

### Background

---

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and learning. Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy foods and to learn about food choices from educators and other children (*Early Years Learning Framework, Outcome 3, page 33*)

### Policy statement

---

This policy details the Services approach to mealtimes when the food and beverages consumed by children while at the Service are provided by their parents. It also describes the way educators use mealtimes as a positive and social occasion for developing lifelong healthy food choices.

### Strategies and practices

---

- The Services *Nutrition, Food and Beverage Policy – Parent Provided* is explained to parents at enrolment. Parents are provided with information about nutritious, age-appropriate food and drink, and with healthy lunch box tips.
- At enrolment, parents provide the Service with details of their child's food and drink allergies and of any cultural preferences in food. The enrolment form has provisions for parents to provide the Service with details of any special dietary requirements e.g., allergies, culture, religion, food preferences. Parents are asked to update this information when any changes occur. This information is required for those times when children may be offered items not from home e.g., birthday cake, cooking experiences.
- Except for drinking water, parents supply all their children's food and drink requirements while at the Service and for excursions. Parents are encouraged to pack in their children's lunch boxes only food that is consistent with *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*, and/or *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*. The healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, the Services website and up to date materials from recognized authorities.
- Educators promote healthy eating in children by including the topic in daily routines, modelling, discussions, songs, stories, games, using different cultural meal settings, and cooking experiences.
- Mealtimes are relaxed, pleasant and unhurried. Children choose what to eat from their lunch boxes. Educators sit and eat with the children, maintaining good personal nutrition. They help them open any sealed containers, and talk with them on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, healthy food and nutrition.
- The Service maintains a list and photographs of children with special food requirements for health or medical reasons e.g., allergies, intolerances. This information is displayed in the food preparation areas, eating areas and strategically throughout the Service. Relief educators are informed of these dietary requirements when they begin their shift. Children with special food requirements for health and medical reasons will wear an alert bracelet.

- Developmentally appropriate eating utensils and furniture are provided for each child. Children, including toddlers, are encouraged to be independent and develop social skills at mealtimes.
- Food is never used to reward or punish children. Whilst children are encouraged to eat healthy food from their lunchboxes, they are not required to eat food they do not like or to eat more than they want.
- Safe drinking water is always readily accessible to children, and educators encourage children to drink water at frequent intervals.
- Children who are hungry at times other than mealtimes are provided with food from their lunch boxes.
- Children will have access to breads/cereals or fruit/vegetable snacks if they are hungry between meals.
- Educators follow all regulatory food handling and hygiene practices at mealtimes. These include handwashing, wearing gloves, using tongs to handle food, ensuring children do not share utensils or use those that have been dropped. Refer to the Services Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy.
- Parents are informed of their child's food and beverage intake in the child's communication book for infants and on the daily feedback sheet for older children. Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well, and all uneaten and unopened food is returned home.
- Educators monitor the safety and suitability of foods. They send home foods likely to cause choking such as popcorn, and carrot sticks, and celery sticks for children less than three years old. Items such as chocolate, sweet cakes, biscuits and buns, sweet sugary treats and crisps are also sent home. Educators must not humiliate children by refusing to allow them to have food provided by the parents. The service can resource families with appropriate food choices but must ultimately respect the parent's wishes.
- If 'discouraged' foods are brought to the service, a note suggesting an appropriate alternative will be provided to parents/guardians.
- Babies are fed individually by educators.
- Parents are asked to place their child's lunch box in the refrigerator in their child's room upon arrival at the Service. The lunch box is to be clearly labelled with the child's full name. Parents are asked to remove lunches from insulated lunch boxes or bags because these prevent the foods from being cooled effectively by the refrigerator.
- Birthdays are an important part of a child's life, and educators and children are encouraged to celebrate them at the Service. Parents are welcome to bring a cake to share. Only purchased cakes still in the original wrap or container, with a current use-by date and a full list of ingredients, can be brought into the Service.
- The Service is a nut free zone, and educators take all reasonable steps to ensure this mandate is upheld. Children are actively discouraged from sharing food. Educators remove from lunch

boxes any products suspected of containing nuts, and these products are returned to parents when they collect their child.

- Educators receive current information on nutrition for young children, with special regard to cultural preferences.

## Additional safe practices for babies

- Educators follow the Services written Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure when storing and heating babies' bottles.

## Responsibilities of parents

- To provide food and beverages for their child which are consistent with the Service's *Nutrition, Food and Beverage – Parent Provided Policy*.
- To provide the Service with details of their child's known food allergies at enrolment, and to inform the Service immediately when any changes occur.
- To discuss their child's food allergies, if any, with them and to ensure they understand the importance of not sharing food.

## Procedures and forms

- Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) – and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure
- Food Register -Food brought to centre (services providing meals)
- Bottle Receipt Register

## Links to other policies

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Injuries, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Student, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

## Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regs	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
	78	Food and beverages
	90	Medical conditions policy
	91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

QA	2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
5.1.2	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained

## Sources

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2024). National Quality Framework. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about>
- Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (2022).
- Australian Government Department of Education. <https://www.education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework> accessed 24 June 2025
- Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (Current as of 2024). <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653> accessed 24 June 2025
- Australian Dietary Guidelines (NHMRC). <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-dietary-guidelines> accessed 24 June 2025
- Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood.
- Australian Government Department of Health. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection> accessed 24 June 2025

## Further reading and useful websites

- Australian Breastfeeding Association – <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/> accessed 24 June 2025
- Nutrition Australia – <https://nutritionaustralia.org/> accessed 24 June 2025
- Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne – <https://www.rch.org.au/> accessed 24 June 2025
- Children's Health Queensland – <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/> accessed 24 June 2025
- Queensland Health – <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/> accessed 24 June 2025

## Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

## Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.	January 2019
2	6 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	February 2020
3	31 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	January 2021

## Nutrition, Food and Beverages – Parent Provided

4	25 September 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	September 2021
5	28 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy	September 2022
6	29 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed policy Accessed sources and added information	September 2023
7	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	August 2024
8	1 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	July 2025
9	24 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Reviewed policy. Updated sources and further readings in line with current NQF guidance.	June 2026