



P2-09: Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

As per *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, Queanbeyan & District Preschool Association (QDPA) has a nutrition and mealtimes policy and procedures in place to ensure quality practices relating to nutrition and mealtimes are always followed.

QDPA recognises the important role families play in their child's food and nutrition journey. We acknowledge that our families represent a diverse community, with varying beliefs and values around food culture. At QDPA we will promote a safe and empowering environment for children to demonstrate their own agency and autonomy around their food choices at Preschool. QDPA will include discussions on food and nutrition in the educational curriculums from a lens of the benefits of certain foods and drinks as opposed to language around healthy vs unhealthy/good vs bad foods.

We trust children will know and can listen to their bodies, to choose what and how much to eat throughout their day at Preschool. For families and children who need some additional support in navigating lunchboxes, 'fussy eaters' or other food related concerns, QDPA can provide resources and tools, as well as support through external referrals if needed.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene, and safe food practices
78	Food and beverages
79	Service providing food and beverages
90	Medical conditions policy
91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents



160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and Procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy Excursions and Centre Events Policy	Governance Policy Health and Safety Handbook Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness Policy Medical Conditions Policy
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PURPOSE

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) Services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. It is essential that our preschools partner with families to provide education about nutrition and positive eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, approved provider, nominated supervisor, visitors, students, volunteers and management of QDPA.

IMPLEMENTATION

QDPA has a responsibility to help children to develop positive food practices and approaches, by working in partnership with families and educators.

Mealtimes reflect a relaxed and pleasant environment where educators engage in meaningful conversations with children. This assists in creating a positive and enjoyable eating environment. Mealtimes will occur at various times throughout the day to cater for all children's nutritional needs.

Food will be prepared in accordance with our *Food Safety Policy*.



NUTRITION

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- ensure educators and staff are aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations in relation to this policy and relevant procedures to ensure awareness of safe food handling practices while creating safe and empowering food environments for children.
- ensure new staff and educators are aware of food practices and procedures as outlined in this policy during induction and orientation.
- provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children.
- Support families in their decision-making process around their children's lunchboxes, recognising families will have a thorough understanding of what their child will eat/not eat throughout the day.
- Limit highly processed foods, or foods with limited nutritional value, within cooking experiences or centre events.
- ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- ensure food and beverages are offered to children regularly during the day.
- ensure enrolment forms include information relating to child's food preferences, allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious considerations or medical conditions which involve food or food practices.
- consult with families on enrolment to develop individual management plans, including completing Risk Minimisation Plans for children with medical conditions involving food allergies, food intolerances and special dietary requirements as per *Medical Conditions Policy*
- ensure children's individual dietary requirements as per enrolment information or medical condition plans are communicated to all staff and food handlers.
- ensure any changes to children's individual dietary requirements are recorded and communicated to all staff and food handlers.
- appoint a Food Safety Supervisor to oversee food handlers.
- ensure the Food Safety Supervisor and all staff and food handlers attend basic safe food handling training, including an appropriate Food Safety and Food Hygiene Certificate.
- encourage and provide opportunities for staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition and food safety practices.



EDUCATORS/ FOOD HANDLERS WILL:

- ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances, and special dietary requirements and consult with families and management to ensure individual management plans are developed and implemented, including completing Risk Minimisation Plans for children with medical conditions involving food as per *Medical Conditions Policy*
- ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking.
- ensure all children are always supervised children whilst eating and drinking.
- participate in regular professional development to maintain and enhance knowledge about early childhood nutrition and food safety practices.
- participate in safe food handling training on a regular basis, every 12-24 months, including the completion of an appropriate Food Safety and Food Hygiene Certificate
- consider the needs of various age groups at the service - meal times may be offered progressively or at different times.
- ensure age and developmentally appropriately utensils and furniture are provided for each child.
- not allow food to be used as a form of punishment or to be used as a reward or bribe.
- not allow the children to be force fed or being required to eat food they do not like or more than they want to eat.
- talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating.
- ensure pets or animals are not present within the kitchen or food preparation areas.
- Educators will not consume commercial foods and drinks, hot food, or hot drinks whilst in the classroom with children. Educators have dedicated break times away from children to consume these foods/drinks.

CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

QDPA will:

- ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role-model positive attitudes towards food, health, and their bodies.
- Protect children from food and body shaming, nutrition information and diet-talk.
- Support children to eat freely from their lunchboxes during dedicated mealtimes.
- Work in partnership with children and families to support confident, adventurous eaters.



- Support and encourage families to send a range of foods to Preschool, and to advocate for their child's needs by removing pressure to create perfect lunchboxes.
- Recognise food equality is a societal issue, and not all families will have access to the same range of food sources. QDPA will supply fruit and vegetable bowls in each classroom to support every child's access to these foods throughout the day.
- Use positive language when discussing foods with children and consider helpful and unhelpful language in these conversations with both children and families. See examples below from <https://kidseatincolor.com/>

TALKING ABOUT "THOSE" FOODS

CAN BE UNHELPFUL

"Processed meat will give you cancer."



"Junk food will make you fat."



"Potato chips are bad for you."



"Sugar is poison."



"Candy has no nutritional value."



"Juice will make your teeth rot."



CAN BE HELPFUL

"For us, pepperoni is only for when we have pizza."

"Here's your lunch today." [Includes crunchies]

"These are called 'potato chips.'"

[Served with dinner. No comment.]

"Candy isn't on the menu today."

"We always brush our teeth after having juice."

Kids Eat in Color

- endeavour to recognise, nurture, and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children.
- encourage children to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink, providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem while promoting children's agency and decision-making.
- respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist he/she eats.
- be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat.
- not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.
- role-model and discuss safe food handling with children.



CELEBRATING CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS

At QDPA we love to share in the celebrations of your child's birthday. To support the diverse range of family and staff values and beliefs, there are some limitations to what we can accept at preschool. You are welcome to bring in small cupcakes, cookies or fruit platters for example. However, we cannot accept lolly bags, ice-cream cakes or large/full size cakes. If you have something in mind to share with your child's class and are unsure, please speak to your service Director/Educational Leader.

COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Cooking experiences can help develop children's knowledge and skills around food and mealtimes. Cooking is a fun experience and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes, cooking skills, and safe food handling skills. On these occasions, participating educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to in accordance with QDPA's *Food Safety Policy*.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

QDPA will:

- provide a copy of the *Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy* to all families upon orientation at the Preschool.
- provide opportunities for families to contribute to the review and development of the policy.
- request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the Preschool and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met.
- communicate regularly with families about food related experiences within the Preschool and provide up to date information to assist and support families in their decision making of food choices for their children.
- Encourage families to pack foods that their children can eat independently from their lunchboxes.
- Ensure families store their child's lunchboxes appropriately in accordance with QDPA's *Food Safety Policy* (fridges, no thermos, ice-bricks where necessary) etc.

Families will:

- Communicate promptly any allergy or dietary requirements/preferences as soon as this information comes to their knowledge.



- Provide signed medical/allergy/anaphylaxis actions plans to the service as a matter of urgency. A child can not attend the service without this plan being provided once the diagnosis has been confirmed.
 - Provide appropriate medication for any diagnosed medical/allergy/anaphylaxis conditions as per QDPA's *Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policies*.
 - Work in partnership with the service to develop appropriate risk minimisation plans.
 - Adhere to food safety procedures outlines by the preschool. For example, families will place their child's lunchboxes/cold items in the designated refrigerators to ensure food is kept at the correct temperature.
 - Not bring food in that has already been pre-heated, as it cannot be guaranteed this food has always maintained the correct temperature throughout the day prior to consumption.
 - Staff are unable to reheat or warm up the food for children that has been brought in their lunchboxes, so families will ensure all the food provided is safe to consume with this in mind.
 - Not supply food in their child's lunchbox that their child could choke on
 - Engage in positive, open, and transparent communication with educators around food and mealtimes.
- QDPA is here to support you.

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2021). *Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements Policy Guidelines*.

Australian Government Department of Education. [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#). V2.0, 2022

Australian Government Department of Health *Eat for Health the Australian Dietary Guidelines*
<http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>

Dieticians4Teachers. <https://dietitians4teachers.ca/>

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023).

Food Act 2003

Food Regulation 2015

Food Safety Standards (Australia only). (2015):

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/safetystandards/Pages/default.aspx>

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991

Food Standards Australia New Zealand. (2016). Safe Food Australia – A guide to the food safety standard (3rd Ed.): <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/Pages/safefoodaustralia3rd16.aspx>

Food Standards Australia New Zealand: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Foost. *Nutrition is not Kids Business*. <https://foost.com.au/fussy-eating/>

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Updated 2023).

Kids Eat in Color. <https://kidseatincolor.com/blog/?uterm=food-equality>



National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013):

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-dietary-guidelines>

National Health and Medical Research Council. Department of Health and Ageing. Infant Feeding Guidelines. (2013):

https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/the_guidelines/n56b_infant_feeding_summary_130808.pdf

National Health and Medical Research Council. Eat for health: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/>

NSW Food Authority: <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

School Mealtimes. <https://mealtimes.com.au/schools/>

The Australian Dental Association: <https://www.ada.org.au/Home>

The Curious Nutrition. <https://thecuriousnutritionist.com.au/>

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.

REVIEW

Version Control	Date	Author	Description of Change
1.0	2016	QDPA	Original document
2.0	2017	QDPA	Scheduled review
3.0	August 21	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document reviewed with change in leadership team in 2021. Additional related regulations & NQS references added. Version control and description box added to clarify reviewed items/new inclusions. Format change to include policy statement, purpose, scope and implementation, addition of footers and page numbering and general layout changes
4.0	April 2023	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changed policy name from Food and Nutrition Policy policy maintenance - no major changes to policy hyperlinks checked and repaired as required. Policy reviewed and included suggested guidelines from ACECQA Nutrition, Food and Beverages, Dietary Requirements Policy Guidelines (August 2021) Additional sections added for AP, Management, NS and Educator and food handlers. inclusion of cultural or religious dietary practices
5.0	March 2024	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Split Nutrition and Food Safety Policy into "Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy" and "Food Safety Policy" Removed references to healthy eating and reframed policy around creating safe and positive food environments at Preschool (removed all references to not allow certain foods) Added no hot food or drinks to be consumed in classrooms with children.



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added no reheating of foods (or thermoses) to ensure foods are at a safe temperature all day. • Added cold food/lunchboxes to be stored in fridges. • Added reference to food equity and QDPA will supply a fruit/vegie bowl for children's access. • Added alternate food language image for reference. • Included a "families will" section. • Updated references.
6.0	March 2025	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checked sources • Added families not to supply foods their child could choke on • Related policies updated • No major changes
7.0	December 2025	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checked sources • Removed reference to no thermos • Removed reference to provide information to families on reading nutrition panels • Added cookies as an alternative option to birthday celebrations



Queanbeyan and District
Preschool Association