



Taking Risks in the Outdoor Environment

Approval: November 2020

Review: November 2022

POLICY STATEMENT:

At Bondi Before & After School Care, we acknowledge the growth of risk aversion in many out of school hours care centres and the potential this has to negatively impact on children's ability to problem solve and respond positively to challenging situations (Ball, Gill & Spiegel, 2003). We are also aware that in today's society children's contact with the outdoors is becoming more and more limited as the dependence on electronic and digital sources for learning, recreation and socialising increases. We believe that it is necessary to provide children with environments where they can experience real hazards and learn to respond to these, supported by educators.

At BASC educators will encourage children to take certain risks such as tree climbing, bug watching, walking with bare feet and playing with sticks however only after identifying potential dangers and how to avoid them. Research suggests that *"when children make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks, manage change and cope with frustration"* they gain strong social and emotional wellbeing (My Time Our Place, 2011). As a centre we strive to assist children in achieving the My Time Our Place framework outcomes and so believe that children should regularly participate in challenging activities and risk assessing.

Goals:

- To keep children safe by supporting them to form risk assessments of challenging and potentially risky activities.
- To take every reasonable precaution to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury
- To provide outdoor experiences that engage children and encourage them to become responsible in and show respect for the outdoor environment

Strategies:

The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of this policy as well as the *"Creating a child safe environment"* policy
- Ensure that any hazards in outdoor environments are reported to the WHS officer and the school GA
- Ensure that all staff are aware of specific boundaries relating to tree climbing, insect, stick, rock and bare foot play
- Ensure that sufficient numbers of staff are employed to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the need for adequate supervision of children at all times
- Ensure that staff are aware of their responsibility to report any incidents of harm to children
- Ensure that staff are aware of and have access to the *"reporting requirements"* policy.

Educators, staff and volunteers will:

- Clearly identify risks in outdoor environments with children
- Assist children in coming up with ways to avoid risk, ensure suggestions are documented
- Ensure that there is adequate supervision of children at all times

- Report any hazards in the outdoor environment to the WHS officer and the school GA
- Communicate clear boundaries to children relating to tree climbing height, areas appropriate for bare feet, the size of sticks to play with and the types of bugs they can study as well as how long for
- Provide children with tools to interact with the outdoor environment in imaginative and exploratory ways
- Encourage children to appreciate and respect the natural elements of the outdoor environment including trees, plants and animals
- Prompt children to think about appropriate ways to interact with nature by asking questions

CONSIDERATIONS	
Education & Care Services National Regulations	regulation 113
National Quality Standard	Quality Area's 2 & 3
Service Policies & Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supervision ● Child Safe Environment ● Parent Handbook
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 ● My Time Our Place Framework 2011 ● National Quality Framework 2012 ● Ombudsman Act 1974
Sources	<p>Ball, D., Gill, T., & Spiegel, B. (2003). Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide. England: Play Safety Forum.</p> <p>Community Childcare Cooperative (2012)</p> <p>Government of South Australia - Department for Education and Child Development (2014), Out of School Hours Care: Balancing Risks and Benefits in Children's Play Experiences, accessed from http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/oshc/pages/default/play/?reFlag=1</p> <p>Somers Preschool (2013), Play Benefit and Risk Policy, accessed from http://somerspreshool.org.au/Bush_Kinder_file/somers_bush_kinder_policy-play_benefit_and_risk-17.02.13.pdf</p>