

Water Safety Policy and Procedure

Policy Title:	Water Safety Policy and Procedure		
Last Reviewed:	October 2015	Next review due:	March 2018
NQF Reference:	National Law section 167 National Regulations 168 NQS 2		

Rationale

In all experiences where children engage with water, educators must be mindful that children can drown in shallow water, with drowning being the greatest cause of accidental death in children under five in Australia. However, for every drowning that occurs, there are approximately three children admitted to hospital from near drowning accidents, with some of these children suffering some form of brain damage.

Policy

Children are inquisitive when in or around water and therefore the health, safety and well-being of the children must be considered at all times; with their age, previous experience and physical capabilities being taken into account. Appropriate supervision of children must be maintained at all times - the water safety skills of children does not replace adult supervision.

It is not only large bodies of water that may pose a threat to the safety of children. Other bodies of water such as nappy buckets, toilets, water features or containers may also pose a threat to children, where they are accessible or there is inadequate supervision.

As part of the preparation of a water based activity, educators may discuss with children water safety, including what to do if they get into difficulties while in the water.

While swimming pools are prohibited on the premises of a Tasmanian education and care service, this does not prohibit services from engaging in water based experiences or activities, such as water play or swimming.

Procedure

Whenever children are engaged in a water based activity the following procedures must be implemented:

- Appropriate risk assessment developed and implemented, including a review of the environment for any hazards;
- Always ensure appropriate supervision:
 - Older children are within direct sight at all times;
 - If the child is under five years of age, within arm's reach at all times;
- Required first aid qualifications to be maintained at all times;
- First aid kit and other medication to be accessible at all times;
- Where applicable, bronze medallion requirements are to be maintained;
- Implement appropriate sun protection procedures in line with the services Sun Protection Policy and Procedure;
- Where a container has been used within a water based activity, the container is to be emptied immediately after use and stored to prevent the collection of water or made inaccessible to children.

In addition to the above the requirements, the following must also be applied:

Pools or Spas

- Ratios - where the adult is in the water with the children:
 - 0 - 3 years 1:1

- 3 - school age 1:2
- School age 1:5

Note: Pool lifeguards should only be used for and counted in supervision ratios if they do not have general lifeguard duties at the time (i.e. Their sole responsibility is the supervision of the excursion).

- Where children are to swim, at least one adult must hold a current Bronze Medallion;
- Where the educator is required to leave the pool/water area, even for a brief moment, they must ensure:
 - appropriate supervision is maintained; or
 - all children remain with an educator;
- Read and obey all safety signs;
- Use a system to identify the supervising adult and children who are part of the group (e.g. hat/arm band etc.);
- Be aware people, toys or other floating devices may obscure your view;
- Confirm children's swimming ability with parents prior to the commencement of the excursion;
- Always check the temperature of the water before children enter;
- Children should not put their head under the water in a spa as this could increase the risk of entrapment in the suction outlets;
- Ensure long hair is tied back in pools and spas to avoid entrapment.

Beach

- Where a beach is flagged, ensure children always swim between the red and yellow flags as they mark the safest area on the beach to swim;
- If unsure of the conditions, confirm them with the life guard before anyone enters the water;
- Be aware of any changes in the overall weather, waves or currents;
- Always check the depth before entering;
- If wading, check for hidden rocks or sudden drop offs;
- If available, always read the Surf Conditions Board;
- Adults should always be in the water with children at the beach;
- If requested by a lifeguard, everyone will immediately leave the water;
- Ensure appropriate clothing and equipment (e.g. rash vests, hats, sunscreen, bathers, towel and spare clothing) are available;
- Confirm children's swimming ability with parents prior to the commencement of the excursion;
- To confirm the water is safe for swimming contact the Public and Environmental Health Service on 1800 671 738;
- At least one adult must hold a current Bronze Medallion;
- Ratios will be maintained as outlined in the *'Pool and Spas'* section of this document; however, where the activity takes place in a location manned and patrolled by Surf Life Saving Australia, the ratios may vary according to the advice of the Patrol Captain.

Fishing

The suggested ratio for children when fishing is 1:10. (Where an educator is engaged in giving instruction, another educator must take overall responsibility). Ratios may vary dependant on:

- venue
- weather
- time of year
- experience and age of the children

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Local restrictions may also apply to the number of people who can fish in some areas (e.g. jetties, wharves etc.). For the requirements for a current angling Licence (required to fish in any inland water in Tasmania, apart from a registered private fishery or in specified bream waters) for any person over the age of 14 years www.fishing.tas.gov.au and/or www.ifs.tas.gov.au

In addition:

- Always choose a safe spot for children to fish - stay away from sloping, slippery edges;
- In addition to a first aid kit, emergency safety equipment may include:
 - throwing line;
 - floatation device;
 - spare clothing;
- Ensure children wear appropriate clothing and footwear;
- Ensure the equipment is age and size appropriate. Barbless hooks are recommended, as well as safety glasses if engaged in fly fishing;
- Remind children never to turn away from the water, as a wave may knock them over. A fish on the line does not alter this.

Links to other policies or documents

- Administrations of First Aid Policy and Procedure
- Excursion Policy and Procedure
- Excursion Risk Assessment Form
- Medical Conditions Policy and Procedure
- Safe Environment Policy and Procedure
- Sun Protection Policy and Procedure
- Supervision Policy and Procedure

Sources

- *Education and Care Services National Regulations*
- Department of Education Tasmania
- Fishcare Tasmania
- Kidsafe Australia
- Kids Alive
- Royal Life Saving Australia
- Surf Life Saving Tasmania