

# OP02 Access to Outdoor Play Policy

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Access to Outdoor Play
<b>Policy Number:</b>	OP02
<b>Version Number:</b>	3.0
<b>Last Updated</b>	May 2023

## 1 Purpose

Petit Early Learning Journey is committed to providing an environment that promotes the health, happiness, and well-being of all children in its care. Petit ELJ is also committed to providing adequate access for all children to fresh air and play in an outdoor environment no matter the season. Outdoor learning environments are viewed as places that support children's learning, creativity, social engagement, and sense of belonging and are valued equally to indoor environments.

## 2 Scope

The Approved Provider, Operations Managers, Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director and employees are all responsible for ensuring children have access to outdoor play in a safe play environment.

## 3 Definitions

**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.

**Risk** – A risk is any situation where the outcome is uncertain, where there is a chance that harm will occur. A risk of harm to someone occurs when a hazard can't be removed. If a hazard can't be eliminated, the potential for injury must be minimised and the risk managed on an ongoing basis (SafeWork NSW).

**Risk assessment** – is one part of risk management. It is the process by which specific risks are evaluated and addressed. Undertaking a risk assessment means evaluating or deciding which risks are significant and how they should be addressed. It involves critical reflection on the benefits and hazards identified within the service, such as an experience, excursion, practice, piece of equipment or learning environment.

**Risk management** – describes the efforts of the whole service or organisation to mitigate risks and hazards. It is the term applied to a logical and systematic process of establishing the context, identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating, monitoring, and communicating risks associated with any activity, function or process in a way that will enable organisations to minimise accidents and maximize safety.

**Foreign matter** – an object that intrudes where it shouldn't be. This may include glass, plastic or naturally occurring hazardous items such as mushrooms or plants that pose potential risks to children or adults.

## 4 Policy principles

Petit ELJ understands the importance of children having access to outdoor play in an engaging, safe environment. Outdoor play offers children an abundance of opportunities to explore, discover, and appreciate the natural world, while developing their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. Research suggests that spending time in the fresh air also promotes healthy questioning, interactions, and feedback, while also strengthening fine and gross motor movement.

Outdoor experiences are essential for children's development and should therefore be an integral part of the daily program for all children, including babies.

## 5 Policy implementation

Petit ELJ will ensure:

- Every child will be given access to an outdoor play environment each day, weather permitting
- Studio's that have no direct access to outdoor play spaces have processes in place to ensure appropriate, considered access to outdoor environments occur every day
- Entrapment hazards, foreign matters, broken, dangerous or damaged items are identified and appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk of harm implemented.
- Risk Assessment and Management Plans and a Supervision Plan is done for all outdoor environments to ensure a high level of risk management and to support the safe access to the outdoor environment by all children.
- Outdoor environments are designed and set up to facilitate life-long skill development for children where they can experience challenging situations in their physical environment that is managed effectively to minimise negative outcomes, not eliminate risk. Risky play is facilitated alongside effective planning through each centres Risk Assessment and Management Plans and Supervision Plans.
- Outdoor environments are enriched by natural resources and opportunities to engage with nature which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water
- Learning environments are designed so they are welcoming and accessible for all children and families, considering cultural diversity, social and physical inclusion and facilitate agency and learning.
- Outdoor environments permit children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously.
- Environments are predictable and support children to take increasing responsibility for their health, hygiene, and personal care.
- Outdoor environments are established and maintained with continued consideration to the EYLF and individual planning cycles for children.

## 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 including contractors and volunteers, 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.
- Complete all training requirements – reading this policy and associated documents within their 3-month induction period and annually thereafter.

#### **Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director**

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

- Ensure outdoor environments are well resourced and well maintained ensuring natural materials are used wherever possible.
- Ensure that risk assessments are prepared to identify potential risks within the service, especially with the introduction of new equipment and these risk assessments are reviewed annually by Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director.
- 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.
- Complete all training requirements – reading this policy and associated documents within their 3-month induction period and annually thereafter.

#### **Educators:**

It is the responsibility of Educators to:

- Offer children opportunities to be active, messy, and noisy and play on a large scale.
- Provide an engaging outdoor environment ensuring that the program is extended from the indoor and has input from children's interest.
- Encourage water play and sensory experiences for children
- Allow children to explore garden areas and be involved in planting and growing their own produce, teaching them about being self-sufficient and growth cycles.
- Set up the outdoor environment to minimise the risk of injury, disruption between activities, conflict between children and reduce prolonged exposure to excess internal and external noise.
- Create learning environments outside that produce a comfortable 'lived-in' feeling. This often means having a mix of found objects, purchased equipment and materials, including appropriate seating for adult educators and family members that also encourage quality interactions with children.
- Appropriately re organise play spaces for ongoing access and engagement with children.
- Participate in on-going professional conversations and development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment
- Encourage access to both indoor and outdoor spaces allowing children's autonomy to make decisions about how and where they engage in play.
- Create outdoor learning environments that are planned in accordance with children's needs, development, abilities and interests. Environments are inviting, interesting, inclusive and promote exploration and play based learning.

- Utilise a balance of natural, man-made, recycled and found resources within outdoor environments.
- Facilitate, plan for and risk assess in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor through appropriate Risk Assessment and Management Plans and Supervision Plans opportunities for risky play that provides children opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury risk (Sandseter (2007); Little & Wyver, 2008)
- Ensure that they ask for clarification if any information is unclear
- 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 and annually thereafter.

#### Families:

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to:

- Ensure children are dressed in clothes which allow them to explore and play freely and not restrict them using equipment while at play.
- Children’s clothing should accommodate weather conditions i.e., be loose and cool in summer to prevent overheating but provide adequate sun protection – example no singlets and warm enough for chilly weather – including outdoor play.

## 7 Reporting and Compliance

#### Links to NQS and Legislation:

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

<b>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</b>	
105	Furniture, materials, and equipment
108	Space requirements – outdoor space
110	Ventilation and natural light
113	Outdoor space – natural environment
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

<b>National Quality Standards</b>		
<b>Quality Area 1 Educational Program and Practice</b>		
<b>1.1 Program</b>		
Element 1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child’s current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
Element 1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child’s learning.
<b>1.2 Practice</b>		
Element 1.2.1	Intentional Teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
Element 1.2.3	Child directed learning	Each child’s agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
<b>Quality Area 3 Environment</b>		
<b>3.1 Design</b>		
Element 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.

National Quality Standards		
3.2 Use		
Element 3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
Element 3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials, and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
Element 3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

#### Links to related procedures and forms

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- OP51-F001 Opening Safety Checklist
- OP51-F002 Closing Safety Checklist
- OP51-F005 Maintenance Book
- OP52-F001 Risk Assessment and Management Plan Form
- OP54-F002 Daily Playground Surface Temperature Check Record
- OP055-PR001 Supervision Plan Template
- OP40 Managing Reporting Requirements & Notifications Policy
- OP51 Safe Play Spaces Policy
- OP52 Risk Management Policy
- OP54 Sun Protection Weather and Heat Policy

#### Links to references and further reading

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- 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.
- Kidsafe Safety Information Sheets: [https://www.kidsafensw.org/resources/information-sheets/ Moveable Play Equipment](https://www.kidsafensw.org/resources/information-sheets/MoveablePlayEquipment)
- National Quality Standard: Adventurous Play – Developing a culture of risky play: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/AdventurousPlay%E2%80%93DevelopingACultureOfRiskyPlay.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