in the preschool environment, however the owner will maintain responsibility for the animal if present at the service. Educators will ensure hygiene and safety are a priority when animals visit the preschool.

Uninvited animals, including pests or vermin, present at the venue will be addressed by educators based on the risk the animal poses to children, staff and maintenance of resources. Uninvited animals can be used by educators as a spontaneous learning experience. In the event of a snake being in proximity to the preschool, educators will contact the local wildlife service for assistance and follow Emergency and Evacuation Procedures to address any safety risks. Pest control will occur on an annual basis, in collaboration with venue owners where relevant. If evidence of vermin infestation is detected, educators will contact management and implement control and hygiene strategies to eliminate the infestation.

Hazardous Materials

Ooranga strives to minimise health and safety risks associated with the handling and storage of hazardous materials. The service adopts a risk management approach to enable practices that minimise the risk of harm, injury or illness caused by any hazardous material.

Ooranga will provide the least hazardous chemical, product or equipment possible without compromising hygiene. Safety Data Sheets will be available to all persons present at the service and training will be provided on safe use and storage prior to any use of hazardous substances.

Staff will ensure non-toxic plants are planted in the preschool venues where possible and minimise the risk of toxic plants to children and adults within the grounds.

Related Documents

Other relevant policy documents; Relationships with Children Policy, Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities Policy, Leadership and Service Management.

Relevant procedures; Emergency and Evacuation, Hygiene and Infection Control, Risk Management.

Regulatory References: Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Regulation 2012; Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action including termination of employment.