

BERMAGUI PRESCHOOL



4.11 Snakes

This policy was approved by the Nominated Supervisor in consultation with staff and families.

Date Approved: March 2025

Review Date: March 2028

Aim

This policy aims to:

- Identify the risk of snakes at Bermagui Preschool and during excursions
- Outline prevention strategies to reduce the risk of snake bites
- Ensure an appropriate and timely response to snake bite incidents
- Provide guidance for education and awareness for staff and children

Values

Bermagui Preschool is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children, staff and visitors
- Respecting wildlife and recognising that snakes are part of the natural environment
- Promoting calm, informed responses to wildlife encounters
- Ensuring staff and families are informed about risk minimisation strategies

Background

Snakes may be present in rural and coastal environments, particularly during warmer months (generally September to April), but may be encountered at any time. Species commonly found in the region may include brown snakes, red-bellied black snakes, tiger snakes, and copperheads. All snakes must be treated as potentially venomous. Snakes are generally shy and will avoid humans where possible. Encounters are more likely in long grass, bushland, rocky areas, and near water sources. All native snakes are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW) and must not be harmed or killed.

Risk Minimisation Strategies

The service will reduce risk by:

- Keeping grass short and outdoor areas maintained
- Inspecting outdoor areas prior to children accessing them
- Removing debris, logs and potential hiding places where practical
- Supervising children closely outdoors
- Educating children about safe behaviour in outdoor environments

Education and Awareness

The service will teach children:

- To leave snakes alone
- To move away quietly if a snake is sighted
- To report sightings immediately to an educator
- Not to put hands in hollow logs, long grass or hidden areas

Children will be educated in a calm and age-appropriate manner, without encouraging fear.

Responsibilities of the Nominated Supervisor / Responsible Person

The Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- First aid kits are maintained and accessible at all times, including pressure immobilisation bandages

- Staff are trained in snake awareness and first aid response
- Procedures align with the service's Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Risk minimisation strategies are implemented and reviewed
- Educators are supported to deliver calm and appropriate education to children

Response to Snake Sightings

If a snake is sighted:

- Educators will calmly move children away from the area
- Children and staff will maintain a safe distance
- The snake will not be approached, provoked or harmed
- If required, children will be moved indoors or to another safe area
- The area will be isolated until it is safe
- Emergency procedures (including lockdown if necessary) may be enacted

First Aid – Snake Bite

In the event of a snake bite:

- Call 000 immediately for an ambulance
- Keep the person calm and still
- Do not allow movement unless necessary for safety
- Do not wash the bite site
- Do not cut, suck or apply a tourniquet
- Apply pressure immobilisation technique as per Australian first aid guidelines
- Immobilise the affected limb and the person as much as possible
- Monitor breathing and responsiveness until emergency services arrive
- Follow the service's Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Notify families as soon as practicable

Wildlife Response

If assistance is required for snake removal or injured wildlife:

- Contact appropriate licensed wildlife rescue services or local emergency wildlife response organisations
- Contact a local veterinary clinic if an animal is injured

Legislation and Standards

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Care Services National Law
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- National Quality Standard (Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety; Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974

Version History

V1.0 – Initial policy (pre-2021)

V2.0 – Reviewed March 2025

Updates include:

- Alignment with current WHS and NQF terminology
- Removal of outdated contact details from policy body
- Strengthened risk minimisation and supervision language
- Improved emergency response wording (safe, non-harm, non-escalation approach)
- Clarified snake bite first aid steps in line with Australian first aid guidance