NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY POLICY

As per *Education and Care Services National Law and* Regulations, Langwarrin Community Centre (LCC) has a nutritional and food safety policy and procedures in place to ensure quality practices relating to nutrition, food and beverages and dietary requirements are followed at all times.

LCC recognises the importance of safe food handling and eating to promote the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the food and drink choices of children in our care. We acknowledge that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families.

We are committed to implementing the healthy messages to children regarding food, drink and body trust. We support and promote Peninsula Health's information - Navigating the Lunchbox and The Embrace Collective – Body Blocks. These programs aim to prevent body image issues in young people and develop positive relationships with food, movement and their bodies.

Occasional Care Program:

All food and drinks are provided by the families for their own child each day. Food is kept within each child's lunch box (not refrigerated). If required please ensure an ice pack is within your child's lunch box.
Food will not be heated during the program.

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
80	Weekly menu

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

First Aid Policy Anaphylaxis Management Policy Bottle Safety and Preparation Policy Breastfeeding Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy Diabetes Management Policy Enrolment Policy	Excursions / Incursions Policy Family Communication Policy Governance Policy Health and Safety Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Medical Conditions Policy Multicultural Policy

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 Service partners with families to provide education about nutrition and promote eating habits for young children that positively influence their health and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with chronic adult conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Our Service recognises the importance of eating for the growth, development, and wellbeing of young children and is committed to promoting and supporting inclusive food and drink choices for children in our care, and promoting positive body image for all children. .

We believe in providing a positive eating environment that reflects dietary requirements, cultural and family values, and promotes lifelong learning for children

Peninsula Health - Health Promotion are starting to steer clear of using the terminology of 'healthy eating' and moving towards more neutral terminology such as 'food and nutrition'. We are also moving away from talking about foods with labels such as 'healthy' or 'healthy foods', or 'sometimes foods' or 'all the time foods'. Also moving away from telling people what they need to eat. Instead, starting to focus more on providing or eating a variety of foods (no matter what they are), learn, explore and enjoy food, connect with your loved ones around food. Ultimately taking the pressure off food.

With small children, who are very literal thinkers, who are still learning and exploring foods in a big way, we are starting to move towards age appropriate talk around food.
For 3 and 4 year olds, the idea of 'sometimes foods' is too abstract at this age and they don't understand it. At this age we are wanting to encourage them to explore and eat a variety of foods, without pressure to eat certain types of foods or in any particular way. Learning being focused on what foods are and where they come from (i.e. this is an apple, it grows on a tree).

For some children, childcare can be quite overwhelming or stimulating and for some children their lunchbox might provide them with a level of familiarity and comfort. Neurodivergent children can have particular eating preferences too.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, approved provider, nominated supervisor, visitors, and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service has a responsibility to help children to develop positive food practices and approaches, by working 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.
All staff involved in the stages of food handling have the skills and knowledge to ensure food safety is a priority.

NUTRITION

ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING AND BOTTLE FEEDING

Please see the following policies for further information: Bottle Safety and Preparation Policy, Breastfeeding Policy

Promote food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents.

Our Service will:

WHERE FOOD IS BROUGHT FROM HOME:

- provide information to families on the variety of foods available for lunch boxes.
- families are encouraged to provide their child with foods that they know their child likes and will eat
- families to not permitted to provide food items that are displayed on our allergy notices
- families are to provide foods suitable to the age and development of their children
- families are not to provide foods that could present a choking hazards for their child.
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THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ MANAGEMENT/ 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 promoting healthy eating
- ensure new staff and educators are aware of food practices and procedures as outlined in this policy during induction and orientation
- 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
- ensure all staff and food handlers attend basic safe food handling training, including an appropriate Food Safety and Food Hygiene Certificate
- encourage 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
- encourage children to remain seated whilst eating or drinking, however – if a child is unable to remain seated, support them to find a comfortable safe position to eat that is better suited to their needs.
- ensure all children are always supervised 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 months, including the completion of an appropriate Food Safety and Food Hygiene Certificate
- ensure infants are fed individually by educators
- ensure age and developmentally appropriate furniture is 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 children to be force fed or being required to eat food they do not like or more than they want to eat
- encourage toddlers to be independent and develop social skills at mealtimes
- establish healthy eating habits in the children by incorporating nutritional information into our program
- talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating
- encourage parents to the best of our ability to continue our healthy eating message in their homes
- provide children the opportunity to eat any items from their lunch boxes at morning tea or lunch
- talk with children about where foods come from, how they grow
- recognise that the food children bring will reflect - family, social and cultural values, budget, time, appetite, taste and neurodevelopmental factors
- ensure children are not made to feel self-conscious about their food choices
- ensure learning environments are body kind, inclusive of all foods and nurture body trust

FOOD HYGIENE

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, or other toxins being present in food and can cause extremely unpleasant symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and fevers. Children under five years of age are considered a high-risk group as their immune systems are still developing and they produce less of the stomach acid required to kill harmful bacteria than older children or adults (Foodsafety.gov. 2019).

Our Service will strictly adhere to food hygiene standards to prevent the risk of food poisoning.

BUYING AND TRANSPORTING FOOD (for cooking experiences)

Our Service will:

- always check labels for the 'use by' and 'best before' dates, understanding that 'use by' dates apply to perishable foods that could potentially cause food poisoning if out of date, whilst 'best before' dates refer to food items with long shelf life but quality could be compromised
- avoid buying food items in damaged, swollen, leaking or dented packaging
- always check eggs within cartons: Never buy dirty or cracked eggs
- never buy any food item if unsure about its quality

CLEANING

Our Service will:

- ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before, after, and during any food preparation
- ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned before use
- ensure that all dishwashing sponges, brushes, and scourers are cleaned after each use and allowed to air dry or placed in the dishwasher
- ensure the food storage area is clean, ventilated, dry, pest free, and not in direct sunlight
- prevent pest infestations by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently
- replace any cleaning equipment that shows signs of wear or permanent soiling.

PERSONAL HYGIENE FOR FOOD HANDLERS

Our Service will ensure:

- strict hand-washing hygiene is adhered to prior to, during when needed and after cooking experience.
- wounds or cuts are covered with a band aid and gloves will be worn over any dressings
- staff who are not well will not prepare or handle food.

ALL STAFF HANDLING FOOD WILL:

- ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, running water, and single use disposable towels or individual hand towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks
- ensure gloves (and food tongs) are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils

CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Our Service will:

- ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role-model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided
- choose water as a preferred drink
- 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
- 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
- not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes
- role-model and discuss safe food handling with children

SERVICE PROGRAM

Our Service will:

- foster awareness and understanding of food and drink choices through including in the children's program a range of learning experiences encouraging children's understanding of a variety of foods.
- encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences
- provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about food and drink choices
- embed the importance of eating and physical activity in everyday activities and experiences.

COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Cooking can help develop children's knowledge and skills regarding healthy eating habits. Cooking is a great, fun activity and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes and cooking skills. On these occasions participating educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

Our Service will:

- provide a copy of the *Nutrition and Food Safety Policy* to all families upon orientation at the Service
- 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 Service 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 and nutrition related experiences within the service and provide up to date information to assist families to provide food experiences at home which promote positive relationships with food and bodies.
- communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on appropriate food and drink to be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including factsheets, newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Nutrition and Food Safety Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis

SOURCE

Australian Breast-Feeding Association Guidelines: https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
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*
https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).
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
Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Updated 2023).
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/
NSW Government. Healthy Kids. (2019). Munch and Move: https://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/campaigns-programs/about-munch-move.aspx
Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
The Australian Dental Association: https://www.ada.org.au/Home
The Department of Health. Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood – Staff/Carers Book: https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection?utm_source=health.gov.au&utm_medium=callout-auto-custom&utm_campaign=digital_transformation
Victoria State Government Education and Training Nutrition Australia *Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard A guide for early childhood education and care services*
Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.
https://theembracehub.com/body-blocks-by-embrace-kids
https://www.peninsulahealth.org.au/news/navigating-the-lunchbox

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Carol Hopkins	CSO	Oct 2025
POLICY REVIEWED	Oct 2025	NEXT REVIEW DATE	Dec 2027
VERSION NUMBER	• V2 10.25		
MODIFICATIONS	• Removed references to healthy foods in line with information from Peninsula Health • Encouraging children's choices/promoting body trust • OSHC information removed		
APPROVED BY	• Claire Tyrrell		

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Carol Hopkins	CSO	Feb 2024
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APPROVED BY			