

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MANAGEMENT

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

Element 2.1.1: Wellbeing and comfort- Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation

Element 2.1.2: Health practices and procedures- Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented

Standard 2.2: Safety- Each child is protected

Education and Care Services National Regulations

77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices

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COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared that COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic'- a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia.

COVID-19 is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience:

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue
- shortness of breath
- diarrhoea & nausea

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The [Australian Government](#) is constantly updating the current status of COVID-19 including health recommendations, travel restrictions, and a vast collection of resources and information to help people make informed decisions.

As this information is changing rapidly, our Service is monitoring health alerts and implementing measures suggested by key health experts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

Our Service has a range of comprehensive policies in place to guide best practice in relation to health and safety, dealing with infectious diseases and maintaining a child safe environment. Our duty of care and responsibilities to children, parents, families and all staff to provide a safe environment is of utmost importance.

The evolving nature of COVID-19 and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist our Service manage this pandemic.

This policy will change as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 as advised by our Government are implemented by our Service.

PURPOSE

Our Service will minimise our staff, educators and children's exposure to COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government- Department of Health and local Public Health Units to slow the spread of the virus. We will implement practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus including the exclusion of any person (child, educator, staff, parent, visitor or volunteer) that is suspected or has tested positive to having COVID-19 and meeting the requirements for staff ,educators and educators household members to be Vaccinated against Covid-19. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government, Department of Health and state Ministry of Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Health Department will be strictly adhered to at all times.

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POLICY

This policy applies to all children, families, educators, staff and visitors of the service

PROCEDURE

Our service is committed to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus by implementing recommendations provided by the [Australian Government- Department of Health](#) and Safe Work Australia.

Our service implements procedures as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council as part of our day-to-day operation of the Service.

We are guided by explicit decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of any infectious disease by the *Australian Government- Department of Health* and local Public Health Units in our jurisdiction under the Public Health Act. COVID-19 is a notifiable condition in all states and territories of Australia.

In the event of any child, educator, staff member or visitor attending our Service who is suspected or confirmed to have the infection, the Approved Provider will contact their Public Health Unit.

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line
1800 020 080
Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service
Health Direct
1800 022 222
Public Health Unit- Local state and territory health departments

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies:

- Sick Children Policy
- Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy and
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Handwashing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Interactions with Children, Families and staff Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy

Based on our current information, the key characteristics of the disease are:

Symptoms	Fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath
Spread	The virus can spread from person to person through close contact with an infectious person, contact with their droplets from a cough or sneeze, or contact with surfaces (e.g. doorknobs or tables) contaminated by droplets.
Prevention	Everyone should practise good hygiene to protect against infections. Wash your hands with soap and water. Use a tissue and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Avoid close contact with others.
Diagnosis	If you become unwell, seek urgent medical attention. Call ahead of time to book an appointment and tell your doctor if you have been in close contact with someone who has been ill or have travelled recently.
Treatment	There is no specific treatment for COVID-19, but medical care can help with the symptoms.
Vaccination	Scientists from around the world are working on developing a vaccine. The World Health Organization (WHO) believes this may be available within 18 months.

Minimising the transmission of COVID-19

Our Service has implemented risk management planning to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as is reasonably practicable.

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Effective 15 March 2020, the *Australian Health Protection Principal Committee* has made recommendations to the general public to help manage the spread of COVID-19. These measures include implementing good hygiene, self-isolation and social distancing.

Immunisation

Covid-19 Vaccination: We will ensure that from Monday 11th October all staff members have had at least 1 Covid-19 vaccine and that they will have had the second by November 1st 2021, or have a recognised Medical Contradiction.

We will also ensure that from Monday 8th November 2021 all educators and educator's adult household members have reached double vaccination status and provided us with evidence or have a recognised Medical Contradiction.

Families are encouraged to seek their own medical advice as to if and when to get the vaccine, we also strongly recommend that all staff, children and families receive the seasonal influenza vaccination.

Hygiene practices

Our Service will ensure [signs and posters](#) remind employees and visitors of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread including hand washing and hand sanitiser procedures and information about COVID-19. These will also be communicated to families through email, newsletters and social media. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser will be kept out of reach of young children and only available for adults to use. If parents decide to apply this to their child, they must supervise the child to avoid rubbing it into their eyes or a child swallowing the gel/liquid. Our Service will supply disposable tissues and have bins available with plastic liners available in several locations for disposing used items

Covid testing

All staff, educators and families are strongly encouraged to have a Covid-19 test if they have even the slightest cold or flu like symptoms or have been to anywhere identified as a Covid exposure site and self-isolate until they receive a negative result.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, families and visitors will comply with the following:

Exclusion/ Self-isolation/ Self-quarantine

- effective 28 March 2020, **any person** entering Australia from any destination will be required to undertake 14-day quarantine at designated facilities (Australian Government)
- any person who has been in an area considered to be high risk or a 'hotspot' as listed on the NSW Health website, will not be permitted to return to our service within a minimum of 14 days
- parents agree to have their child's temperature taken by a staff member prior to entry to the Service where required
- parents agree to have their child excluded if their child's temperature is above 37.5°C
- any person who has been in close contact with someone who has a positive diagnosis must self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days, and then have a negative test result
- household members of a person who has a confirmed case (including children) of COVID-19 must also be isolated from the childcare Service and general public
- the Public Health Unit will provide further information on a case-by-case basis as to the length and place of isolation. (see: [COVID-19 home isolation](#))
- families must immediately advise the Service if they, or anyone in their family, develops any symptoms of the virus or receives a positive result of the virus whilst in isolation
- any person (including employee, enrolled child, parent, educator, caregiver, visitor or stakeholder) who is displaying any cold or flu like symptoms such as: fever, coughing, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue and shortness of breath, must seek urgent medical attention to determine if they need to be tested for COVID-19 and must not attend our Service until they provide evidence of a negative Covid-19 test and are no longer exhibiting symptoms, or a COVID-19 clearance from a doctor and are no longer exhibiting any symptoms of illness (**as per our service policy '2.9 Infectious diseases and exclusion'**)

Implement effective hygiene measures

The national campaign *Help Stop The Spread and Stay Healthy*, launched by the Australian Government has emphasised that effective handwashing is a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds whenever you cough, sneeze or blow your nose, prepare food or eat, touch your face or use the toilet is compulsory.

Our Service will adhere to National Regulation requirements and Government guidelines to ensure all educators, children, families and visitors to the Service implement best practice.

Our Service will ensure:

- all employees, parents, children and visitors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand santiser provided upon arrival to the Service
- hands must be thoroughly dried using disposal paper and disposed of in the bin provided
- disposable tissues must be used to wipe noses, eyes or mouths and disposed of in the bin provided immediately after use
- hands must be washed following the use of tissues
- hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water before and after using the toilet
- cough and sneeze etiquette must be used- cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow
- educators and staff must adhere to our *Handwashing Policy* at all times
- children are supervised when washing hands
- educators and staff must adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures
- educators will wash their hands or use alcohol based santiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- educators and staff must adhere to our *Health and Safety Policy* for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and equipment (such as toys, puzzles, outdoor toys, bedding,

playdough etc) as per *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* recommendations

- educators will maintain a cleaning register of all surfaces and equipment conducted
- equipment, resources and surfaces including high-touch surfaces- taps, door handles, light switches, nappy change areas and toys will be cleaned more frequently as required using detergent and water followed by disinfectant
- In the event of a confirmed contact, cleaning contractors hygienically clean the Service to ensure risk of contamination is removed as per [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles for COVID-19](#)
- washroom facilities for employees have adequate supplies of soap, toilet paper and alcohol-based sanitiser

NOTE: According to the World Health Organisation, COVID-19 may survive on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. (March 14 2020)

Social distancing in childcare

Social distancing is important because COVID-19 is most likely spread from person-to-person through close contact with a person while they are infectious, close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes or from touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection and then touching your nose or mouth. (source: Australian Government Department of Health. Coronavirus disease)

Social distancing in early childhood education and care is not feasible for educators to perform their job, however we will implement measures to minimise the risk of exposure as reasonably practicable.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 parents are reminded of the following:

- if your child is sick, **do not** send them to care
- do not visit our Service if you or another family member is unwell
- sanitise your hands at regular intervals throughout the day

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- avoid physical contact with other people who may be sick- such as older people and people with existing health conditions
- clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly (door handles, car seats, mobile phone, toys, dummies)
- promote strictest hygiene measures when preparing food at home and at the Service

To minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 our Service office will:

- Limit the number of people in office at any one time to allow adequate social distancing
- Before entering the office, all visitors will be asked to utilise the hand sanitiser provided, to answer appropriate safety protocol questions relating to COVID-19, complete the sign in register which including their names and contact phone number and may be asked to have their temperature taken and recorded to ensure it is below 37.5C
- Staff and visitors to the office will be required to register their attendance via the Services NSW App by using the service's registered QR code. (This was bought in as compulsory from Monday 12/7/2021)
- Staff and visitors will wear an appropriate face mask at all times as directed by NSW Health unless eating and drinking.
- Staff will be required to use hand sanitiser and check their own temperature on arrival and sign in as normal. Staff will also be required to meet the COVID safety protocols relating to visiting areas and contact with suspected or confirmed cases.
- Registered as a 'Covid Safe workplace' and provide a unique 'QR code' for visitors to register their attendance via the 'Services NSW' app or a hard copy alternative.

To minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 our Service will ensure educators:

- register for and provide families and visitors to their service with a unique 'QR Code' to register their attendance at their residence.
- Ensure Parents and families wear an appropriate face mask when dropping off and picking up their child/ren
- Will themselves wear a face mask at all times while operating their service as mandated by NSW Health.
- will restrict the number of family members visiting our Service

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- where possible, outdoor play will be promoted within our Service to provide children with additional personal space
- increase ventilation within the Service
- ensure cots, mats, cushions etc are positioned at least 1.5 metres apart
- seat children at opposite ends of a table when playing and eating
- avoid any situation when children are required to queue- waiting their turn to use bathroom for handwashing or toileting, waiting their turn to use a piece of equipment etc.
- contact parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they may be at an increased risk of disease and require additional support/care
- limit outings to public places (excursions to local shops, schools, libraries)
- cancel large group celebrations (Easter, Grandparent's Day, special day celebrations)
- discourage use of public transport by staff if possible and recommend that staff:
 - wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or sanitise hands with alcohol-based sanitiser before and after travelling to work
 - if using public transport, maintain physical distancing measures during any trip

Suspected cases of COVID-19 at our Service

As per our *policy* we reserve the right to refuse a child into care if they:

- are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention
- have had a temperature/fever, or vomiting in the last 24 hours
- have had diarrhoea in the last 48 hours
- have been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the Service
- have started a course of antibiotics in the last 24 hours or
- if we have reasonable grounds to believe that a child has a contagious or infectious disease (this includes COVID-19)

If your child becomes ill whilst at the Service, educators will respond to their individual symptoms of illness and provide comfort and care.

Educators may take your child's temperature. If the temperature is above **37.5°C** you will be contacted and required to collect your child immediately. If you are unable to collect your

child/ren, an emergency contact person will be contacted, and arrangements must be made for the immediate collection of the child/ren.

Educators will attempt to lower your child's temperature by:

- removing excessive clothing (shoes, socks, jumpers)
- encourage your child to take small sips of water
- move your child to a quiet area where they can rest whilst being supervised

Educators will wear disposable gloves and a face masks if available to avoid possible contamination.

Educators will keep accurate records of the child's temperature, time taken, time parent/s were contacted, staff member's name and time of collection.

All information will be recorded in our *Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma* Record. Parents will be required to sign this record upon collection of their child.

Parents are reminded to ensure their contact details are current and emergency contact details are updated if required.

Our Service also reserves the right to prevent employees, parents, family members or visitors to enter our premises if the Educator, Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor suspects instances of COVID-19.

Notification

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor is mandated by law to notify the Public Health Unit or [Health Information hotline](#) on 1800 020 080 of any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. In addition, the Approved Provider must also notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) in their state or territory within 24 hours.

Management reserves the right to request employees to self-isolate if they suspect they have come into contact with someone who has a confirmed COVID-19 infection.

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Talking to children about COVID-19

Our Service is committed to maintaining positive interactions and relationships with children and their families. Information provided to children about COVID-19 will be age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing. Educators will both acknowledge children's concerns and be open to discussions about COVID-19.

Educators will inform children about the virus and emphasise preventative measures such as handwashing, use of tissues, cough and sneeze techniques and limiting touching other children's faces.

Posters to demonstrate correct handwashing methods will be referred to and educators will model techniques.

Children's emotional well-being will be closely monitored by all educators and staff and any concerns communicated with parents and families.

Children's questions will be respected and supported.

In the event of the Service being closed as a precaution to limit the spread of the virus, information will be provided to parents/families to help explain the situation to young children.

Absences from childcare

Whether a child is ill or not and does not attend care as part of the family's own precautionary measure against potential contact with COVID-19, each child can use the 42 allowable absence days without the need for families to provide documentation such as a medical certificate.

What happens if our Service is forced to close?

The decision to close our Service will be made, and advised, by relevant state and territory governments or the Regulatory Authority. This may be due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our Service community.

Should this occur, all families will be notified immediately via email and/or phone.

The Approved Provider will notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) within 24 hours of any closure via the [NQA IT System](#)

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Staff entitlements if sick or suspected to have COVID-19

Under workplace health and safety laws, our Service must ensure the health and safety of all employees.

Confirmed COVID-19

If an educator or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, they are unable to attend the workplace and cannot return to work until they have completed a period of self-isolation of at least 14 days and provided evidence of a negative test result or clearance from a doctor. Employees must make a declaration that they are *fit for work* and have no symptoms of COVID-19 and have been advised they no longer need to be in isolation from their doctor or public health unit. (updated 3 April)

Full and part-time employees who cannot attend work due to illness can take paid sick leave.

Caring for a family member or emergency

If an employee cannot attend work due to caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. See **Fair Work Act** for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

Self-isolation due to travel

As per Australian Government's new measures for COVID-19 effective 28 March 2020, any person returning from overseas will be mandated to isolate in a designated facility. The employee is **not** entitled to be paid (unless they use paid leave entitlements- annual leave. Employees are not entitled to use personal sick leave as they are not 'sick'. Employers may choose to adopt an option to satisfy both parties. See: [Australian Business Lawyers and Advisors](#) for further information)

Self-Isolation directed by Service

Where an employee is directed by the Approved Provider to stay home and self-isolate as they have shown symptoms of a flu-like illness, and the employee is not sick and able to work, our Service will continue to pay the employee as per their contract. The employee will be requested to complete work from home negotiated with the Approved Provider

Self-isolation as a precaution

If an employee wants to stay home as a precaution of contracting COVID-19 they may negotiate to take unpaid leave, annual leave or long service leave with Management.

Employees who are stuck overseas or in quarantine

If an employee cannot return to Australia due to the COVID-19 virus, they must contact the Approved Provider immediately. Management will negotiate payment considering accrued annual leave, long service leave or leave without pay.

Employees Entitlements- Fair Work Australia

Employees' work arrangements may change during the outbreak of COVID-19. Due to reduced attendance numbers and business viability, the Approved Provider will explore options for staffing and flexible work arrangements with individual employees.

Arrangements may include: reduction in hours for casual employees, encourage employees to take annual leave or other leave entitlements or changes to rostering and duties and arrangements for work to be completed from home.

Employees may be requested to complete activities such as:

- professional development learning
- programming and documentation- updating Medical Plans, registers etc
- updating the Quality Improvement Plan
- conducting cleaning within the service and room preparation

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- completing any maintenance required as per risk assessments
- development of online activities for children- Zoom, You Tube account

The Approved Provider must obtain written consent by the employees of any changes in their work conditions.

Communicating with families

Our Service will establish continue regular communication channels with families and share information about COVID-19 as required.

Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity of self-isolation for some staff members, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes as they occur.

Caring for our community

We understand that the outbreak of COVID-19 and the constant amount of information received through the media may be very stressful to young children and parents. The anxiety about this disease may be overwhelming and cause fear and anxiety to some people, especially children.

Our Service is committed to continue to provide quality education and care to all children and support families responsibly during this unprecedented challenge with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Knowing how to look after yourself, and others is very important during this crisis.

We will promote a safe and supportive environment by:

- reassuring children they are safe
- acknowledging and listening to children's questions
- promoting and implementing hygiene routines for handwashing and cough and sneezing
- keeping regular and familiar routines within our Service
- ensuring children eat well throughout the day

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- engaging children in play, games and other physical activities
- being alert to children's level of anxiety and provide quiet and relaxing activities
- ensuring children are provided with rest and sleep when needed
- providing information to families and support services as required

Dr Michelle Dickinson- Video for kids about COVID-19

<https://youtu.be/OPsY-jLqaXM>

Emerging Minds- Talking to Children about Natural Disasters, Traumatic Events or Worries About the Future

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/supporting-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/>

Play School- Hello Friends! (A COVID-19 Special)

<https://www.abc.net.au/abckids/shows/play-school/covid-19/12114308>

UNICEF- How to talk to your child about COVID-19

Disclaimer

The information contained in this policy is based on current information from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Government- The Treasury, Family Assistance Law and Fairwork Ombudsmen. (5 April 2020).

Eligibility for JobKeeper payments and information about the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package is based on documents provided by DESE. Some services may not have experienced a reduction in enrolment and are able to apply for a higher rate of payment under the relief package through an online submission. In this instance, amendments to this 'draft' policy must be made to suit your service. <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/childcare/childcare-faq>

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More information and resources

Child Care Centre Desktop- COVID-19 Support Module and Resources-available on our home page

[Australian Business Lawyers & Advisors](#)

[Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment- Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information sheet regarding periods of local emergency and absences for child care providers and services](#)

[Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for early childhood education and care providers and services from 6 April 2020](#)

[Australian Government The Treasury JobKeeper payment](#)

[Beyond Blue Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting educators, children and young people](#)
[CCS Helpdesk 1300 667 276](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) frequently asked questions](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources Australian Government](#)

[COVID-19 Infection control training](#)

[Fairwork Australia- Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)

[Healthdirect Coronavirus hub](#)

[Home Isolation Information](#)

[Information for people with a suspected case](#)

[Information for employers](#)

[Information on Social distancing](#)

[Local state and territory health departments](#)

[Raising Children](#)

[Safe Work Australia](#)

[Posters and Visuals](#)

[COVID-19 coronavirus in pictures](#)

[Manuela Moina- Children's book- "Hello! I am the Coronavirus"](#)

[Recently travelled overseas Poster](#)

[Simple Steps To Help Stop The Spread Poster](#)

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State and Territory specific and National information

[NSW Health alert COVID_19](#)

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Health *Health Topics* [Health Topics Coronavirus COVID-19](#)

Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for travellers <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>

Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman *Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws* (updated 13 March 2020) <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Information for child care providers and services* <https://docs-edu.govcms.gov.au/node/53362>

Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation Child Care Subsidy Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) 23 March 2020

https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2020L00295?utm_source=Facebook&utm_content=240320

[Australian Government The Treasury JobKeeper payment](#)

Fair Work Ombudsman Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws (2020)

<https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

(2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early*

childhood education and care services.

Public Health Act 2010

Public Health Amendment Act 2017

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria

The Australian Parenting website Raisingchildren <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Safe Work Australia (2020) *Early childhood education and care workers: Minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19*

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/early-childhood-education-and-care-workers-minimising-risk-exposure-covid-19>

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action or termination of employment or registration as an educator

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