

Quality Area 3

Physical Environment



This quality area of the National Quality Standards focuses on the physical environment and ensuring that it is **clean, safe, suitable** and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences which promote children's learning and development.

Quality Area 3 – Physical environment

The aim of Quality Area 3 under the National Quality Standard is to ensure that the physical environment is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

The way that the environment is designed, equipped and organised determines the way that the space and resources are used and has the potential to maximise children's engagement and level of positive experience and inclusive relationships.

Physical environment		
Standard 3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
Element 3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
Element 3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
Standard 3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
Element 3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
Element 3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
Element 3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.



The physical environment plays a critical role in keeping children safe and reducing the risk of accidents and injury.

Areas of glass are addressed, animals are assessed and the existence of water hazards, to name a few are taken into account when approving a suitable Family Day Care environment.

Physical learning environments are characterised by both **indoor** and **outdoor** learning spaces.

Where possible , children need opportunities to be outdoors as much as indoors. The **ideal environment** would offer the **integration of both indoor/outdoor at the same time .**

The physical environment impacts on the behaviours of both children and adults.

Physical learning environments allow for grouping of children in ways that:

- ❖ Minimise the risk of injury.
- ❖ Minimise conflict between children.
- ❖ Reduce prolonged exposure to excess internal and external noise.
- ❖ Promote children's learning and development by creating environments that work for children; whereby educators are able to spend valuable time interacting with them.

In **Family Day Care**, our challenge is to ensure that the environment we create for children **offers a rich and diverse range of learning experiences while maintaining a warm, homely environment for children.**

At the same time SAFETY is a key factor and we are required to maintain and document a risk assessment of the physical environment



Indoor Environments

These areas are characterised by invitations to play and open spaces that provide children with opportunities to work on self chosen and negotiated activities, provide both quiet and active learning situations and maintain when necessary routines and small and whole group experiences.

They support children's emerging interests and allow them to demonstrate their innate creativity and curiosity.

They reflect children's different cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles.

They recognise children as active learners and decision makers.

It is important that rooms in the family day care environment provide a balance of natural and artificial lighting, good ventilation, fresh air, and a comfortable temperature.

Space is organised to encourage choice and promote independence, whilst allowing the child to actively engage with the environment.

There is a need for quiet areas for rest and/or sleep or to just have a quiet space to be alone.

It is also important to have the space arranged in a way that the routine activities such as toileting, nappy change, sleep etc. promote positive experiences.











Ideally there should be convenient access to the toilet, hand washing, bathing and drying facilities from the indoor and outdoor of the service premises.

We must also ensure we have access to laundry facilities that allows for dealing with soiled clothes, nappies and linen.

Meal times and other routine experiences are to be pleasant and comfortable occasions with opportunities for relaxed conversations with adults and other children.



Suitable furniture is used to meet the needs of the individual child. When sitting at the table, their elbows should rest comfortably on the table.







Time that infants and toddlers spend in high chairs, cots, playpens and strollers needs to be kept to a minimum.

When Educators cater for babies and toddlers they need to provide comfortable and protected areas both INDOORS AND OUTDOORS where they can rest, roll, sit, crawl and stand alone or with others.

The environment needs to be safe to explore with their mouths, hands and bodies.

Being cuddled and held by an adult is essential.

Children require access to furniture , materials and equipment that is adequate in number, suitable for their developmental stage and safe. All equipment and furniture used must be **safe , clean and in good repair.**

Educators need to use equipment that meets the Australian standards and have a routine for the cleaning and maintenance of all toys and equipment used.

The service premises must have adequate facilities for safe handling, preparation, storage and disposal of foods and beverages.

Ideally you aim to create an environment that is inviting and comfortable; an environment that can be regularly reorganised according to the needs of the children.

At all times a high standard of cleanliness is to be maintained whilst running this professional service.





Educators should aim for flexible arrangement of furniture and equipment and include open ended materials to encourage children to become creative thinkers, problem solvers and investigators.

It needs to be flexible enough to allow the children to move resources and equipment to extend learning opportunities.

Choosing resources , materials and equipment with children to use in a way that support children's sense of belonging, relationships, creativity and learning is paramount.

Use of natural and recycled materials is a quality practice.





Suitable physical environments , where mixed age groups include school age children, accommodate all children in a manner where none are disadvantaged.

Educators also need to be aware of how they will balance their family members need for privacy and at the same time providing sufficient space for the children being educated and cared for.

It is imperative that Educators invite suggestions and ideas from the children and the families about ways to use the natural elements and multi use of materials in the environments. Evidence of this needs to be provided.

It is expected that there would be a documented program showing the links between the arrangements and choice of resources , materials and equipment and the learning outcomes for children.

OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

A flexible learning environment supports the holistic way children learn. Physical activity enhances brain development, coordination and social skills as well as motor skills. It also helps children to build confidence in their own abilities and to learn to enjoy being active.

Exploration of the natural environment helps children to develop an appreciation of the natural world, an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment and to begin to think of ways in which they can contribute to a sustainable future.

Adopting practices like recycling of resources, being energy efficient, the conservation of water and the growing and preparing of food, models sustainable practices.

Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment. They are encouraged to understand the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land.

Outdoor learning environments must be adequately and safely fenced to such a height that children who are preschool age cannot go through , over or climb under them.







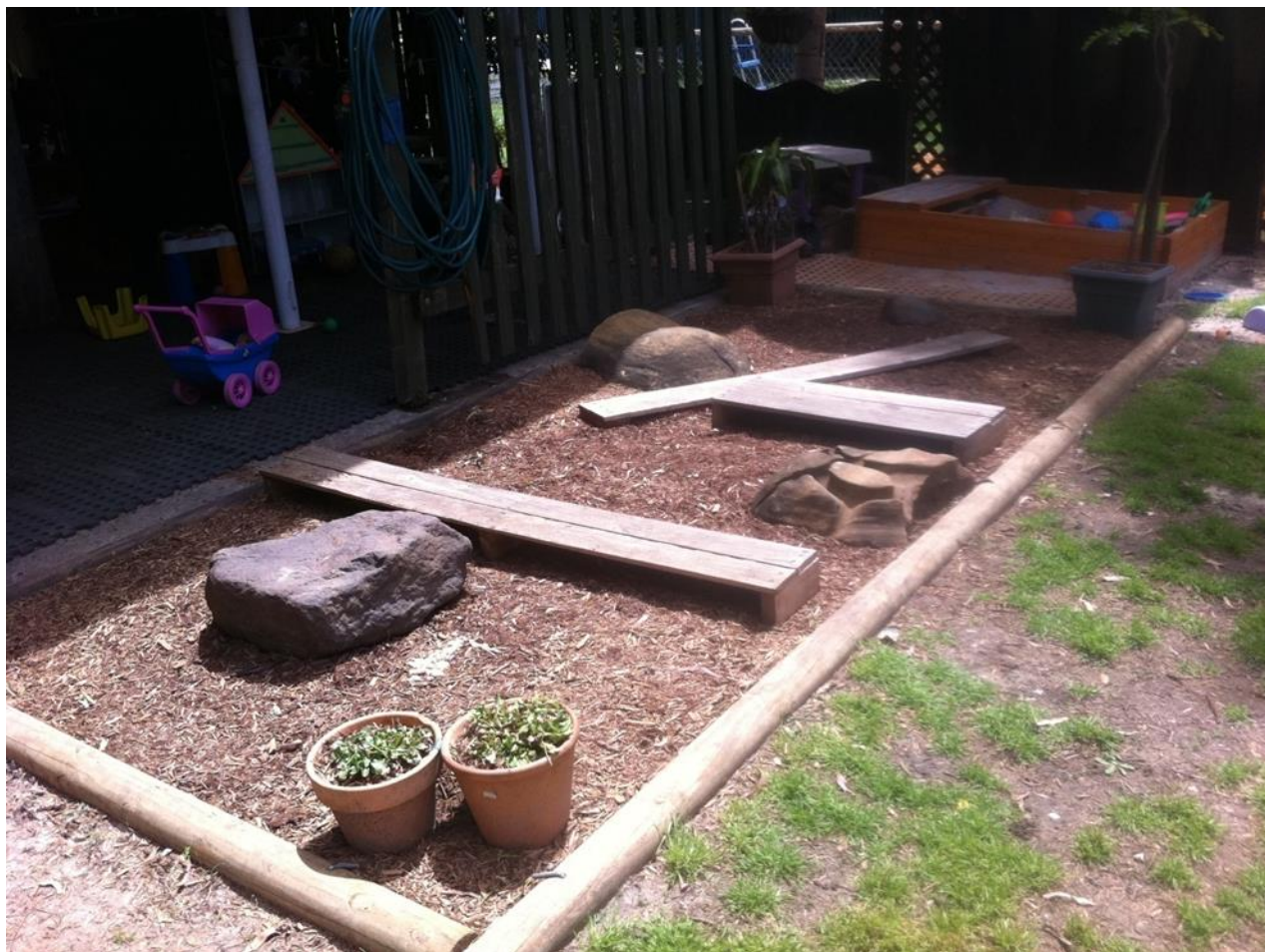


Outdoor learning spaces offer a vast array of possibilities not available indoors. Spaces with plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud and water invite open ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature.

Choosing equipment and materials that can be used in multiple ways allows the environment to be readily rearranged which provides additional interest, variety and challenge.







Outdoor learning spaces ideally incorporate opportunities for children to be involved in active, messy and noisy play as well as being able to withdraw to a quiet area if wishing to.

Opportunities for whole group or solitary play should be made available.

Outdoor spaces include shaded areas that meet the recommendations of relevant recognised authorities for protection from sun.

Messy play









Recycled resources used in creative ways.



It is essential to look at the use of a range of real, commercial, natural, recycled and simple homemade materials to support learning in a range of ways.

Well designed indoor and outdoor environments can support the diverse interests, preferences and learning styles of all children in the service.

Educators are also to be aware of how children will enter and leave their service in a safe way.

Please refer to the following :

- ✓ Education and Care Services National regulations Part 4.3- Physical Environment
- ✓ Guide to the National Quality Standard
- ✓ Quality Area 3-Physical Environment.

Questions to answer:

How does the physical environment contribute positively to children developing autonomy and independence?

How do we foster children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land?

As an Educator why is it important to regularly rearrange your physical environment?

List some of the most important features of a very suitable family day care environment.

THANK YOU