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# POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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## WATER SAFETY

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT AND/OR PURPOSE

Catholic Early Learning and Care is committed to:

- Allowing children to explore their natural environment including through water play.
- Managing risks associated with water activities.
- Ensuring programming incorporates water safety awareness, and
- Providing training/information to educators about water safety.

### 2. APPLICATION

This procedure applies to all Catholic Early Learning and Care Services in the Diocese of Cairns.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **Nominated Supervisor Responsibilities:**

- Ensuring 'water safety at the service guide' is followed for the service;
- Conducting risk assessments for other identified water hazards;
- Building water safety messages into the educational program as appropriate;
- Educating staff on the management of 'unstructured aquatic activities' during excursions;
- Implementing the 'unstructured aquatic activities program' for all unstructured 'deep' water activities excursion activities.

#### **Educators' Responsibility:**

- Identify and eliminate water hazards as part of the daily inspection.
- Following water safety guidelines for the service.
- Always supervise water activities.
- Teach children about staying safe around water.
- Report water hazards and incidents immediately to the nominated supervisor.
- Read and follow risk assessments.
- Following 'unstructured aquatic activity program for 'deep' water excursion activities.

### 4. PROCEDURE

#### **Water Safety at the Services Guide:**

#### **Hazard inspection:**

As part of the daily indoor/outdoor checklist educators identify and remove any water hazards

**Education:**

- Annual WHS Mandatory training
- Risk Assessments

**Supervision:**

- For 0–5-year-olds and non-swimmers, educators need to be within arms' reach of the child. It is best if the educators are engaging with the children i.e. playing with them, talking to them.
- Constant active supervision is required for children aged 6–12 years old.
- Adhere to the ratio of 1 educator to 5 children when in close proximity to water.

**What is active supervision?**

Active supervision means focusing all of your attention on the children all of the time, when they are in, on or around the water. Educators must be interacting with the children and be ready to enter the water in case of an emergency. Educators should avoid distractions when children are in the presence of water. Maintain constant supervision.

**Water carrying containers that can present a drowning hazard for children.**

Water carrying containers that can reasonably present a drowning hazard for children (e.g. water troughs, baths, buckets, pet water bowls, tanks, water features)

- Fill to a safe level.
- Supervise at all times when water is present in them.
- Empty at the end of each water play activity and remove from access by children.
- Store in a manner to prevent the inadvertent collection of water through natural causes such as rain.
- Allow to dry thoroughly at the end of each water play activity to prevent the build-up of potentially harmful bacteria and mould.

Children will be discouraged from drinking the water during play activities.

**Unstructured aquatic activities – to be followed for deep water excursion activities**

The Water Safety Guidelines for Unstructured Aquatic Activities has been developed through a collaborative process involving the three sectors of education in NSW, peak water safety agencies and the aquatics industry, and in line with the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008-2011

**DEFINITIONS:**

<b>Unstructured Aquatic Activity</b>	Free swim time as part of an excursion
<b>Shallow water</b>	'Water depth no higher than a student's waist'. This ensures no restrictions to arm movements and allows for a distressed child to signal for help.
<b>Deep Water</b>	Water depth higher than a child's waist
<b>Water Survival Challenge</b>	A proficiency test that assesses a child's aquatic skill level against predetermined criteria. This is a minimum benchmark for students participating in an unstructured aquatic activity.
<b>Venue</b>	A venue is defined as an aquatic location (swimming pool, lake, dam, etc.) in which unstructured aquatic activity is to take place.
<b>Wrist bands</b>	A waterproof band placed on a child's wrist to identify proficiency against the Water Survival Challenge criteria. Blue wrist bands for proficient children and yellow wrist bands for non-proficient children who are able to walk with balance and stability in shallow water.
<b>Nominated Rescue Person</b>	Current competency in SISCAQU202A - Perform Basic Water Rescues (annual refresher required)  OR Higher level of competency (e.g. current bronze medallion – updated annually, current lifeguard)

### **Selecting a Venue**

CELC have determined that venues where unstructured water activities are conducted in 'deep water' the water must be clear to allow constant supervision of all children at all times (e.g. clear water swimming pool, able to clearly see the bottom of the water source).

### **CELC does not permit children to enter the ocean at any time.**

As part of the selection process the Nominated Supervisor should seek to obtain the venue emergency action plan and any local rules relevant to the venue.

### **Obtaining Parent Permission**

Parents must provide consent for their child(ren) to participate in the aquatic activities using one of the following forms:

- Unstructured Swimming Permission Form – Multiple Activities
- Unstructured Swimming Permission Form – Single Activity

Children who are nominated by their parents as swimmers will be required to complete the Water Survival Challenge.

Children who are nominated by their parents as non-swimmers and are permitted to go in the water will be provided with a yellow wrist band. These children will need to be assessed on their ability to walk with balance and stability in waist deep water.

Children, whose parents do not provide permission for their child(ren) to go in the water or are unable to walk with balance and stability in waist deep water will be involved in non-aquatic activities.

### **Educator Supervision**

The educator to child supervision ratio for unstructured aquatic activity must not exceed 1:10. As a general rule all deep water unstructured water activities will have a ratio of 1 educator to 5 children.

The number of supervising educators required at the activity will depend on the number of children, their age and maturity, the type of activity and the conditions at the venue. The ratio will be determined based on risk levels.

There must be a minimum of one 'nominated rescue person' at a deep-water unstructured water activity.

Educators providing supervision do not require any special aquatic competencies to provide appropriate supervision, scanning and surveillance support for unstructured aquatic activities.

### **Should educators be in or out of the water for supervision?**

1 staff member for each 10 children shall be positioned out of the water.

If the service identifies that a 1:5 ratio is required for a deep-water unstructured activity and there are 35 children in attendance the educators can be positioned:

- Total educators required: 7
- Out of the water = 4 educators
- In the water = 3 educators

NOTE: At least one educator positioned out of the water must be capable of performing a water rescue (i.e. nominated rescue person)

### **Children with Special Needs**

Individual controls need to be identified and implemented for children with special needs. These needs should be documented on form:

- Excursion – Children with additional requirements

The following should consider when identifying controls:

- The child's ability to understand and follow directions, including non-English speaking background children.
- Whether the child requires help entering and exiting the pool.
- Whether there are any further medical issues that educators should be aware of.

Additionally, and as an example, children with seizure conditions are particularly vulnerable in the water and require close supervision. Any children with seizure conditions must have 1:1 supervision.

### **Risk Management Plan**

Nominated Supervisors are responsible for completing the risk assessment prior to sending the booking and consent form to parents. The degree of planning required is influenced by the nature of the unstructured aquatic activity, the level of risk and the child group. For activities that have previously been planned and conducted, previous risk management plans may be reviewed and reused.

All educators participating in the activity should be given access to the risk assessment.

The nominated supervisor needs to ensure the appropriate equipment is available for rescue.

### **Educator Induction**

Prior to the excursion the Nominated Supervisor is required to:

- Ensure the educators view 'The Water Survival' video to support understanding of the elements contained in '[The Swim Survival Challenge](#)'
- Discuss who the rescue person is, what rescue equipment is available, supervision positions, additional controls for children with special needs.
- Explain the venue layout, rules, educator responsibilities, appropriate activities and activity areas.
- Explain the plan for non-swimmers.
- Discuss other information identified in the risk assessment.
- Explain communication equipment and techniques.

### **The Water Survival Challenge**

All swimmers will be required to complete the Water Survival Challenge prior to participation in unstructured aquatic activity.

The aim of 'The Challenge' is to determine the aquatic proficiency of children prior to participation in unstructured aquatic activity.

### **Child Induction**

Prior to going to the venue, it is important that children are provided with an induction into 'The Challenge'.

Each element within 'The Challenge' should be outlined to the children. The DVD can be utilised as a teaching resource highlighting the different aspects of 'The Challenge'.

Children wishing not to participate in aquatic activities will not be allowed to enter the water, this includes children whose parents have not provided consent for them to enter the water.

Children who are nominated by their parents as swimmers but who do not wish to participate in 'The Challenge' are to be treated as non-proficient.

### **The Challenge**

TESTING CHILDREN PROFICIENCY

'The Challenge' identifies the proficiency that each child demonstrates at the time of testing. If a child is able to walk with balance in the water but is unable to complete 'The Challenge', a yellow wristband is issued.

'The Challenge' consists of five elements:

- Entry – Slide in entry into shallow water and walk five metres (Please note: This is the minimum benchmark for yellow wrist banded students).
- Survival Swimming – 25m swim with recognisable strokes
- Survival Sequence – Scull, float or tread water for 1 minute, call out for help once
- Exit – Exit the water unassisted
- Rescue Sequence– Demonstrate a simple voice rescue.

### **CLASSIFYING CHILDREN/WRISTBANDS**

Following completion of 'The Challenge' all children are required to be issued with a wrist band. Services should document the child's proficiency in case a wrist band is lost or damaged during activity.

Proficient children issued with a blue wristband will be deemed safe to participate in the appropriate activity as outlined in the services risk assessment.

Non-proficient children will be issued with a yellow wristband and can participate in shallow water activities.

The wrist bands should remain on the children until they exit the venue at which point, they can be appropriately discarded.

Wrist bands are utilised prior to the commencement of unstructured activities to recognise the proficiency of children.

When selecting a wrist band please ensure the following:

- the wristband is designed for single use, is waterproof, tear resistant and non-stretch. Wrist bands made of Tyvek are recommended.
- sufficient numbers of wrist bands are available to cater for the entire group
- ensure additional wrist bands are available in case of breakage or loss during activity
- are disposable to avoid children reusing bands or providing to other groups or children. Must be cut off to be removed making them a single use item.

When applying a wrist band, ensure they are tight enough to avoid child removal or swapping of wrist bands but not too tight to interfere with circulation or cause discomfort.

**Blue wristbands should be used to indicate proficient children.**

**Yellow wristbands should be used for non-proficient children.**

It is important that services consistently utilise these colours to avoid confusion at aquatic venues where pool lifeguards/educators will also be observing.

Appropriate activities should be organised for those children deemed not proficient but assessed as being capable of walking with balance and confidence in water (yellow wristband).

Children with yellow wristbands should have a designated shallow water area for their use. This area will be in the shallow part of the pool and established in collaboration with the Nominated Rescue Person. This area must be appropriately defined and with area specific supervision applied.

Educators supervising non-swimmers (yellow wristbands) should monitor children's ability to walk with balance and confidence in shallow water. If the child has difficulty, they should be removed from the water.

Children who are not participating (i.e. children without a yellow or blue wristband) in the aquatic activity must be assigned a supervised area away from the water's edge.

Any child who is in the water without a wristband should be immediately removed from the water.

#### **HOW OFTEN ARE STUDENTS REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY AGAINST 'THE CHALLENGE'?**

Aquatic proficiency (skills) can deteriorate if not practised on a regular basis. It is therefore recommended that children undertake 'The Challenge' at least 6 monthly.

## **5. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Water Safety Guidelines for Unstructured Aquatic Activities
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ATKd5C3844&feature=youtu.be>

#### **Forms:**

- Unstructured Swimming Permission Form – Multiple Activities
- Unstructured Swimming Permission Form – Single Activity
- Excursion – Children with additional requirements

## **6. BREACHING THIS POLICY**

Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against a person who is found to have breached the requirements contained within this document. Action taken will depend on the nature and circumstance of each breach and could include: an official warning and note on the individual's personnel file; a formal written and/or verbal apology; counselling; demotion; transfer; or suspension or dismissal for very serious matters.

## **7. SEE ALSO**

#### **Legislation:**

- Work Health & Safety Act & Regulations 2011
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Reg 168 2. (a) iii Water Safety
- Reg 101 Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- The National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018
- Water Safety Guidelines for Unstructured Aquatic Activity – Department of Education and Training NSW

## **8. ENQUIRES**

Catholic Early Learning and Care Executive Director - [admin@cclc.catholic.org.au](mailto:admin@cclc.catholic.org.au)

## **9. APPROVAL**



Vicki Bell  
Executive Director  
Catholic Early Learning and Care

**Date: 19/11/2021**