

# INCLEMENT WEATHER AND HEAT STRESS POLICY

## Rationale

Inclement weather can affect everyday activities and comes in many forms. Inclement weather includes extreme high temperatures, high UV levels, heavy rain, hail and snow, strong winds, severe dust storm, lightning or thunderstorm or flooding. The environment in South Australia can pose risks related to heat exposure and dehydration, particularly for young children. If left untreated, this can lead to heat stress which is potentially life-threatening. This procedure takes into consideration both ambient temperature and humidity in the modification of the preschool program to ensure the well-being of children and staff is supported during inclement weather events. This procedure is site based and follows recommendations for inclement weather available on the Department for Education website.

## Aims

The aims of the Elsie Ey Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting 'Hot Weather Procedure' are to promote amongst children, staff and parents:

- Positive attitudes towards environmental conditions.
- Lifestyle practices which can help reduce the incidence of heat stress and heat related health conditions.
- Personal responsibility for, and decision making about, own regulation of exposure in hot weather.

## Implementation - This procedure applies all year round.

### Educators will:

1. Monitor daily weather forecasts (such as Bureau of Meteorology) and identify potential inclement weather risks
2. Look out for
  - o Signs of an approaching storm such as dark sky, high winds, thunder and lightning.
  - o Tree debris that might pose a slip or trip hazard, such as leaves, nuts and branches.
  - o Damaged tree limbs and branches that may fall.
  - o Wet floors and stairs.
  - o Employees or students having trouble breathing triggered by dust, thunderstorms or panic.
3. Consider the health and safety risks to staff, children and others when planning learning experiences in these conditions, take action to notify children and staff of safety risks, and make environmental changes to reduce risks.
4. When the ambient temperature is over 36C children will play in areas covered by shade.
5. When temperatures exceed 38C at site location children will remain inside. Site temperature is defined as the temperature at Roseworthy as listed on the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website, checked at half hourly intervals.
6. On days where the forecast temperature exceeds 26C, before children play in areas with rubber play safe and metal climbing equipment staff will conduct a touch test to ensure surfaces are safe for children to use. (If an adult can hold their hand on a surface for a slow count to 10 the surface is safe for use).
7. Water play will be included and promoted in the program on days where the weather is 30C or higher.
8. Families may exercise their right to pick their children up early in periods of extreme weather conditions such as heat waves. As the site has a mixture of evaporative and split system air-conditioning, this is not mandated and will purely be based on parent reference.



9. In the event of a power failure/ air-conditioning malfunction on a day where temperatures exceed 36C families will be contacted and provided with the option of picking their children up early.
10. Children are encouraged to drink water at regular intervals during each preschool session
11. Staff will discuss physical signs with children to support children's understanding of their own body's responses to heat, for example "Your cheeks look red/ You're sweaty", "You're hot, it's time to go inside and get a drink of water and cool down".
12. Humidity levels will influence the period of time children spend outside during times of high humidity.
13. In temperatures over 36C educators will rotate outside supervision rosters hourly, or as agreed upon by the educators working on the day.
14. On days forecasted to reach a top of 36C or higher, children's bags will be stored inside the building to assist with regulating food temperatures and minimising the need for movement in and out of the building.
15. If the forecasted weather is 30C or over on the day of a planned excursion, the director and excursion organiser will review the details of, and risk assessment for, the excursion to determine if it needs to be modified or cancelled. Considerations will include excursion destination, route of travel, access to shade and water, type of activity to be engaged in. In the event it is decided to cancel the excursion, families will be notified and children will engage in their regular preschool session.