

OP51 Safe Play Spaces Policy

Policy name:	Safe Play Spaces Policy (This policy incorporates and replaces former OP10 Cleaning Policy and OP14 Dangerous Products, Plants, Vermin and Objects Policy)
Policy number:	OP51
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1 Purpose

Natural environments, structures, safe play spaces, furniture and equipment are all essential components of quality early childhood education and care. Young children, however, have a limited understanding of the potential dangers of certain products, plants and objects in the environment and must rely on adults to ensure the environment is safe for them. While this is reflected in our health and safety policies, our natural environments, structures, furniture, and equipment require careful consideration and regular assessments to minimise risks to all those entering Petit ELJ’s services.

Under the Education and Care Services National Law, Petit ELJ has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of children enrolled. Maintaining a high level of cleanliness and hygiene is also vital for health and well-being. This is especially so for young children whose immune system is still developing, thereby making them susceptible to infections. In early childhood education and care services, children have frequent and close physical contact with other children. In addition, their personal hygiene needs such as nappy changes take place in shared facilities. These facilities and equipment need to be cleaned and sanitised regularly to ensure a safe environment is ensured.

2 Scope

The Approved Provider, Operations Managers, Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director, employees and Agency educators are all responsible for ensuring safe, well-maintained and clean play spaces.

3 Definitions

Entrapment- A hazard presented by the situation in which a body, or part of a body, or clothing can become trapped. The user is not able to break free and injury is caused by the entrapment.

Hazard – refers to a situation or element that could result in an individual getting injured. Not every hazard will have a harmful outcome. Understanding the likelihood and potential severity of harm is essential in mitigating hazards without unnecessarily restricting risk and challenge from the learning environment. Recognising the possibility and potential severity of harm will help to determine whether the hazard needs to be managed and to what extent. Examples of possible hazards include: open water trough in a play space, a broken piece of equipment that is unstable, unsafe or has sharp edges, outbreak of possible infectious disease.

Moveable play equipment - A range of purpose-made manufactured equipment that is not permanently fixed in place and can be adjusted and moved by educators on a regular basis to vary play opportunities (AS 4685). It includes trestles; jouncing boards/balancing beams; cubby houses; castles; play cubes and portable slides and rockers. It may also include removable or interchangeable play items that are designed to connect to a fixed structure.

Australian Safety Standards – Australian standards set out specifications and design procedures to ensure products and services consistently perform safely, reliably, and the way they are intended to. Mandatory standards are law, and there are penalties for supplying products that do not comply with them. They are developed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in conjunction with public and industry consultation.

Unobstructed – Clear or free from obstructions or obstacles: not obstructed

4 Policy principles

The provision of safe and clean environments for children is essential to prevent injury or illness and enable children to grow and develop.

Petit ELJ will only use furniture and equipment that has been made in accordance with Australian/New Zealand Safety Standards and will ensure staff keep equipment and resources safe, clean, and well-maintained to reduce likelihood of unintentional injuries to children and adults in the service.

Each Petit Early Learning Journey centre will ensure:

- the premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean, and well-maintained
- Items or areas identified as a hazard or possible hazard will be reported and actioned in an appropriate and timely manner.
- cleaning tasks are scheduled, and cleaning procedures are developed alongside the recommendations of recognised authorities and according to regulations.
- safe, natural, and effective cleaning products are used in replacement of harsh chemicals wherever possible.
- educators model safe and healthy hygiene practices and routines to the children and involve the children in maintaining a safe, clean environment.

5 Policy Implementation

Petit ELJ is committed to ensuring the safety of play spaces, furniture, resources, and equipment through regular maintenance and monitoring.

- Petit ELJ's buildings, facilities, furniture and equipment meet licensing requirements and those of all relevant national and state regulatory bodies, local council, and the Building Code of Australia. All equipment and furniture will comply with compulsory Australian safety standards- (AS/NZS 2172 for cots and AS 4684 for highchairs). Play equipment is installed strictly according to manufacturers' recommendations. All fixed equipment meets the Australian/New Zealand Safety Standards and is well maintained. All resources meet Australian Safety Standards and are well maintained and have non-toxic finishes.
- Daily inspections of cots and highchairs locking devices and stability will be conducted. Any issues identified must be reported to the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director immediately. A child must not be placed in a cot or highchair if it does not secure properly.
- The cot room must remain free from stored resources or small objects. Aisles between cots must remain unobstructed. Cots must be positioned away from power points, curtains and blind cords.
- Educators are expected to report any damage to mattresses, including tears or stains, as well as any defects in cots, such as paint peeling. No child is to use a mattress or cot with any identified damage that may result in injury or illness.
- The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director is responsible for ensuring that all equipment and resources are inspected on a regular basis. This includes checking for any wood splintering, corrosion on metal equipment, peeling of paint, rips, or damage to safety mats, missing or sun-damaged plastic caps on climbing frames and bike handles, and any splitting.

- All employees must be aware of the potential for entrapment hazards and take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of harm including removing the hazards. It is possible for small fingers and limbs to become lodged in gaps, and head and upper body entrapment can lead to asphyxiation and death. Gaps between 5-12mm can ensnare fingers, while limbs can become stuck in gaps between 30-50mm. Heads can become caught in gaps larger than 85mm.
- All employees must be aware and comply with Australian Standard 4685 requirements regarding fall zones and the appropriate height of furniture, equipment, and playground apparatus as per the below table.

Name	Definition	Requirements in ECEC setting
Free Height Fall (FHOE)	Free height of fall refers to the distance between any platforms or structures on a playground item and the ground below. Risk or serious injury is minimised where fall heights are reduced	Must never exceed maximum of 1.8 metres high for fixed equipment and 1.5 metres for moveable equipment
Free space	The area immediately surrounding equipment used for climbing. Free space is represented as a series of cylindrical spaces originating from and perpendicular to the surface bearing the user along the path of movement. Specifically in relation to climbing equipment or structures above 600mm high.	3D distance from equipment or structure heights above 600mm No obstacles should be present. 1m radius from equipment. Height is 1.8m for standing, 1.5m for sitting. For hanging equipment, free space of 300mm is required above and 1.8m below.
Impact area (Soft Fall)	The impact area is the ground that can be hit by a user after falling through the falling space. This space must be free of obstacles or protrusions and covered with an impact-absorbing surface (soft fall)	1.5 metres radius from equipment or structure heights above 600mm

Reference: A Guide to the Australian Playground Standards (written by Andrew Reedy – Play Check)

- A proactive process of risk management is implemented and shared across all employees of Petit ELJ. Risk assessments and management plans are developed and implemented where risks require additional support measures.
- Daily routine visual inspections are completed by employees and Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director to identify hazards in surfacing, fixed and mobile equipment, moving parts, swings, fences, gates, sandpits and other hazards through the Opening and Closing Safety Checklists and regular compliance reviews. Records are kept of inspections and maintenance of furniture, playgrounds, and equipment by the centre in line with the *Record Keeping and Archiving Policy*.
- All employees must report any hazards to the Nominated Supervisor/ Centre Director timely so that processes can be completed to rectify the hazard. Where possible, the hazard will be removed away from children or children removed away from the identified hazard. At times, this means hiring contractors or tradespersons to attend the centre, a process that is managed through Petit ELJ's Facilities Manager.
- There is sufficient furniture and developmentally appropriate equipment so each child can take part in the educational program depending on their interests, ages and abilities and the recommendations in relation to the age and developmental stage of the children using the furniture and equipment is adhered to.

At Petit ELJ, we are committed to the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene. We will ensure that all play spaces, furniture, resources and equipment are properly cleaned on a regular basis.

- Petit ELJ follow the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommendation that - using hot soapy water is the most effective method of removing germs. Accordingly, hot soapy water is used for general cleaning (e.g., floors, tabletops), and for cleaning areas contaminated by blood, faeces, urine, vomit and other body fluids.
- Employees of Petit ELJ must maintain a safe and hygienic environment for children by performing regular clean-up tasks, such as promptly addressing spillages, sweeping floors, and wiping down surfaces regularly including tables and chairs before and after meals.
- Educators in each studio follow a Daily Cleaning Checklist to ensure all cleaning tasks are regularly completed.
- Nappy change areas are cleaned after each change, and at the end of the day. Bathrooms are cleaned at scheduled intervals throughout the day, and at other times when necessary.

- Rubbish bins are emptied at regular intervals throughout the day, or at any time the bins are full or unpleasant, and plastic liners replaced. A lid is always kept on top of the bin.
- Gloves are always worn when cleaning or using chemicals.
- To prevent cross-contamination between work areas, educators use the Washcloth Colour Chart to select the appropriate cloth. In addition, cleaning implements such as gloves and scourers are confined to specific areas. The coloured washcloths are washed and replaced frequently.
- Each room has its own cleaning equipment and supplies that are clearly labelled (e.g., buckets, mops, cleaning cloths). Cleaning items are air dried and stored in places inaccessible to children. Any item used to clear away blood or body fluids is cleaned immediately and air dried. After each use, mops are cleaned with warm soapy water and hung upside down to air dry.
- Rest mats/beds are only to be used with a sheet on it first. Rest mats/beds are sprayed and wiped at the end of each rest period. Cots are cleaned after each child's use. Parents take their children's linen home to launder each week, or as required. Service supplied linen is washed after each child's use.
- Items of clothing and linen that have been soiled and require washing should be placed in a labelled, sealed container that is inaccessible to children.
- Toys are washed regularly. Mouthed toys are placed in a labelled container with a labelled lid and cleaned daily. Once scrubbed with hot warm soapy water, toys are sanitised and air dried.
- Fridges and freezers are regularly wiped down and always in a clean condition. Trays are regularly removed to be washed with warm soapy water.
- The sandpit is covered when not in use by a sandpit cover and raked daily to remove any dangerous or foreign matter and aerate the sand. In the event of sand being soiled by urine, faeces, food or other materials during the day, children are removed from the sand pit and the contaminated sand is removed. Where the spread is extensive, the entire contents of the sandpit should be replaced. Aeration and sunshine are the best form of sanitising sand. Where the sun is not an option, commercial sand sanitiser is used as per the instructions to clean the sand.
- Soft toys, cushion covers, and dress ups are cleaned at minimum weekly and more frequently as needed. If any item becomes soiled or dirty it is to be removed away from children and cleaned.
- All employees are trained through the Chemical Training Schedule on the correct use and storage of chemicals at the centre during their induction and onboarding.

Petit ELJ is committed to ensuring the safety of children, educators, families and our community by preventing exposure to hazardous plants, vermin, and objects.

- At the start of employment, all employees are informed of their responsibility to comply with this Policy. The Policy is regularly addressed at team meetings, during staff appraisals, and other appropriate occasions. Agency staff are also made aware of the requirements of this policy during their induction.
- The service maintains an up-to-date list of all chemicals and cleaning agents used in the service. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), together with any additional first-aid instructions required, are maintained for each item, and kept in an easily identifiable location in the Service. The MSDS are filed in a way that employees can readily retrieve the information in an emergency. In such emergencies, employees follow the procedures detailed on the MSDS sheet. In addition, employees can seek advice from the Poisons Information Service whose number is posted beside the service telephone.
- All hazardous materials are stored in locked cupboards that are childproof and, located out of children's reach when not in use.
- Clear warning signs are displayed wherever potentially hazardous materials are stored. As part of the program, educators discuss with the children various safety issues relating to hazardous materials, poisonous plants and other dangers such as vermin.
- Hazardous products are always kept in their original labelled container.
- When using any hazardous products, all staff follow the instructions on the labels. Staff members who cannot understand the instructions seek guidance from other staff.

- Hazardous products and chemicals are disposed of in strict accordance with the instructions on the labels.
- Employees conduct daily safety checks of the building and outdoor play areas for foreign objects, vermin, sharps, possible harmful plants or damaged equipment.
- Employees regularly check the temperature of outside surfaces using the Daily Playground Surface Temperature Check Record
- The service is treated regularly by a pest controller licensed by the relevant state health authority, when necessary.
- Natural cleaning products are used wherever their use does not compromise hygiene. Only warm soapy water and non-toxic products are used for cleaning when children are present.
- Safety plugs are fitted to all power points. Electrical appliances are inaccessible to children. All electrical appliances are appropriately 'tested and tagged' annually.
- Plants are confirmed as appropriate for the environment (child-safe) prior to being planted or installed in the centre. Poisonous and hazardous plants are identified, and action is taken in accordance with advice from the Poisons Information Service (Telephone 13 11 26). Educators intentionally teach children of the danger posed by these plants.
- In the event of a sharp/dangerous object such as a razor or knife blade or broken glass being found at the service, the item is disposed of in the Sharps Disposal Container.
- In the event of vermin being found at the Service educators:
 - will not attempt to pick up or kill the vermin
 - will remove the children from the area and keep them away until the vermin have been removed
 - must notify the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director immediately. The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director will contact Petit ELJ Facilities Management and organise the correct removal of the vermin.
- In the event of a snake being found at the Service educators:
 - will not attempt to pick up or kill the snake
 - will remove the children from the area and keep them away until the snake has been removed, or the Nominated Supervisor gives direction to the contrary.
 - Must notify the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director immediately. The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director will call the relevant herpetologist/wildlife authority on the emergency list displayed beside the telephone and act according to the advice from that authority.

Petit ELJ is committed to ensuring the safety of children, educators, families and our community by ensuring appropriate maintenance of all facilities, buildings, fixtures and furniture and equipment.

- All Petit employees have a responsibility to report any hazards or potential hazards within the centre's physical environment that may cause harm to children and / or adults to the Nominated Supervisor / Centre Director or Assistant Centre Director on the same day they are first observed. This includes all maintenance issues or facilities failures.
- A Maintenance Book, located in a common area such as the centre office and which is easily identifiable to all employees, is to be used for this purpose.
- All items raised by employees are to be reviewed and confirmed by the Nominated Supervisor / Centre Director or Assistant Centre Director and transferred to the centre's Maintenance Log no later than 24 hours from notification to ensure the appropriate priority classification of issue is completed.
- The Maintenance Log is the complete record of all items reported to Facilities Manager by the Nominated Supervisor / Centre Director or Responsible Person and used to ensure all risks are being managed appropriately and in a reasonable timeframe.

- All issues classified as **URGENT** according to the priority classification are to be reported to the centre's Operations Manager and to Facilities Manager via a Request for Reactive Work Order. These must be flagged as high importance. If no response is received within 24 hours of submission, then a follow up phone call to the Facilities Manager must be made.

6 Responsibilities

Approved Provider:

It is the responsibility of the Approved Provider to:

- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Take every reasonable precaution to protect children at the service from harm and/or hazards that can cause injury ensuring that qualified first aid trained staff are in attendance whilst the service is providing education and care to children.
- Ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to Nominated Supervisors/ Centre Directors, employees, families and stakeholders and are available for inspection.
- Make sure any notification in relation to serious incidents is within the regulated timeframes as per the *Managing Reporting Requirements & Notifications Policy*.

Operations Managers:

It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager to:

- Keep the Approved Provider abreast of any legislative requirements that are not being met or that have changed.
- Monitor compliance at a service and site level and ensuring staff and students have completed the training on the policy and procedure.

Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director

It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor/ Centre Director to:

- Provide effective supervision of children, including the supervision of infants to minimise the risk of accidents and injuries that could result from furniture, equipment, resources, structures or other hazards within the learning indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- Regularly check furniture and equipment for stability and wear and tear- (corners, surface- splinters, missing bike handle grips, faulty cleats in boards or ladders, heavy objects on climbing frames that destabilise the equipment)
- Any items requiring attention are recorded in the Maintenance Book for action by Petit ELJ Facilities Management. If attention is required urgently, a separate Request for Reactive Work Order will be sent to the Facilities Manager for review and action.
- Ensure employees and students are familiar with and follow all policies and procedures as developed by Petit ELJ. This includes ensuring compliance with all related policies and procedures and reading this policy within their 3-month induction period.

Educators:

It is the responsibility of Educators to:

- Ensure they complete relevant checklists daily to maintain a safe environment within Petit ELJ centres.
- Ensure that any matter requiring immediate attention during the educators' checks is advised to the Nominated Supervisor/ Centre Director for immediate attention.
- Ensure they are familiar with and follow all policies and procedures as developed by Petit ELJ. This includes ensuring compliance with all related policies and procedures.

- Complete all training requirements – reading this policy and associated documents within their 3-month induction period.
- Ensure that they ask for clarification if any information is unclear.

Families:

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to:

- Ensure they comply with any requests relating to their child/ren such as removing any soiled clothing from the service and taking home any sheets or bed linen that need washing.
- Ensure children’s belongings being brought to the centre are free from hazards at all times including sharp objects, medications and controlled substance. Any item brought into the Service is checked by educators to ensure it does not pose any danger to children, and any identified risk discussed with the family to ensure they are aware of the danger and why the item cannot be left at the Service.

7 Reporting and Compliance

Links to NQS and Legislation:

Education and Care Services National Law (2010)	
Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Section 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
112	Nappy change facilities
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

National Quality Standards		
Quality Area 2 Children’s Health and Safety		
2.2 Safety		
2.1.2	Health Practices and Procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and Emergency Management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented
Quality Area 3 Physical Environment		
3.1 Design		
3.1.1	Fit for Purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.

Links to related policies, procedures, and forms

- OP51-F001 Opening Safety Checklist
- OP51-F002 Closing Safety Checklist
- OP51-F003 Daily Cleaning Checklist
- OP51-F004 Chemical Training Schedule
- OP51-F005 Maintenance Book
- OP51-F006 Request for Reactive Work Order
- OP51-F007 Maintenance Log
- OP51-R001 Wash Cloth Colour Chart
- OP54-F002 Daily Playground Surface Temperature Check Record
- OP02 Access to Outdoor Play Policy
- OP22 Environmental Sustainability Policy
- OP35 Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- OP40 Managing Reporting Requirements & Notifications Policy
- OP52 Risk Management Policy
- OP54 Sun Protection, Weather & Heat Policy
- OP55 Supervision Policy
- OP58 Record Keeping and Archiving Policy

Links to references and further reading

- Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations

- Guide to the National Quality Framework
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- National Quality Standard
- Code of Ethics
- United Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Australian Competition & Consumer Commission. (2013). Keeping baby safe – a guide to infant and nursery products: <https://www.productsafety.gov.au/publication/keeping-baby-safe-a-guide-to-infant-and-nursery-products>
- Australian Competition & Consumer Commission. (n.d.). Product safety Australia: Mandatory standards: <https://www.productsafety.gov.au/product-safety-laws/safety-standards-bans/mandatory-standards>
- Kids Health. (2011). Fact Sheet: Poisonous or harmful plants. <http://kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/sites/kidshealth.chw.edu.au/files/fact-sheets/pdf/poisonous-plants.pdf>
- Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. (2016). Snakes. http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/livingwith/snakes/frequently_asked_questions.html
- Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2009) Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.
- Kidsafe Safety Information Sheets: <https://www.kidsafensw.org/resources/information-sheets/Moveable-Play-Equipment>
- A Guide to the Australian Playground Standards (written by Andrew Reedy – Play Check): <https://www.natureplaywa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Guide-to-the-Playground-Standards-2021.pdf>

8 Approval and Review Details

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	DETAILS
Approval Authority	COO
Administrator	Operations Managers
Next Review Date	12 months from date of acceptance