IN-NATURE PROGRAM

QUALITY AREA 2 | ELAA version 1.2

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines for Kurboroo Kindergarten to plan and conduct safe and appropriate in-nature program.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Kurboroo Kindergarten is committed to:

- providing opportunities through the educational program for children to explore and experience the wider environment and broader community
- ensuring that the in-nature program is accessible, affordable and contribute to children's learning and development
- ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of children at all times, conducting risk assessments and ensuring authorisations are obtained from parents/guardians
- providing adequate supervision of all children during the in-nature program
- promoting road safety education and safe active travel for children.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the in-nature program

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
1. Developing an *In-nature Policy* in consultation with the nominated supervisor, staff and parents/guardians at the service	**R**	√	√	√	√
2. Ensuring that staff, volunteers, students and others at the service are provided with a copy of the *In-nature Policy* and comply with its requirements *(Regulation 171)*	**R**	√	√	√	√

Sourced from Early Learning Association Australia

3.	Ensuring families are given all the information regarding the in-nature program prior to enrolling their child at the service	√	√			
4.	Ensuring that all parents/guardians have completed, signed and dated their child's enrolment form *(refer to Enrolment and Orientation Policy)* including details of persons able to authorise an educator to take their child outside the service premises *(Regulation 99, 160, 161)*	**R**	√	√	√	√
5.	Ensuring that a child does not leave the service premises on the in-nature program unless prior written authorisation has been provided by the parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record, and that the authorisation includes all details required under *Regulation 99, 102(4) (refer to Attachment 1)*	**R**	√	√		√
6.	Ensuring that parents/guardians or persons named in the enrolment record have provided written authorisation *(Regulation 99)* within the past 12 months where the service is to take the child on regular outings *(refer to Definitions)*, and that this authorisation is kept in the child's enrolment record *(Regulation 161) (refer to Attachment 1)*	**R**	√	√	√	√
7.	Ensuring that the number of children attending the in-nature program does not exceed the number for which service approval has been granted on that day	**R**	√	√		
8.	Ensuring that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times, including during the in-nature program *(Regulations 123)*	**R**	√	√		
9.	Ensuring that children are adequately supervised *(refer to Definitions)* at all times *(Regulation 122) (National Law: Section 165)*	**R**	√	√		√
10.	Ensuring that parents/guardians, volunteers, students and all adults participating in the in-nature program are adequately supervised at all times and are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children *(refer to Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy)*	**R**	√	√		
11.	Ensuring that a risk assessment *(refer to Definitions)* is carried out for the in-nature program *(in accordance with Regulation 101)* before authorisation is sought from parents/guardians *(Regulation 100),* including suitability of location	**R**	√	√		
12.	Ensuring the risk assessment *(refer to Definitions)* identifies and assesses the risks, specifies how these will be managed and/or minimised, and includes all details required by *Regulation 101*	**R**	√	√		
13.	Developing strategies to improve children's safety in high-risk situations such as bushland, near water or near a road *(refer to Supervision of Children Policy, Water Safety Policy and Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy)*	**R**	√	√		
14.	Ensuring a new risk assessment is completed when circumstances change for the in-nature program	**R**	√	√		

15. Ensuring Child Safe Principles are included when undertaking risk assessments	R	√	√		√
16. Ensuring there are sufficient service-issued devices available during in nature programs	R	R			
17. Ensuring that only service-issued devices record images of children during in nature programs *(refer to Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments)*	R	R			
18. Ensuring emergency plans are in place, which allow each child to be easily removed from any in-nature site in the case of an emergency and be reviewed regularly.	**R**	R	√		√
19. Develop procedures in response to forecast of extreme weather conditions *(refer to Definitions)* and when to cancel the in-nature program, and ensuring that parents understand this process	**R**	R	√		√
20. Ensuring incident, injury trauma and illness procedures are followed during the in-nature program *(refer to Incident, Injury Trauma and Illness Policy)*	**R**	√	√		√
21. Ensuring that staff and volunteers comply with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*	**R**	√	√	√	√
22. Encouraging parents/guardians to comply with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy and Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments*	**R**	√	√	√	√
23. Providing road safety education as part of the curriculum		√	√		
24. Ensuring that adequate, developmentally and age-appropriate toilet, handwashing and drying facilities are provided for use by the children. If children who wear nappies are present, ensuring that adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities are available for nappy changing	R	√			
25. Ensuring that the in-nature program is based on an approved learning framework, the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child *(refer to Curriculum Development Policy)*		√	√		
26. Ensuring that there is a clear purpose and educational value for the in-nature program, and that this is communicated to parents/guardians		√	√		
27. Discussing the aims and objectives of the in-nature program, and items of special interest, with children prior to undertaking the activity		√	√		
28. Involving children in consultation and decision-making processes		√	√		√
29. Considering the financial ability of families before deciding on the in-nature program that would require an additional charge. Events that can be planned ahead of time should be included as an expenditure item in the service's budget and, as a result, will not incur additional charges *(refer to Fees Policy)*	√	√	√		

30. Ensuring that proposed in-nature program are inclusive of all children regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions *(refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy)*	**R**	√	√		
31. Ensuring strategies are in place to provide an accurate attendance record *(refer to Definitions)* for children attending the in-nature program, and for children remaining at the service while the in-nature program is happening	**R**	√			
32. Ensuring strategies are in place to ensure that there is an accurate list of all adults participating in the in-nature program, including parents/guardians, volunteers and students, with contact details for each individual	**R**	√	√		
33. Ensuring that each child's personal medication and current medical management plan is taken on the in-nature program *(refer to Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy)*	**R**	√	√	√	√
34. Understanding that, if they participate in an excursion or service event as a volunteer, they will be always under the immediate supervision of an ECT/educator or the approved provider				√	√
35. If participating in the in-nature program, informing an educator immediately if a child appears to be missing from the group				√	√
36. Supervising and caring for siblings and other children in their care who are not enrolled in the program				√	
37. Taking a portable first aid kit (including required medication for dealing with medical conditions) on the in-nature program *(Regulation 89)*	**R**	√	√		√
38. Ensuring the service issued mobile phone and the emergency contact details for each child taken on the in-nature program for notification in the event of an incident, injury, trauma or illness *(Regulation 98)*	**R**	√	√		
39. Ensuring sunscreen and hats (if required) is taken on the in-nature program and is available as required and that location provides adequate shade *(refer to Sun Protection Policy)*	**R**	√	√		√
40. Ensuring children always have access to safe drinking water and are offered food and beverages appropriate to their needs whilst on the in-nature program	**R**	√	√		√
41. Informing parents/guardians of items required by children for the in-nature program event e.g., snack/lunch, sunscreen, coat etc	√	√	√		
42. Displaying a notice at the service indicating that children are on the in-nature program, and including the location of the program and expected time of return to the service	√	√	√		

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

In-nature programs are outdoor educational sessions for children held in various natural settings such as, metropolitan park, regional parks, local bushland, or local beaches.

Within in-nature programs, children learn through play with natural materials in an outdoor environment, creating a fun and engaging classroom in nature. Experts in child development emphasise the significance of outdoor play for children's learning and wellbeing. It supports their physical and mental growth and teaches them to manage risks. This educational approach aligns with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and the National Quality Framework (NQF)

When planning for in-nature programs, it is important to ensure that they are inclusive of all members of the service community. Consideration must be given to any extra costs involved and the ability of families to pay these costs. Consideration must also be given to ensuring that all children can attend regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions *(refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Management Policy, Anaphylaxis and Allergic Reactions Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy and Seizure Policy)*. Clear procedures must be developed and followed, and these should be communicated to parents/guardians.

A risk assessment must be conducted for the in-nature program to identify potential risks to children's health, safety, or wellbeing before seeking permission from parents or guardians *(Regulations 100, 101)*. The risk assessment must outline each risk and detail how it will be managed or minimised *(Regulation 101)*. Written authorisation from a parent/guardian, or an individual listed in the child's enrolment record must be obtained prior to taking the child off the service premises. For specific information to be included in the written authorisation, *refer to Attachment 1.*

Early childhood road safety education seeks to minimise the risk of serious injury and death from road accidents, while also preparing children to become safe and independent road and transport users in the future. Integrating road safety education into outdoor programs, such as in-nature programs, provides a comprehensive approach to keeping children safe around traffic and in road environments. Children develop effective traffic skills most successfully when they practice in real-world settings, such as using crossings and traffic lights.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- *National Quality Standard*, including Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice and Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g., Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Attendance Record: Kept by the service to record details of each child attending the service including name, time of arrival and departure, signature of person delivering and collecting the child or of the nominated supervisor or educator *(Regulation 158(1))*.

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat -Bureau of Meteorology's Severe weather knowledge centre

Risk assessment: (In the context of this policy) a risk assessment must identify and assess any hazard that poses a risk to a child's health, safety and/or wellbeing while on an excursion, and specify how these risks will be managed and/or minimised *(Regulation 101)*. Risk assessments must consider:

- the proposed route and location of the in-nature program
- any water hazards *(refer to Water Safety Policy)*
- any risks associated with water-based activities *(refer to Water Safety Policy)*
- if the excursion involves transporting children—
    - the means of transport; and
    - any requirements for seatbelts or safety restraints under a law of each jurisdiction in which the children are being transported; and
    - the process for entering and exiting—
        - the education and care service premises; and
        - the pick-up location or destination (as required); and
    - procedures for embarking and disembarking the means of transport, including how each child is to be accounted for on embarking and disembarking; and
- the number of adults and children involved in the excursion; and
- given the risks posed by the in-nature program, the number of educators or other responsible adults that is appropriate to provide supervision and whether any adults with specialised skills are required (example: Specialised skills could include life-saving skills)
- the proposed activities, and the impact of this on children with varying levels of ability, additional needs or medical conditions
- the proposed duration of the in-nature program, and the impact of this on children with varying levels of ability, additional needs or medical conditions
- any items/information that should be taken on the in-nature program e.g., first aid kit, emergency contact details for children, medication for children with known medical conditions (such as asthma, anaphylaxis and diabetes) and a mobile phone.

A sample Excursion Risk Management Plan is provided on the ACECQA website at: www.acecqa.gov.au (search Sample forms and templates)

Regular outing: (In relation this policy) a walk, drive or trip to/from a location that the service visits regularly as part of its educational program, and where the circumstances covered by the risk assessment are the same on

each trip. If an excursion is a regular outing, an authorisation from parents/guardians is only required to be obtained once every 12 months. A new authorisation is required if there is any change to the circumstances of the regular outing.

Supervision: refer to adequate supervision in *Definitions* above.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- ACECQA Information Sheet: The how and why of in-nature play
- ACECQA: Risk Assessment and Management Tool
- Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: www.acecqa.gov.au
- CELA Blog – A bush yarn
- Child Health Promotion Research Centre & Edith Cowan University (2012) National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education: https://childroadsafety.org.au/assets/Research/National-Practices-for-EC-RSE.pdf
- Department of Education: Bush Kinders
- ELAA's Road Safety Education program www.childroadsafety.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Parks Victoria – Bush Kinder Handbook
- VicRoads: www.vicroads.vic.gov.au
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.education.vic.gov.au
- Victorian Educators Outdoor Pedagogy Portal

RELATED POLICIES

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations
- Administration of First Aid
- Administration of Medication
- Anaphylaxis and Allergic Reactions
- Asthma Management
- Code of Conduct
- Educational Program
- Dealing with Medical Conditions
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Diabetes
- Emergency and Evacuation
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Epilepsy and Seizures
- Fees
- Food Safety
- Hygiene
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Inclusion and Equity
- Interactions with Children
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Participation of Volunteers and Students
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Road Safety Education and Safe Transport
- Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments
- Sun Protection
- Supervision of Children

- Water Safety

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Developing a regular outing authorisation form

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Kurboroo Kindergarten on 14/10/2025.

REVIEW DATE: October 2026

ATTACHMENT 1. DEVELOPING A REGULAR OUTING AUTHORISATION FORM

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Regulation 102 (4))* specify that written authorisations for excursions, given by a parent/guardian or person authorised on the child's enrolment record, must include the following details:

- the child's name
- the reason the child is to be taken outside the service premises
- a description of when the child is to be taken on the regular outings
- a description of the proposed location of the in-nature program
- if the excursion involves transporting children—
    - (i) the means of transport; and
    - (ii) any requirements for seatbelts or safety restraints under a law of each jurisdiction in which the children are being transported
- proposed activities to be undertaken as part of the in-nature program
- the period of time that the child will be away from the service premises
- the anticipated number of children attending the excursion
- the anticipated ratio of educators to children attending the excursion
- the anticipated number of staff members, and any other adults who will accompany and supervise children on the excursion
- that a risk assessment has been prepared and is available at the service.

Note: regular outing authorisation is only required to be obtained once in a 12 month period.

The authorisation form should require parents/guardians to include contact details for two people and for the child's medical practitioner in the event that the child experiences an incident, injury, trauma or illness while on the excursion.

The form must be signed and dated by the parent/guardian or a person authorised on the child's enrolment form.

Services should also include information about:

- additional costs involved, if any, and
- whether parents/guardians/siblings are able to participate in the excursion and, if so, details of the supervision requirements for additional family members.