

## Background

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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

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

## Strategies and practices

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1. The Services *Nutrition, Food and Beverage Policy – Service Provided* is explained to parents at enrolment.
2. 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.
3. The Service serves all the children's food and drink requirements over the day – except for babies' bottles. The food and drinks served are nutritious, appropriate to each child (as detailed in their enrolment form) and consistent with *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*, and/or *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*.
4. Upon request parents may supply 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.
5. Parents providing their children's food and drink while at the Service are provided with information relating to children's allergies at the Service and are asked not to provide foods containing certain allergens e.g., egg, nuts.
6. Parents providing their children's food and drink must take their child's food directly to the kitchen to be added to the Food Register -Food Brought to Centre (services providing meals) and stored appropriately.
7. The weekly menu accurately describes the food and beverages for each day and is displayed prominently for parents. The weekly menu meets the Nutrition Australia recommendations.

8. 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 and strategically throughout the Service. Relief staff are informed of these dietary requirements when they begin their shift.
9. Meals served to children with dietary requirements/restrictions and allergies/intolerances are served on distinctive plates.
10. Food is presented attractively. Pureed meat, vegetables and fruit will be offered to younger children (0-2 years).
11. The healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, the website and up to date materials from recognised authorities.
12. Educators promote healthy eating in children by including the topic in daily routines and in other intentional teaching such as role-modelling, discussions, songs, stories, games, using different cultural meal settings, and cooking experiences.
13. Mealtimes are relaxed, pleasant and unhurried. Educators sit and eat with the children, maintaining good personal nutrition, and talk with them on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, healthy food and nutrition.
14. 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. Children under the age of 12 months are required to be seated in a toddler sized chair with a safety harness, or in a highchair with a safety harness.
15. The Service provides chairs of different sizes to suit children's varied needs as they progress developmentally. Children's chairs range in size depending on the height of the children. Please take note when seating children at the table that they can independently maneuver themselves in and out from the table.
16. Food is never used to reward or punish children.
17. Children are encouraged to eat, but they are not required to taste new foods, to eat food they do not like or to eat more than they want.
18. Safe drinking water is always readily accessible to children, and educators encourage children to drink water at frequent intervals.
19. Children who are hungry at times other than mealtimes are provided with suitable food options.
20. Staff follow all regulatory requirements for preparing and serving food. 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 Service's Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy.

21. Parents are informed of their child's food and beverage intake in the child's communication book for infants and the daily feedback sheet for older children. Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well.
22. Foods likely to cause choking such as raw carrot, celery sticks, nuts, lollies, hot dogs, popcorn, whole grapes and corn chips are not served to children under 3 years. It is recommended blanching or grating carrots and removing the skin of apples and grating them for under 2s.
23. Babies are fed individually by educators.
24. Mothers who are breastfeeding are welcome to visit the Service at any time or during breaks from work to feed their babies.
25. 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. Food brought in by parents needs to be added to the Food Register - Food Brought to Centre (services providing meals).
26. The Service is a nut free zone, and no nuts or nut products are to be brought into the Service or served.
27. The Service provides staff with appropriate training in safe food handling. They are provided with current information on nutrition for young children, with special regard to cultural preferences.
28. Parents are surveyed twice per year to obtain their feedback about the Services menu, including children's likes, dislikes, individual needs, and cultural appropriateness. They can choose to complete the Menu – Parent Survey (Detailed).
29. Educators seek children's opinion of the menu and help them to complete the Menu – Child Survey. The results are collated on the Menu – Child Food Survey Results.
30. The cook is not required to provide full meals to staff. Service food budgets do not allow for the provision of meals for staff. Staff provide their own food and take lunch breaks that allow them time away from the children. Left-over food can be provided to children who may be at the Service until late and are hungry. Food must not be taken to staff working in the rooms.

### **Additional safe practices for babies**

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

### **Responsibilities of parents**

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- 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**

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- Daily Feedback Sheet
- Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) – and Formula – Storing and Heating Procedure
- Food Register -Food brought to centre (services providing meals)
- Menu – Child Food Survey Results
- Menu – Child Survey
- Menu – Parent Survey (Detailed)

## Links to other policies

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- 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

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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

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- Children's Health Queensland. (2022). *Expressing breast milk for your baby*. <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/fact-sheet-expressing-breast-milk-for-your-baby/> accessed 24 June 2025
- Early Years Learning Framework 2009
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018
- Queensland Health. (2016). *Formula Feeding*. <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/PDF/good-start/formula-feeding.pdf> accessed 24 June 2025

## Further reading and useful websites

- Australian Breastfeeding Association – <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/> accessed 24 June 2025
- The Department of Health. (2013). *Get up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for early Childhood* <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection> accessed 24 June 2025
- Nutrition Australia Queensland <https://nutritionaustralia.org/category/fact-sheets/> accessed 24 June 2025
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). *Australian Dietary Guidelines* <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-dietary-guidelines> accessed 24 June 2025
- Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne – <http://www.rch.org.au/home/> 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. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	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
4	25 September 2020	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Accessed sources and further readings.	September 2021
6	9 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy Reviewed	September 2022
7	29 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Policy Reviewed Accessed sources and added information	September 2023
8	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	August 2024
9	1 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	July 2025