



Product Safety & Compliance Guidance for Educators & Early Childhood Settings

A practical guide to product compliance for educators & buyers

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Disclaimer

Modern Teaching Aids has prepared and published this Product and Safety & Compliance Guide to provide an overview and guidance to educators and buyers about product compliance and safety requirements in Australia in early childhood settings. This guide contains general information only which is current as at the date of publication. This guide does not constitute legal advice or other advice and should not be relied on as such. Information in this guide is subject to change at any time and Modern Teaching Aids does not represent or warrant that the information in this guide is comprehensive, complete, accurate or up to date.

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Introduction

Keeping our children safe: a practical guide to product compliance in early childhood settings

Every day, educators and staff across early learning centres make countless decisions that affect the safety, wellbeing and development of the children in their care. From the toys on the shelves to the furniture they climb on, and the hygiene products used throughout the day — every product matters.

This guide is here to help you:

- Understand what product safety compliance is, and why it matters in childcare
- Know what to look for when purchasing and using products
- Feel confident your environment meets mandatory safety standards
- Equip yourself with tools to assess, review, and retire products when needed

We've created this guide to support your understanding of compliance and give you awareness of what is required for the resources and equipment that can be found in your environment.



Understanding product compliance

What is product compliance?

Product compliance refers to whether an item meets the safety, labelling and performance requirements set by government regulators. In Australia, these standards are legally enforceable for many categories of items that are used by children or contribute to learning environments.

There are two types of standards:

- **Mandatory standards:** Required by law. A product must meet these to be sold in Australia.
- **Voluntary standards:** Not legally required but considered best practice. The product can be sold without having been tested to these voluntary standards. However, suppliers might choose to test their products to voluntary standards to demonstrate their products exceed mandatory safety requirements.

Who regulates product safety in Australia?

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) – Oversees national product safety regulation.
- State and Territory Regulatory Authorities – Monitor compliance under the National Quality Framework (NQF).
- Energy Regulators – For electrical items (via EESS and ERAC).
- TGA & APVMA – For hygiene and chemical products.

Directors' and educators' role in product safety

Even though suppliers are responsible for ensuring products meet relevant standards, services and educators also have a duty of care under the:

- National and state laws regulations
- The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) and National Quality Standard (NQS)
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

You must ensure that:

- Products are safe to use every day.
- You have the required documents to ensure product compliance.
- You check labels and warnings on arrival.
- You report hazards and incidents immediately.
- You follow the service's incident and hazard response process.
- You only purchase goods from reputable suppliers with proven compliance practices.

This guide helps you carry out these steps with confidence.

Product categories & key hazards in early childhood settings

Each category below outlines key compliance requirements, potential risks, and simple actions educators can take to ensure safe daily use of products.

1. Toys

In-scope: All items designed for play, including plush toys, wooden blocks, puzzles, role play sets, musical instruments, stacking toys, and educational manipulatives.

The requirements for toys and play equipment depends on the age range it is intended for, and the materials it's made of and/or included components such as batteries or magnets. To give more detailed information for each type of product, this section is split up into the following sub-categories.

- Toys suitable for children under the age of 3 years
- Toys suitable for children of 3 years and up
- Toys made with fabrics
- Electrical toys
- Products with button and coin batteries
- Toys with magnets

1.1 Toys suitable for children under the age of 3 years

Toys intended for children under 36 months are subject to the strictest toy safety requirements under Australian law. This age group is particularly vulnerable to choking, ingestion, suffocation, and entrapment risks due to their developmental stage and mouthing behaviours.

In scope

- Any toy marketed or labelled to be used by children under 36 months.
- Any item which appeals for children under 3 (such as soft toys), regardless of the age labelling applied by the supplier/manufacturer.
- Includes rattles, teething toys, stacking toys, soft toys, early learning puzzles, and large-piece construction sets.

Exclusions

- Toys labelled "not suitable for children under 36 months" and compliant with small parts regulations.
- Products clearly marketed for older age groups without appeal or accessibility to younger children.

Applicable standards

Mandatory standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical and physical safety**, enforced by the Consumer Goods (Toys for Children up to and including 36 Months of Age) Safety Standard 2023 - Checks for small parts, sharp points, accessible batteries/magnets
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of certain elements** (paints, coatings, plastics)
- **Phthalates** – mandatory for plastic products that can be easily chewed or sucked on.

Voluntary standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.2 – Flammability** (applies if toy includes textiles, costumes, soft components, see section 1.3)

What Is Tested?

Mechanical and physical properties:

- Small parts hazard – Ensures no small detachable components that can pose choking hazards.
- Shape and size – Prohibits items like spherical or cylindrical components from being small enough to occlude airways.
- Sharp points and edges – Assessed for potentially harmful sharp elements.
- Accessible fasteners – Screws, nails, and other fasteners must not detach easily.
- Compression and tensile strength – Evaluated parts to ensure they don't break or detach during normal use or reasonably foreseeable abuse.
- Tear and seam strength (soft toys) – Ensures filling material doesn't become accessible.
- Cords, straps, and elastics – Tests for length and strength to prevent strangulation.
- Folding mechanisms – Assesses for entrapment or pinching risks.
- Stability of ride-on toys – Checks for tipping or balance issues.
- Mouth-actuated toys – Ensures they can't be swallowed or inhaled.
- Drop test – Simulates a child throwing the toy around and tests durability.



Flammability (if relevant):

- Material must not burn too rapidly (specific thresholds depend on item type).
- Some items must self-extinguish before reaching a critical length.
- Prohibited materials are highly flammable solids, liquids or gases that ignite too easily or burn too rapidly.

Migration of certain elements:

- Toxic elements are tested for migration from toy materials, to ensure the migration of those elements stays within the maximum allowable limits.
- Applicable to products which are coated or have printed or painted surfaces.

Phthalates:

- Tests for the presence of phthalates in soft plastics that are mouthable, squeezable, or chewable, such as bath toys, teething rings or dolls.

Why is it important?

- Young children explore by mouthing — small or loose parts can cause choking or ingestion.
- Toys not tested for this age group may contain toxic coatings or loose fibres.
- Failure to follow age-appropriate toy guidance can lead to serious injury or death.

Best practice for educators

- Only use toys clearly labelled for under 3s or tested to appropriate standards.
- Avoid second-hand or damaged toys with unclear safety history.
- Supervise children using any toy that has seams, attachments, or moving parts.
- Remove immediately if any part becomes loose, torn, or degraded.
- Keep documentation or packaging showing age-appropriateness.

1.2 Toys suitable for children of 3 years and older

Toys for children over 3 are still subject to safety standards, but with greater tolerance for small parts and complexity. These toys must still be durable, non-toxic, and safe for their intended developmental use — particularly in mixed-age environments.

In-Scope

- Toys labelled for ages 3 and up.
- Includes construction kits, puzzles, educational toys, dolls/accessories, pretend play sets, and electronic learning tools.

Exclusions

- Toys exclusively for children under 3 (addressed separately in section 1.1).
- Products marketed for adults or display only (e.g. collectible items with no play function).

Applicable Standards

Mandatory standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of certain elements** (applies to all toys for children under 14)

Voluntary standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical and physical properties**
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.2 – Flammability** (applies if toy includes textiles, costumes, soft components, see section 1.3)

What is tested?

Migration of certain elements:

- Toxic elements are tested for migration from toy materials, to ensure the migration of those elements stays within the maximum allowable limits.
- Applicable to products which are coated or have printed or painted surfaces.

Flammability (if relevant):

- Material must not burn too rapidly (specific thresholds depend on item type).
- Some items must self-extinguish before reaching a critical length.
- Prohibited materials are highly flammable solids, liquids or gases that ignite too easily or burn too rapidly.

Mechanical and physical properties:

- Sharp points and edges – Must not present unreasonable risk of injury during normal or foreseeable use.
- Small parts – Permitted if the toy is not intended for children under 3. Not restricted for 3+, as mouthing risk is significantly lower.
- Folding mechanisms – Tested to prevent finger entrapment or crushing hazards.
- Moving parts and pinch points – Assessed to prevent injury.
- Projections and wires – Tested to avoid puncture or eye hazards.
- Cords and elastics – Evaluated for entanglement and strangulation risk, but longer cords are permitted compared to under-3s.
- Stability (for ride-ons) – Ensures tipping does not occur too easily.
- Tension and compression tests – Simulate foreseeable abuse.
- Durability and drop testing – Conducted to simulate real-life play conditions.



Why is it important?

- Toys without toxicology testing may contain unsafe levels of lead or cadmium.
- Items that appear safe for older children may still pose ingestion or injury risks to younger ones.
- Educators must ensure safe setup, rotation, and grouping of toys in compliance with QA2 and WHS laws.

Best practice for educators

- In mixed-age rooms, ensure 3+ toys are not accessible to under-3s unless assessed safe.
- Inspect termly for damage that could expose sharp or loose parts.
- Use higher-risk toys under supervision, particularly where magnets, projectiles, or electronics are involved.

1.3 Toys made of fabric

Fabric-based toys must meet specific flammability and structural integrity criteria due to the risk of ignition, suffocation, or detachment of sewn components. These toys are often overlooked but are subject to mandatory testing if classified as toys.

In-scope

- Dress-up clothing, capes, wings, hats, masks
- Plush/soft-filled toys and dolls
- Wigs and wearable novelty items
- Play tents, tunnels, or cubby houses intended for enclosed play

Exclusions

- Furniture or soft furnishings (e.g. cushions, curtains)
- Real clothing not marketed or used as a toy



Applicable standards

Mandatory:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of elements**

Voluntary (unless suitable for children under 3):

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.2 – Flammability** of textiles and fibrous toy materials
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical & physical safety** (tearing, seams, cords)
- PFAS: the 'forever chemicals' – From 1 July 2025, the use, import, and sale of certain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in consumer products will be banned in Australia.

What is tested?

Migration of certain elements:

- Toxic elements are tested for migration from toy materials, to ensure the migration of those elements stays within the maximum allowable limits.
- Applicable to products which are coated or have printed or painted surfaces.

Flammability (if relevant):

- Material must not burn too rapidly (specific thresholds depend on item type).
- Some items must self-extinguish before reaching a critical length.
- Prohibited materials are highly flammable solids, liquids or gases that ignite too easily or burn too rapidly.

Mechanical and physical properties:

- Projections and wires – Tested to avoid puncture or eye hazards.
- Cords and elastics – Evaluated for entanglement and strangulation risk, but longer cords are permitted compared to under-3s.
- Strength of stitching, fasteners, and trims.
- Access to internal filling materials.
- Cord length, loop size, and potential entrapment risks.

PFAS testing:

- Targeted PFAS compounds (e.g. PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS) using mass spectrometry, especially in toys with waterproof or stain repellent coatings.

Why is it important?

- Flammable fabrics pose real risk in cooking/play areas or during events.
- Detached eyes, sequins, or trims can cause choking.
- Enclosed spaces with poor airflow can lead to suffocation or panic.
- Drawstrings, ribbons or strings longer than 30cm can pose a risk of strangulation or choking.
- PFAS used in stain- or water-resistant coatings can leach through prolonged contact.
- Children often mouth or sleep with fabric toys, increasing the risk of chemical exposure.

Best practice for educators

- Check labels for fire hazard warnings and washing instructions.
- Avoid costumes with long trailing parts or unprotected cords.
- Supervise children in tents or enclosed play structures.
- Regularly inspect for damaged seams, exposed stuffing, or faded fire labels.



1.4 Electrical toys

Electrical toys are regulated to manage risks of electric shock, fire, overheating, and battery-related injury. These toys must comply with mandatory safety standards under Australian Consumer Law and electrical legislation. Particular attention must be paid to battery compartments, wiring integrity, overheating, and charger safety.

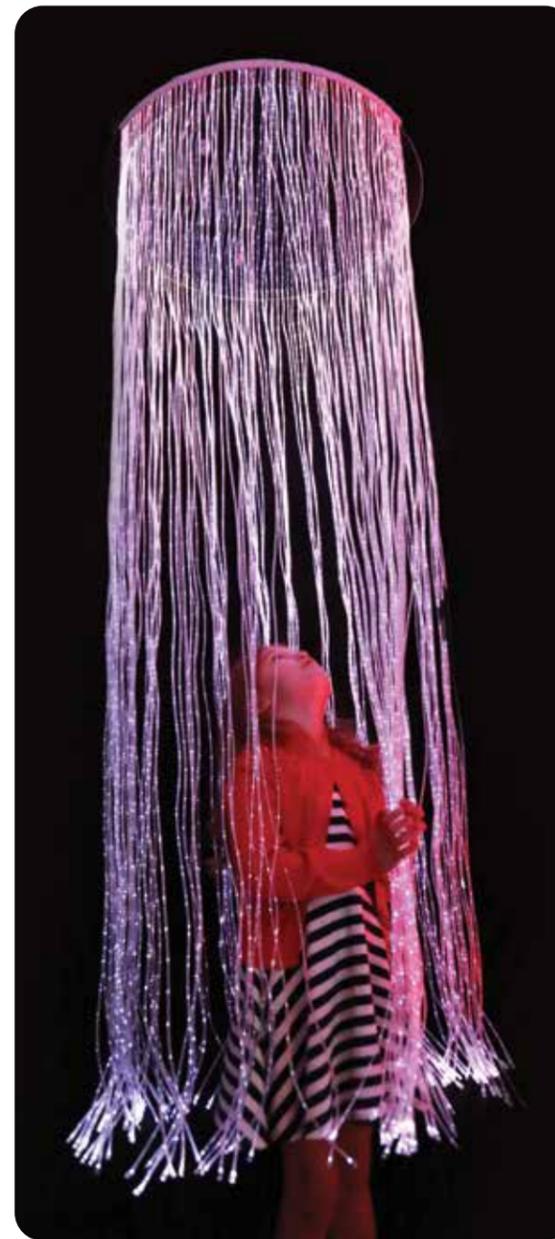
In scope:

Toys powered by batteries (standard or rechargeable), including:

- Light-up, musical, or interactive toys
- Remote-controlled toys
- Electronic learning tools
- Battery-powered plush or sound books
- Toys with USB or mains-powered chargers (e.g. STEM kits, robots)
- Toys containing button/coin batteries (see specific regulation) – for detailed information, see section 1.1.5.

Exclusions

- Non-powered toys.
- Products not designed as toys (e.g. tablets used for learning but not marketed as a toy).
- Products powered solely by mains electricity (240V).



Why is it important?

- Untested electrical toys expose an unknown risk of causing electrical shock, overheating, or fire.
- Battery-related injuries — including severe burns or fatalities — have occurred when children access battery compartments.
- Toys without compliance documentation may pose serious health and safety risks.

Applicable standards

Mandatory:

- **AS/NZS 62115 – Electrical safety for toys**
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of elements**
- **Consumer Goods (Button/Coin Batteries) Safety & Information Standard 2020** — mandatory when the product is powered by button or coin batteries – see section 1.5)
- **EMC – Electromagnetic Compatibility**

Voluntary:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical & physical safety**
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.2 – Flammability**

What is tested?

Electrical safety for toys

- Resistance to electric shock (no accessible live parts).
- Protection from fire hazards or overheating.
- Proper function of power circuits, transformers, and charging systems.
- Strength and safety of battery compartments.
- Battery polarity and incorrect insertion protection.
- Wiring integrity and short-circuit resistance.
- Creepage and clearance distances.
- Correct labelling and instructions (especially around USB charging, adaptors, etc.).

Migration of certain elements:

- Toxic elements are tested for migration from toy materials, to ensure the migration of those elements stays within the maximum allowable limits.
- Applicable to products which are coated or have printed or painted surfaces.

EMC - Electromagnetic Compatibility:

- Tests if the toy interferes with other electronic devices? This checks that the toy doesn't cause problems with devices such as TV's, radios or WiFi.
- Can the toy still work properly near other electronic devices? This checks that the toy works safely if there is electrical 'noise' nearby (e.g. from phones or microwaves).

Best Practice for Educators

- Use only toys with secured battery compartments (screwed shut or dual locking).
- Avoid toys where children can access batteries or wiring.
- Discard toys immediately if overheating, exposed wiring, or melted components are detected.
- Do not allow children to handle or insert batteries — store spares in a locked container.

For rechargeable toys:

- Charge only using the original charger.
- Never charge overnight or unattended.
- Confirm that any toy with a mains-powered charger or plug includes an RCM mark.

1.5 Toys with button or coin batteries

Toys with button or coin batteries are subject to strict mandatory requirements due to the high risk of serious injury or death if batteries are swallowed. Compliance is not optional — these products must meet both general electrical toy standards and specific battery safety standards enforced by the ACCC.

In-scope:

Any consumer good that contains, or is intended to contain, button or **coin batteries, including (but not limited to):**

- Toys, games and novelty items
- Cameras or calculators

Exclusions

- Button or coin batteries supplied in bulk to trades, professions or industries which are not intended for sale to the public.
- Audio-visual and information and communications technology equipment containing button or coin batteries that are soldered in place.
- Toys powered by cylindrical batteries only (AA, AAA, C, etc.) — addressed in the Electrical Toys section 1.1.4.
- Toys with sealed batteries where access is not possible during the life of the toy — only partially exempt (must still meet packaging and instructions requirements)



Immediately stop use if the button or coin battery is accessible without a tool or dual action to open, or if the battery compartment is damaged.

Applicable standards

Mandatory standards

- **Consumer Goods** (Products Containing Button/Coin Batteries) Safety Standard 2020
- **Consumer Goods** (Products Containing Button/Coin Batteries) information Standard 2020
- **AS/NZS 62115 – Electrical safety** for toys
- Any other standard that would be applicable to the toy category.

What is tested?

Button Battery Safety Standard 2020

- Battery compartment security is checked to ensure it can only be opened by using a tool or dual simultaneous action to open.
- If a screw is used, this is required to be a captive screw.
- Must pass a drop test and impact test to confirm it remains closed.
- Battery compliance with AS/NZS 62368.1 (general equipment safety)

Button Battery Information Standard 2020

Markings and warnings are checked:

- On packaging: mandatory warning triangle, ingestion risk, and emergency advice
- On instructions: correct battery insertion, disposal, and emergency response guidance, ingestion advice and compatibility details.
- On the product (if practical): ingestion warning symbol and text

Best practice for educators

- Never use toys with button batteries unless they are clearly marked as compliant with Australian regulations.
- Check that the battery compartment cannot be opened without a tool.
- If any screw or clip is loose, remove the toy from use immediately.
- Keep packaging and instructions as proof of compliance.
- Store spare batteries in a locked container and treat flat batteries as hazardous waste.
- Educate staff on first aid for suspected ingestion and post visible emergency procedures.
- Regularly check toys containing button or coin batteries to ensure the battery compartment is intact and doesn't show signs of wear and tear.

Why is it important?

- **Swallowing a button battery can cause fatal internal burns within 2 hours.**
- Non-compliant toys have led to multiple severe injuries and deaths in Australia.
- Toys imported from overseas may not meet Australia's strict design and labelling standards.
- Directors and educators have a duty of care under QA2 and WHS laws to prevent access to unsafe products.



Key message for educators:

- Never use toys with loose or easily opened battery compartments.
- If a battery comes out during play or falls out during transport, the toy must be removed and reported immediately.
- Ingestion can cause internal burns within hours - this is a **critical safety area** in all early childhood settings.

1.6 Toys with magnets

Toys containing magnets require strict compliance because small, strong magnets can cause life-threatening injuries if swallowed. Even a single loose or poorly secured magnet can present serious internal risks when used in early childhood environments, especially with children under 3 years.

In Scope

- Toys containing permanently embedded, surface-mounted, or loose magnets.
- Includes construction sets, novelty items, dolls/accessories with magnetic attachments, and magnetic features within vehicles, balls, or tiles.
- Applies to toys intended for children under 14 years, especially high-risk for those under 36 months.

Exclusions

- Magnetic whiteboards or classroom tools where magnets are permanently bonded and inaccessible.
- Magnetic learning aids (addressed separately if designed for instructional purposes, see section 1.4).
- Industrial or scientific magnets not intended as toys.

Applicable standards

Mandatory standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical and physical properties.** Includes requirements on small parts, magnet retention, and mechanical testing. This is mandatory regardless of the intended age.
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of certain elements** (for coatings on magnet components)

What is tested?

- Magnetic flux index (strength) – must not exceed hazard thresholds if accessible.
- Small parts testing – magnets must not detach or be accessible if too small.
- Retention tests – magnets must remain embedded under mechanical stress.
- Labelling requirements – warnings must be present where multiple small magnets are accessible.
- Paint and coating safety – tested under ISO 8124.3 if magnets are coated or painted.

Best practice for education settings

- Avoid toys with small magnets in rooms with children under 3.
- If magnetised toys are used, supervise closely and inspect regularly.
- Keep packaging or product labels on file if safety warnings are listed.



Important!

Immediately remove from use if:

- Any magnet detaches or is missing.
- A toy shows cracks, loosened seams, or damage near magnet points.



Why is it important?

- Swallowed magnets can attract through intestinal walls, causing perforation, twisting, or infection.
- Injuries may not be obvious until medical emergency symptoms appear.
- Non-compliant toys may allow magnets to dislodge with minimal force.
- Globally, magnet ingestion has led to fatalities and hospitalisations in children.

Recognised equivalent international standards

In many cases, toys and children's products are tested to overseas safety standards. Australian regulators (primarily the ACCC and state electrical safety bodies) **accept certain equivalent international standards**, provided they offer an equal or higher level of protection.

Below is a breakdown of accepted equivalents for key categories of early childhood products:

Australian Standards	International Standard	Region	Accepted in Australia?	Notes
AS/NZS ISO 8124	EN 71-1, 2, 3	Europe	✓ Yes	Covers mechanical safety, flammability, and chemical migration. Widely accepted for toys imported from the EU.
	ASTM F963	United States	✓ Yes	Comprehensive standard covering mechanical, flammability, and chemical safety. Accepted as equivalent by the ACCC.
	ISO 8124	International	✓ Yes	Parent standard to the Australian AS/NZS version. Recognised globally.
AS/NZS 62115	IEC 62115	International	✓ Yes	The international version of the same electrical toy safety standard. Directly referenced in AS/NZS 62115.
	EN 62115	Europe	✓ Yes	Aligned with IEC; accepted if the product also meets local Australian requirements (e.g. plug type, voltage, RCM mark).
	UL 696	United States	⚠ No	Not accepted on its own. US electrical toy standards do not meet Australian electrical compliance laws.
Button & Coin battery standards	No international standard	–	✗ N/A	Button/coin battery safety is governed by the Australian-specific mandatory standard only.

✓ Important for educators & buyers:

If a toy is tested to one of the above standards, that generally satisfies technical compliance for safety – **but labelling and warning text must still meet Australian Consumer Law** (e.g. English language, age warning formats, button battery rules if relevant).

⚠ Additional requirements:

All electrical toys sold in Australia must:

- Carry the **RCM (Regulatory Compliance Mark)**, except when the toy operates solely on disposable batteries (e.g. AA or AAA batteries), has no mains connection and/or does not emit radiofrequency signals.
- Be assessed under the **Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme (EESS)** where applicable.
- Use **AS/NZS 3112** approved plug types, including insulated pins

✗ Mandatory local requirement for button and coin batteries:

As of **22 June 2022**, all toys and products with button or coin batteries must comply with the **Consumer Goods (Products Containing Button/Coin Batteries) Safety Standard 2020**.

There is **no international equivalent** that fully satisfies this requirement. Compliance must be demonstrated locally, there is no accepted international equivalent.

Warning labels on toys

Correct labelling is a legal requirement under Australian Consumer Law and mandatory toy safety standards. These labels help identify risks and guide safe use. Below is an overview of commonly used warnings.



Icon	Label	When It's Required	Why It Matters
	Warning: Not suitable for children under 36 months. Contains small parts – choking hazard.	Toys with detachable small parts, or designed for older children	Prevents choking or ingestion risks in under-3s
	Warning: Long cord – strangulation hazard.	Toys with cords or strings longer than 300 mm	Prevents strangulation, especially in infants
	Warning: Contains button/coin battery. Keep out of reach of children.	Any toy (or product) with a button or coin battery inside	Warns about life-threatening internal burns if ingested
	This is not a toy. For educational use only.	Products that look like toys but are not intended for play	Avoids unintentional use during unsupervised activities
	Adult supervision required.	Toys with sharp components, craft kits, electrical elements	Ensures responsible use in a supervised setting
	RCM Marking	For all electrical products, except when it's solely powered by batteries.	It demonstrates compliance with all mandatory electrical standards.

Important: Warnings must be:

- Clearly visible at point of sale and on packaging.
- In **English**, legible, and not obscured.
- Present on the product itself if practical (especially for battery-related warnings).

Tip

Maintain a digital copy of the instructions and/or photo of the original packaging in a shared library, to easily refer back to when needed.

Your role as an educator and/or buyer

Even though suppliers must ensure products are compliant, educators and early childhood providers play a critical role under the **National Quality Standard (QA2 – Children’s Health and Safety)**.

Practical Toy Safety Check List

When purchasing or receiving toys

- Check the age grading and warning labels.
- Confirm the item is suitable for your children’s age group.
- Keep toys suitable for children aged 3+ and up away from the younger age groups.
- Ensure your electrical items have the RCM mark and Australian plugs with insulated pins (not required for battery-only powered toys).
- Avoid to use of toys/resources which include hazardous chemicals.

During daily use

- Remove damaged or faulty items from play areas immediately.
- Supervise battery-powered or small-part toys with extra care.
- Store electrical items out of reach of children.
- Check for small parts in rooms for the younger age groups and immediately remove any small parts.
- Regularly check for signs of damage, loose parts, sharp edges, cracks, wear or splinters.

Documentation and follow-up

- Record safety concerns or product issues using your centre’s incident log and notify the supplier you have purchased the product from.
- If a child needed medical attention by a medical professional, it is mandatory to inform the supplier you have purchased the product from.
- Report serious product faults to management and, if needed, to the ACCC.
- Retain packaging and user instructions for reference. Best practice is to keep a product packaging database where photos of packaging and warnings is kept.



Tip

If you’re unsure, remove the product from play and follow your centre’s internal reporting process. You can always contact your supplier for safety documentation or concerns.



2. Prams and Strollers

Strollers used in early learning environments warrant a separate compliance category due to their unique combination of mechanical movement, restraint systems, and weight-bearing design. Failure to meet key safety requirements can lead to falls, entrapment, or runaway hazards—especially when transporting multiple children at once.

In scope

- Single and multi-child strollers used in education or care settings.
- Folding or collapsible strollers used for on-site or excursion purposes.
- Tandem or side-by-side prams and pushchairs used for under 4s.

Exclusions

- Toy strollers intended for pretend play (covered under toy standards).
- Wheelchairs and mobility aids (covered under different regulations).

Applicable standards

Mandatory standards:

- **Consumer Protection Notice No. 8 of 2007** – Mandatory Standard for Prams and Strollers (based on AS/NZS 2088:2000).
- Applies to new, refurbished, or imported prams and strollers sold in Australia.
- Includes mandatory safety requirements on brakes, tether straps, stability, and restraint systems.
- PFAS: the ‘forever chemicals’ - From 1 July 2025, the use, import, and sale of certain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in consumer products will be banned in Australia.

Voluntary Standards

- **AS/NZS 2088:2013** – Latest voluntary version with updated safety benchmarks.
 - Includes improved hazard protection and folding mechanism performance.
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1** – Applicable only if the stroller is marketed as a toy (e.g. dolls’ strollers).

What Is Tested?

- Braking Mechanisms – Must be effective, secure, and meet performance criteria.
- Tether Straps – Mandatory to prevent rollaways; must be included and labelled.
- Harness System – Five-point or equivalent restraint to prevent falls.
- Stability Testing – Prevents tipping under load or on slopes.
- Entrapment Hazards – Must not have openings that could trap fingers, limbs, or heads.
- Folding Mechanism Safety – Requires two or more distinct actions to collapse.
- Labelling & Instructions – Must include specific warnings, correct setup guidance, and use recommendations.

PFAS testing:

- Targeted PFAS compounds (e.g. PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS) using mass spectrometry, especially in toys with waterproof or stain repellent coatings



Why is it important?

- Prevents roll-away accidents and serious falls during excursions.
- Ensures children are safely restrained and not at risk of entrapment.
- Protects against equipment collapse during use.
- Meets both legal obligations and duty-of-care responsibilities in regulated environments.

Best practice for educators

- Always use tether straps when the stroller is stationary.
- Ensure children are fully harnessed before moving.
- Conduct a daily check for folding lock integrity and wheel stability.
- Store instruction manuals and keep serial numbers on record for potential recalls.
- Use brakes every time you stop, even briefly.
- Only use strollers designed for commercial/ multi-child care if transporting more than one child.
- Retire strollers if they show fraying harnesses, weakened frames, or faulty brakes.

3. Furniture in early childhood settings

Furniture in early childhood environments must be safe, stable, age-appropriate, and compliant with all applicable mandatory standards. Poorly designed, low quality or non-compliant furniture poses risks such as entrapment, falls, and tipping.

This section focuses on compliance and safety guidance for furniture used in early learning settings, including:

- Cots
- High chairs
- General learning furniture (e.g. tables and chairs)
- Toppling risks from tall, unanchored furniture
- Infant sleep products
- Mirrors

Each of these types of furniture have their own mandatory and voluntary requirements, which will be discussed in the next sections.

3.1 Cots

Household cots used in early childhood environments must comply with strict mandatory safety requirements under Australian Consumer Law. These standards are designed to prevent falls, entrapment, and suffocation — which are among the leading risks associated with infant sleep settings.

In-scope:

- Freestanding household-style cots used in early learning and childcare environments.
- Wooden or metal-framed cots designed for regular use by children aged 0–24 months (and older if still in use).
- Emergency evacuation cots (they are legally considered household cots and must comply accordingly).
- Any fixed or mobile cot that is not explicitly designed and tested as a portable folding cot.

Exclusions:

- Portable folding cots, which are instead regulated under AS/NZS 2195:2010.
- Bassinets, cradles, or sleep pods, which are not currently covered by a mandatory standard, but should follow National Quality Standards (NQS) and Red Nose Australia safe sleeping guidance.
- Custom-built, built-in, or architectural sleep spaces that cannot be verified against AS/NZS 2172.
- Second-hand cots, which may not meet the most recent version of the standard or may pose risks due to wear or missing parts.
- Modified or non-standard cots that have had components added, removed, or changed in a way that may impact compliance (e.g. mattress replacements, added padding, or third-party accessories).

Important!

Children should transition out of a cot when they:

- Can climb out of the cot unassisted (typically around 18–24 months); or
- Have reached a height of approximately 90 cm, as climbing and falling risks increase beyond this point; or* Show signs of mobility or strength that compromise the safety of raised cot sides (e.g. standing, bouncing, pulling up).



Applicable standards

Mandatory standard:

- **Consumer Goods (Household Cots) Safety Standard 2005** (as amended). Enforces compliance with AS/NZS 2172:2013 – Cots for household use – Safety requirements.
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of Certain Elements** (if painted or coated surfaces present).

Other applicable references:

- General duties under WHS laws and QA2 of the National Quality Framework for safe sleep and rest environments

Tip

Cot mattresses should generally be replaced every 3 to 5 years, or sooner if they show signs of wear, such as sagging, tears, indentations, persistent odours, or reduced firmness, as these issues can compromise infant safety and support. Even if the cot frame remains in good condition, a firm, flat, and snug-fitting mattress is essential to prevent entrapment and ensure safe sleep environments.

What is tested?

Spacing requirements:

- Gaps between side and end bars must not allow a 95 mm sphere to pass through (prevents head/limb entrapment).
- Gap between mattress edge and cot side must not exceed 20 mm when mattress is centred.

Mattress base adjustment:

- Must offer at least two height positions.
- The lowest position must be used once a child can sit up unaided to prevent climbing and falls.

Drop-side mechanisms (if present):

- Must be secure and operable only by adults, using two distinct actions to release.

Minimum internal depth (from mattress surface to top of cot):

- Ensures cot is deep enough to prevent climbing or falling out.

Structural integrity:

- Cot must remain stable under shaking, rocking, and applied force tests to ensure resistance to collapse or tipping.

Permanent labelling:

- Cots must display legible warning labels, including mattress size requirements and safe-use instructions.

Surface safety:

- All coatings must be non-toxic and lead-free.
- Cot must be free from sharp edges, hazardous protrusions, or accessible fasteners that could injure or snag clothing.

Best practice for education settings

- Only use cots that comply with AS/NZS 2172 - Cots for Household Use and are in good condition.
- Always adjust the base to the lowest setting before a child can sit up.
- Ensure mattresses fit snugly and meet the dimensions specified on the cot.
- Regularly check for loose or missing hardware during routine inspections.
- Do not modify cots or add mattresses or padding that weren't supplied or approved by the manufacturer.
- Display warning labels prominently and ensure staff are trained to follow safe cot use procedures.
- Regularly check for tears, rips, loose seams, or spills that may hide mould.
- Any permanent dips are a sign to retire the mattress.
- Make sure there is no more than a 20mm gap between the mattress and the cot sides and ends.

Why is it important?

- Incorrect spacing between slats or components can result in head or limb entrapment.
- Poor mattress fit or added padding can cause suffocation or positional asphyxia.
- Improper base height increases the risk of falls as babies become mobile.
- Non-compliant cots may collapse or tip, leading to serious injury or death.
- Faulty or unsecured drop sides have caused strangulation and entrapment incidents internationally.

3.2 High Chairs

High chairs used in early learning environments must comply with a mandatory safety standard enforced under Australian Consumer Law. These products are high-risk due to the combination of elevation, mobility, and the developmental behaviours of infants and toddlers — such as rocking, climbing, and leaning.

In scope

- Free-standing high chairs designed for children up to approximately 3 years.
- Includes fixed and foldable designs, with or without trays.

Exclusions

- Booster seats, hook-on chairs, or seats that attach to dining furniture (regulated separately).
- High chairs used solely in domestic (non-educational) environments.
- Products not marketed as high chairs or not used during feeding.
- Chairs made from timber, plastic, metal, or composite materials.
- May include footrests, trays, or wheels.

Applicable standards

Mandatory

There is no mandatory standard for high chairs, but compliance with AS 4684 is highly recommended.

Voluntary:

It is highly recommended to ensure that high chairs intended for feeding or seated play of children up to 3 years comply with AS 4684 – high chairs safety. Booster seats and clip-on seats (additional guidelines apply).

What is tested?

- Strength and durability of frame and tray.
- Stability (tip resistance).
- Restraint system (5-point or equivalent harness).
- Entrapment hazards around leg holes and tray.
- Tray and accessory safety:
- Labelling and instructions
- Surface safety (non-toxic finishes, rounded edges).

Why is it important?

- Unrestrained children can slip or climb, leading to serious falls.
- Poorly designed or unstable chairs have caused fatal tip-over incidents.
- Faulty or worn harnesses reduce safety even if a chair appears compliant.
- Non-compliant coatings may expose children to lead or toxic substances, especially if mouthed.

Tip

When purchasing high chairs, look out for washable and replaceable straps and covers, for longevity of the product. We recommend 5-point harnesses for ultimate child safety.

High chair standard warning labels

- “WARNING: Always use the restraint system. Do not leave the child unattended.”
- Must include clear instructions on how to secure the harness.
- Supplier/importer details and product information should also be visible.



3.3 Early childhood furniture (e.g. tables and chairs)

Children’s furniture must be sturdy, stable, and designed with proportions and safety features suitable for young users in supervised group settings.

In-scope:

Mandatory:

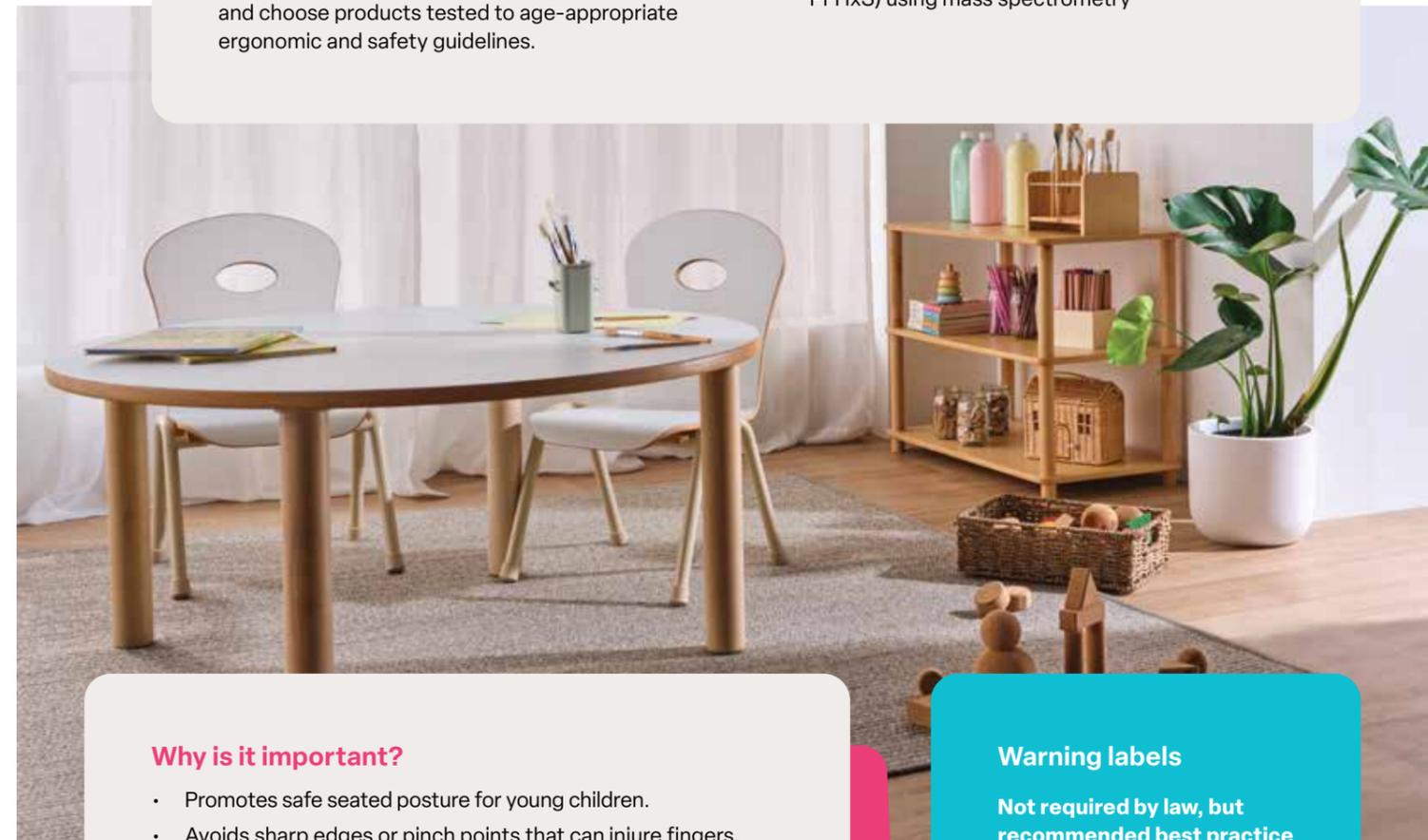
- No current Australian mandatory standard for generic classroom furniture.
- PFAS: the ‘forever chemicals’ - From 1 July 2025, the use, import, and sale of certain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in products where stain or water repellent features are preferable, such as carpets or rugs.

Voluntary:

Educators are expected to apply best practice and choose products tested to age-appropriate ergonomic and safety guidelines.

What is tested?

- Tip resistance for chairs and storage.
- Rounded corners and edges.
- Load bearing and weight capacity.
- Non-toxic coatings and finishes.
- Height, posture and reach suitability (for sitting/standing).
- Anti-entrapment features (e.g. hinges, lid-stay systems on toy boxes).
- Targeted PFAS compounds (e.g. PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS) using mass spectrometry



Why is it important?

- Promotes safe seated posture for young children.
- Avoids sharp edges or pinch points that can injure fingers.
- Prevents tip-over or slipping injuries.
- Poorly designed furniture increases daily injury risk.
- PFAS are commonly found in stain-resistant treatments on textiles and upholstery.
- Children often crawl, nap, and play on soft furnishings – eliminating PFAS reduces daily contact.

Warning labels

Not required by law, but recommended best practice includes:

- Weight/load limits on chairs, tables and storage.
- Safe use signage (e.g. “Do not stand on chair” or “Top-heavy – anchor to wall”).

3.4 Toppling Furniture

Tall and unstable furniture poses a serious crush or entrapment risk to children and must be designed, installed and used in line with mandatory safety regulations and centre duty-of-care obligations. These risks are heightened in early learning environments, where children may climb on or pull on unstable furniture pieces.

In-scope:

Mandatory

Free-standing household furniture sold to consumers in one of the three categories:

- **Category 1:** A clothing storage unit or bookcase with a height of 686 mm or more. A clothing storage unit is an item of furniture intended to primarily store clothes. It has one or more doors or drawers.
- **Category 2:** Entertainment units of any height. Entertainment units are designed to be used primarily to house, support or carry a television.

- **Category 3:** Hall tables, display cabinets, buffets, and sideboards with a height 686 mm or greater.

Voluntary but strongly recommended:

- All other not-in-scope free-standing furniture in education and care settings to be anchored to a wall.
- Any **custom-built or pre-installed furniture** should follow NQS QA3 and WHS risk assessment obligations.

Exclusions

- Furniture permanently affixed to a wall or structure at the point of sale.
- Office or commercial filing cabinets not intended for home or early childhood use.
- Furniture with a height under 686 mm.

Applicable standards

Mandatory Standards

- **Consumer Goods (Toppling Furniture) Information Standard 2024**

What is required?

For consumer furniture (sold to households or centres):

- Supplier must provide:
 - A permanent warning label on the product (visible when the product is empty) with tip-over hazard
 - Installation instructions for safe anchoring
 - Tip-over warning label on the product page on the website.
- Furniture must be stable under normal use, especially when drawers or doors are open

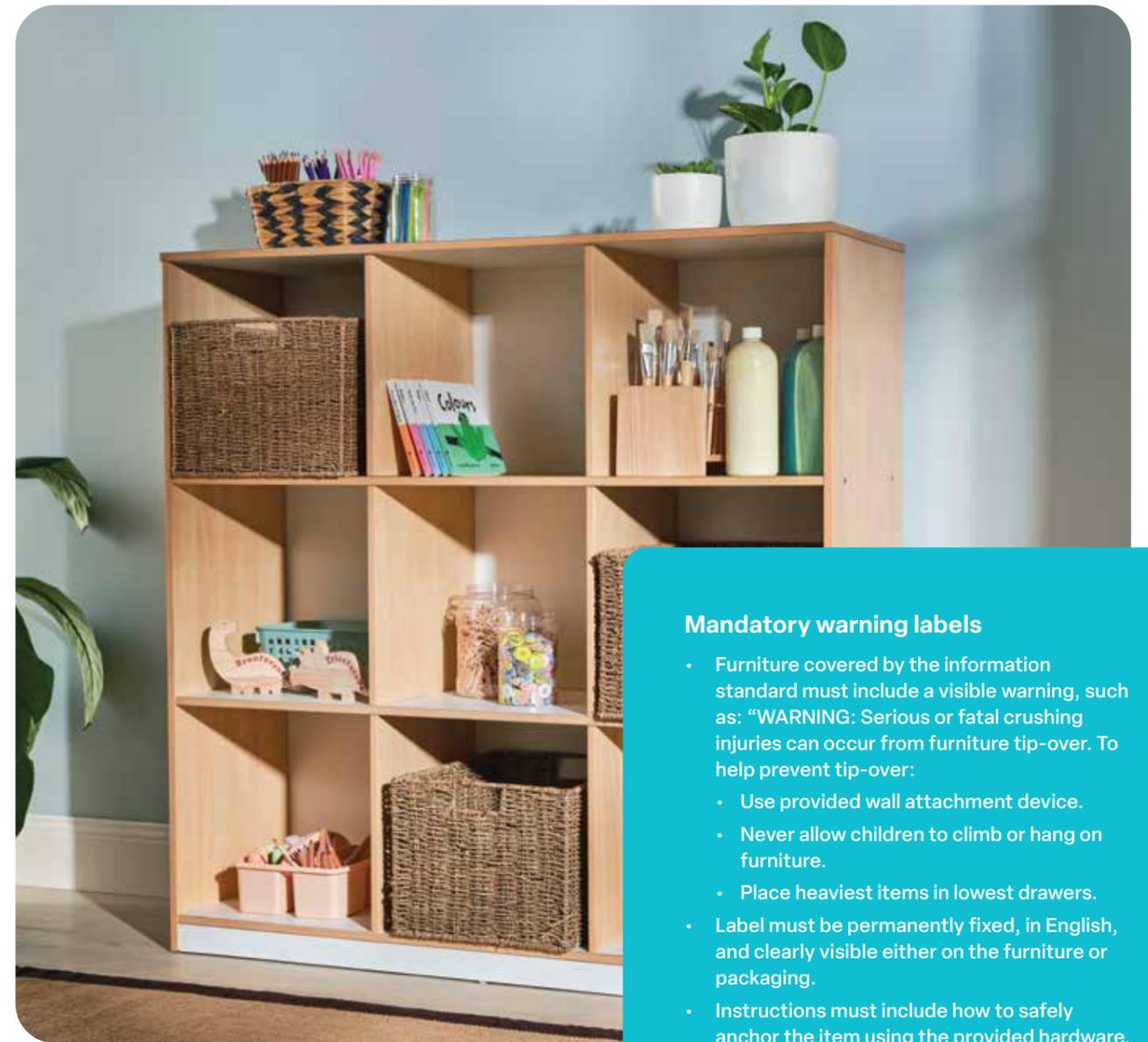
In early childhood settings (regardless of where furniture was purchased):

- Furniture is highly recommended to be anchored to prevent toppling if:
 - It is over 686mm high
 - It is accessible to children or located in play/learning areas
- Services must undertake a risk assessment and document corrective action (e.g. anchoring, relocation, restricted access)



Why is it important?

- Children may climb on or pull furniture during exploration or play.
- Unanchored furniture can tip forward suddenly, causing crushing injuries or death.
- Even lightweight furniture may cause serious harm to small children.



Mandatory warning labels

- Furniture covered by the information standard must include a visible warning, such as: "WARNING: Serious or fatal crushing injuries can occur from furniture tip-over. To help prevent tip-over:
 - Use provided wall attachment device.
 - Never allow children to climb or hang on furniture.
 - Place heaviest items in lowest drawers.
- Label must be permanently fixed, in English, and clearly visible either on the furniture or packaging.
- Instructions must include how to safely anchor the item using the provided hardware.

Best practice for education settings

- All bookshelves, tall drawers, storage units and activity stations should be:
 - Anchored to a wall using brackets, straps, or bolted systems
 - Assessed during room set-up and monitored during inspections
- Where wall anchoring isn't possible (e.g. glass walls, mobility required):
 - Use weighted bases or freestanding tip brackets
 - Limit access to lower drawers only
 - Consider furniture design with low height, wide base, and closed shelving
- Document furniture anchoring in your centre's WHS or environmental risk register.

When is it mandatory?

From 4 May 2025, under the Consumer Goods (Toppling Furniture) Information Standard 2024, all suppliers of freestanding furniture above 686mm must:

- Provide access to anchoring devices
- Include tip-over hazard warnings
- Supply safe-use and installation instructions

For early learning centres, while anchoring is not mandated in legislation, it is an implied duty of care under:

- National Quality Standard (QA2 and QA3)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations – Regs 103 and 168
- Safe Work Australia guidelines

3.5 Infant Sleep Products

From 19 January 2026, all infant sleep products supplied in Australia must comply with mandatory safety and information standards designed to reduce risks of suffocation, entrapment, and other hazards associated with infant sleep environments. An infant is defined as a child aged under 12 months.

In-scope:

Products designed, intended, marketed, or supplied for use as a sleeping facility for an infant, or to soothe or settle an infant, including:

- Household cots
- Portable folding cots
- Bassinets
- Cradles
- Co-sleepers
- Inclined sleepers
- Products that convert into infant sleep product
- Where certain inclined products have a surface on which an infant may lay and are designed, intended or marketed to soothe or settle an infant, they are also infant sleep products.
 - bouncers
 - hammocks
 - recliners
 - rockers
 - swings

Exclusions

- Accessories that attach to or are used with infant sleep products.
- Products regulated by other safety standards, such as car seats, prams, and strollers.
- Medical devices under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.
- Products designed to carry a baby on the body of a carer or parent, like carriers, wraps, or slings.
- Antique or collectable cots, unless imported into Australia as second-hand goods

Applicable standards

Mandatory standards

- **Consumer Goods (Infant Sleep Products) Safety Standard 2024**
- Consumer Goods (Infant Sleep Products) Information Standard 2024
- PFAS (the ‘forever chemicals’ in products where waterproof or stain repellent features are preferable.

What Is Tested/Required:

Under the Consumer Goods (Infant Sleep Products) Safety Standard 2024, the following requirements apply:

- **Incline:** The sleep surface must not have an incline greater than 7 degrees from the horizontal.
- **Surface Rigidity:** The sleep surface, including any mattress, must be firm and comply with AS/NZS 8811.1:2013, which specifies methods for testing firmness.
- **Side Materials:** Sides must be made of breathable materials that do not pose a suffocation risk.
- **Restraint Systems:** The product must not include any restraint system, harness, or strap
- **Castors/Wheels:** If fitted, at least two must have brakes.
- **Entrapment Hazards:** The product must not have gaps that could trap an infant’s head, neck, limbs, or fingers.
- **Small Parts:** Components must not be small enough to pose a choking hazard.
- **Strength and Stability:** The product must be structurally sound to support an infant safely.

Additionally, under the **Consumer Goods (Infant Products) Information Standard 2024**, products must include clear warnings and safety information.

- **PFAS Testing:** Targeted PFAS compounds (e.g. PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS) using mass spectrometry



Why is it important?

- Protects infants from suffocation and unsafe inclines.
- Prevents use of restraints or soft padding linked to SUDI.
- Ensures sleep surfaces are firm, flat, and safe.
- Non-compliant products can lead to fatal sleep incidents.
- PFAS used in stain- or water-resistant coatings can leach through prolonged contact.

When is it mandatory:

- The infant sleep products safety and information standard will apply to all products as listed in scope.
- Commencement Date: The standards commence on 18 July 2024.
- Transitional Period: There is an 18-month transitional period, ending on 18 January 2026.
- Full Compliance: From 19 January 2026, all infant sleep products supplied in Australia must fully comply with the standards.



Mandatory Warning Labels:

Under the Consumer Goods (Infant Products) Information Standard 2024, products must display the following warnings:

- The word “WARNING” in uppercase letters.
- An internationally recognised safety alert symbol (a triangle with an exclamation mark).

Statements to the effect of:

- Infant should be placed to sleep on a firm, flat surface.
- Place infant on their back when using this product.
- Do not put objects or accessories in an infant’s sleep environment.

- Do not place this product near a blind, cord, strap or similar item that could become wrapped around an infant’s neck.

For inclined non-sleep products, additional warnings include:

- Do not use this product for infant sleep.
- Do not leave infant in this product unsupervised.

These warnings must be:

- Clearly visible, prominent, and legible.
- Durable and permanently affixed to the product.
- Displayed on the external packaging, visible without opening.

3.6 Mirrors & Magnifying Glasses

Mirrors and magnifying glasses are commonly used in early childhood education for self-discovery, science exploration, and sensory play. However, both present distinct safety hazards. Mirrors and magnifying glasses can reflect or concentrate sunlight, creating fire risks. If broken, they can produce sharp edges that may injure children. Additionally, these items—particularly handheld magnifying glasses—can be misused or become hazardous if not properly selected and supervised. Because of these risks, mirrors and magnifying glasses require special attention in educational environments.

In-scope:

- Freestanding mirrors designed for children’s use (e.g., floor mirrors, wall-mounted play mirrors).
- Products that incorporate mirrors as part of their design (e.g., mirrored activity boards, toys with reflective surfaces).
- Flexible or acrylic mirrors marketed as shatter-resistant but still reflective.
- Any reflective surfaces intended for child interaction that functionally serve as mirrors.
- Magnifying glasses intended for educational use and exploration, including handheld or stand-based models.

Applicable standards

While there is no specific national early childhood standard solely addressing mirrors, the following are relevant:

Voluntary standards

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical and physical properties** – This is relevant when the product is a toy (impact resistance, sharp edges)

Best practice for Educators

- **Supervised use:** Always supervise children when using magnifying glasses or mirrors, especially in outdoor or brightly lit areas.
- **Avoid direct sunlight:** Never place mirrors or magnifying glasses where they can reflect or concentrate sunlight. This includes window sills, floors near windows, or outdoor settings during peak sunlight hours.
- **Use shatter-resistant materials:** Choose items labelled as “shatterproof” or made from durable materials like polycarbonate or acrylic. Confirm safety ratings where available.
- **Secure mounting:** Fix freestanding or wall mirrors securely to prevent tipping. Avoid placing heavy or unstable mirrors at child height unless properly anchored.
- **Regular inspection:** Check all mirrors and magnifying glasses for cracks, scratches, loose components, or clouding. Remove damaged items from use immediately.
- **Storage and access:** Store magnifying glasses and mirrors safely when not in supervised use. Avoid leaving them where children can access them unsupervised. Always store magnifying glasses and mirrors away from direct sunlight.
- **Educate children:** Use age-appropriate language to help children understand that mirrors and magnifying tools are to be used safely and respectfully.



Why is it important?

- **Fire hazard:** Both mirrors and magnifying glasses can focus sunlight to a point, generating enough heat to cause burns or ignite materials. This is especially concerning in sunlit rooms or outdoor play areas.
- **Breakage and injury risk:** Glass or low-quality plastic components can shatter or crack, posing a laceration risk. Even “shatter-resistant” items can degrade over time or with rough use.
- **Misuse by children:** Young children may not understand the risks of directing light into their own or others’ eyes, or the potential dangers of focusing sunlight with magnifying lenses.
- **Falling or tipping:** Unsecured freestanding mirrors can fall and cause injuries. Small magnifying tools can become choking hazards if improperly designed or broken into small parts.

3.7 Overview of Warning Labels

Label	When It’s Required	Why It Matters
“WARNING: To prevent falls, the mattress base should be adjusted to the lowest position before the child can sit up.”	Cots (AS/NZS 2172)	Reduces fall risk once child becomes mobile
“WARNING: Only use the mattress supplied with this cot. Do not add an extra mattress.”	Portable cots (AS/NZS 2195)	Prevents suffocation from ill-fitting or stacked mattresses
“WARNING: Always use the restraint system. Do not leave the child unattended.”	High chairs (AS 4684)	Minimises risk of falls and injury
“WARNING: Children have died from furniture tipover. Always secure it with an anchor device. Never allow children to stand, climb, or hang on drawers, doors or shelves. Never open more than one drawer at the time. Place heavy items down low.”	When supplying tall furniture over 686 mm in height that is covered by the Consumer Goods (Toppling Furniture) Safety Standard 2022	Alerts users to the risk of death or serious injury from tip-overs and ensures anchoring devices are used as intended

3.8 Your role as an educator/buyer

Educators and/or buyers have a duty of care under the National Quality Standard (QA2 and QA3). Even when the product is compliant, the way it’s used and arranged in the room can create risk. To minimise risks, ensure all furniture is:

- Used according to manufacturer instructions
- Set up in a way that prevents entrapment, falls or tipping
- Regularly inspected for signs of wear or instability
- Appropriate to the age, weight and developmental stage of children
- Safely anchored if tall, mobile or accessible for climbing

3.9 Furniture safety checklist

Checkpoint	What to Look For
At Purchase	Does the item comply with AS/NZS standards (cots, high chairs)? Is tip-over anchoring hardware included (if tall)?
Upon Delivery	Are warning labels and assembly instructions present and legible? Is the product labelled with weight/age guidance?
During Assembly	Has furniture been assembled per instructions? Are all parts (restraints, bolts, screws) present and secure?
In the Room	Is tall furniture anchored to a wall or stabilised? Are gaps small enough to prevent entrapment? Are there no climbable items near windows or hazards?
Ongoing Use	Are all screws still tight? No signs of splintering, wobbling, or instability? Are load-bearing items used within weight limits?

4. Art & Craft Materials and Supplies

Art and craft activities are essential in early learning, fostering creativity, fine motor skills and self-expression. However, they must be carefully managed to ensure all materials and tools are safe, age-appropriate, and used under supervision.

This section outlines the standards and safety considerations for art and craft materials used in early childhood education settings. These products are split into:

- General craft supplies
- Hazardous craft chemicals
- Non-hazardous art & craft materials
- Finger paints
- Face paints
- Tools with sharp edges (e.g. scissors, safety knives)

You'll find guidance on:

- Mandatory requirements such as labelling, age grading, and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for hazardous items.
- Voluntary standards including non-toxic claims, dermatological testing, and EN71/ASTM references.
- Best practice for chemical storage, use, and supervision.

This information is intended to help educators choose safe materials and maintain compliant, low-risk art environments.

4.1 General craft supplies

Craft materials are a staple in early learning environments, but they must be chosen with care to ensure they are age-appropriate, non-hazardous, and free from small parts or hazards that could pose a risk to children during creative play.

In-scope

- All general craft supplies used by or accessible to children under 6 years old.

Exclusions

- Materials only handled by educators or used solely in displays

Applicable standards

Currently, there are no mandatory Australian standards specifically regulating general art and craft materials. However, the following voluntary and internationally accepted standards are commonly used by reputable suppliers and expected under industry best practice:

Standard	Region	What It Covers
ASTM D-4236	USA	Labelling of art materials for chronic health hazards (e.g. toxicity, skin absorption). Products must be reviewed by a qualified toxicologist.
EN 71-3	EU	Limits on the migration of heavy metals (e.g. lead, cadmium, chromium) from materials used in toys and crafts. Important for paints, markers, clays.
AS/NZS ISO 8124.3	AU/NZ	Australian adoption of EN 71-3. Applies to toy materials and often extended to craft items marketed for under-14s.

What is assessed?

- Non-toxic status (e.g. CE marking, ASTM D-4236)
- Size and shape of items (choking hazard prevention)
- Absence of sharp edges or splinters
- Ingredient content (e.g. allergen declarations for wheat, gluten, dairy, nuts)

Best practice for educators

- Use chunky materials for younger children (e.g. larger pompoms, oversized beads)
- Store items in sealed containers with clear labelling
- Avoid craft products with latex, unless labelled hypoallergenic
- Monitor children closely during use — some items (e.g. feathers, sequins, googly eyes) may still pose a risk when mouthing

Labelling requirements:

Not specifically regulated under mandatory standards, but should:

- Declare "Non-hazardous" where applicable
- Include supplier contact details
- Be marked with age suitability



4.2 Craft chemicals (including paints, glues, markers and inks)

Art and craft products often contain chemical substances, even if they appear harmless on the surface. These chemicals may be:

- **Hazardous:** Pose risks such as toxicity, skin or eye irritation, flammability, or inhalation danger.
- **Non-hazardous:** Safe to use in normal conditions, not classified as dangerous.

Both types can be found in:

- Paints and dyes
- Glues and adhesives
- Markers, crayons, and inks
- Fixatives and varnishes
- Clay additives and preservatives

Because hazardous and non-hazardous products have different legal requirements, safety obligations and documentation standards, we have separated them in the following sections.



4.3 Hazardous craft chemicals

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemical, or GHS, defines a hazardous chemical as a substance, mixture, or article that is classified under a hazard category. This means it has the potential to cause harm to human health, physical property, or the environment.

Hazardous art materials must be correctly labelled, stored and used in accordance with chemical safety laws and Safe Work procedures.

In-scope:

- Items which pose physical hazards (e.g. flammability or explosiveness), health hazards (e.g. toxicity, skin or eye irritation), and/or environmental hazards (e.g. acute or chronic aquatic toxicity), according to the GHS classifications.
- Includes: solvent-based paints, strong adhesives, spray fixatives, permanent markers, shellac, some glazes and resins

Mandatory requirements:

- Mandatory requirements for hazardous chemicals vary between household hazardous chemicals and chemicals used in the workplace, determined by the intended use of the product. Hazardous craft materials are usually classified as household items (even when used in early childhood settings).
- Labelling requirements include the name and concentration of active ingredients, warning and safety directions, first aid instructions, and storage and disposal instructions.
- A current Safety Data Sheet (SDS) not older than 5 years must be provided and accessible.
- Secure storage in a locked cupboard or chemical cabinet where this is required according to the SDS.

What do you need to do?

- Under Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011, a valid SDS must be available to all staff for all hazardous chemicals. This needs to be easily accessible in case of an incident with the hazardous chemical such as a spill, inhalation, indigestion, fire, etc.
- Early learning services must also maintain a Chemical Register including all hazardous chemicals available on the premises. This includes hazardous art materials as well as any hazardous cleaning products or other hazardous chemicals.
- Ensure hazardous craft materials are stored out of reach of children, and only used under strict supervision. We recommend not using any hazardous materials in early childhood environments.

Why is it important?

- Prevents chemical exposure during art activities
- Reduces risk of burns, poisoning, or allergic reactions
- Ensures appropriate labelling and safe classroom storage
- Unlabelled or misused chemicals can harm children and staff



Never use hazardous goods around/with young children.

Best practice for educators:

- Always follow the directions as provided on the SDS and the product label.
- Use PPE (gloves, masks) as required.
- Ensure good ventilation when using sprays or solvents.
- Use only under **direct adult supervision** and keep children at a safe distance.
- Do not decant hazardous chemicals into smaller containers, always store the chemical in its original container with the correct warning labels and instructions for use.
- Ensure secure storage of hazardous chemicals, away from children's reach, and lockable where required. Always follow the storage instructions on the safety data sheet.



4.4 Non-hazardous craft chemicals

Non-hazardous paints, glues and markers must still be age-appropriate and used safely to avoid ingestion or skin/eye irritation.

In-scope:

Water-based paints, PVA glue, washable markers, finger paints, crayons, watercolours which do not trigger a hazard classification.

Applicable standards

While it is required for the supplier to review the product for any hazard classifications (in order to classify it as a non-hazardous chemical), it is not mandatory to have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) on file for non-hazardous chemicals. It is also not mandatory to include the non-hazardous chemicals in the Chemical Register of your centre.

Best practice for educators:

- Avoid products with strong odours or unknown ingredients.
- Store in original containers and never decant into food-like containers.
- It is not required by law to have SDS's available for non-hazardous goods, however it good practise to have this available to staff.



4.5 Non-Hazardous vs. Non-Toxic: What's the Difference?

These two terms are often used interchangeably — but they are not the same, and understanding the difference is crucial for safe product selection.

Non-Hazardous

- Means the product does not meet the criteria for classification as hazardous under the Globally Harmonised System (GHS).
- No signal word (e.g. "Danger" or "Warning"), no hazard pictograms required.
- Does not require a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) under WHS law — but best practice is to have one available.
- A non-hazardous product can still include toxic chemical components, but only in proportions which are not causing any hazards to the environment, humans or the physical environment when used in accordance with the SDS and the product instructions. Those products can not be classified as non-toxic.

Non-Toxic

- Means the product has been tested and shown to not cause acute or chronic health effects when used as intended or in reasonable quantities.
- Claims must be substantiated by test reports or certifications from accredited laboratories.
- Should only be used by suppliers if supported by evidence — otherwise it may breach the Australian Consumer Law (misleading or deceptive conduct).



Tip

If a product says "non-toxic" but has no test data, SDS, or supplier guarantee — it's safest to question the claim.
Non-toxic doesn't mean safe to eat or use without supervision.

4.6 Finger paints

Finger paints are given a dedicated section due to their direct skin contact, high frequency of use in early learning settings, and the need to meet stricter safety expectations than standard craft paints. These products are often used by infants and toddlers, making both chemical composition and container safety critical to avoid irritation, ingestion, or exposure to harmful substances.

In-scope:

- Paints marketed as finger paints or safe for direct skin contact.
- Packaged in pots, squeeze bottles, tubes or palettes and labelled as suitable for use by children under the age of 14, particularly under the age of 6.
- Products designed to be used with hands, palms, or feet on paper, card, or other surfaces

Exclusions:

- General poster paint or acrylics not intended for skin contact
- Face paint or cosmetics (regulated under TGA/cosmetic law)

Applicable standards

Mandatory standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 - Migration of certain elements** (testing the maximum acceptable levels).

Voluntary standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.7:2021 – Safety of Toys – Part 7: Finger Paints**



Important:

- Discontinue use if the paint has changed colour, odour, or texture – this may indicate contamination or breakdown of preservatives.
- Ensure all finger paints are labelled non-hazardous and suitable for skin contact. Remove immediately if rash or irritation occurs.

What is tested?

- Approved colourants and preservatives: Only certain additives permitted; each with max concentration limits.
- Migration of toxic elements: Paint must not release unsafe levels of heavy metals like lead, cadmium, or mercury.
- Impurities: No harmful primary aromatic amines, N-nitrosamines, or strong odours.
- pH levels: Must be skin-safe and non-irritating (within a neutral range).
- Containers: Must be sealed, resealable, and child safe.

Labelling, including:

- Age suitability
- Instructions for use and hygiene
- Storage and safety warnings

Why is it important?

- Ensures paints are safe for direct skin contact
- Prevents exposure to harmful colourants or preservatives
- Reduces risk of allergic or chemical reactions in young users
- Unverified “non-toxic” claims may put children at risk

Best practice for educators

Only use paints specifically labelled as “finger paint” or suitable for skin contact.

Look for claims such as:

- “Dermatologically tested”.
- “Non-toxic – conforms to AS/NZS ISO 8124.7”.
- “Safe for children under 3”.

Always store paints:

- In original labelled containers.

- Out of direct sunlight and in a cool, dry area.
- Supervise children during use and prevent ingestion.

Do not use:

- Paints with strong odours.
- Unlabelled or expired products.
- Products decanted into food-like containers (to avoid confusion).
- Wash hands after use and avoid use near food or drink areas.

4.7 Face Paints

Face paints require a separate section due to their application on sensitive skin (face and near eyes), potential for allergic reactions, and because they are regulated as cosmetics rather than toys. These products must meet stricter ingredient, labelling, and safety criteria, and are not covered by toy standards like finger paints. Their use in early childhood settings requires care around product sourcing, hygiene, and supervision.

In-scope:

- Products labelled as face paints, body paints, or costume paints used directly on children's faces, necks, or skin.
- Includes cream palettes, stick face paints, crayons, water-activated cakes, and ready-mixed gels.
- Tattoo pens or stamp markers sold as safe for the skin.
- Halloween or performance makeup kits for children.

Exclusions:

- Standard craft paint
- Non-cosmetic grade glitter
- Face paints intended for adults only and labelled as 'not suitable for children'.

Applicable Standards

Mandatory Standards

- Face paints are considered cosmetic products under the **Therapeutic Goods (Excluded Goods) Determination 2018**, and are therefore excluded from the Therapeutic Goods Act but **must comply with**:
 - Industrial Chemicals Act 2019
 - AICIS (Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme)
- Face paints are classified as cosmetics under the Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS). Therefore, they must comply with the **Cosmetics Standard 2007** – Mandatory under **Consumer Goods (Cosmetics) Information Standard 2020**.
- If face paints are marketed or used as toys (e.g. included in toy sets), they may also be captured under **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1** for physical safety and **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3** for chemical migration.



Important:

Face paints must not contain hazardous substances or industrial dyes/pigments not approved for cosmetic use.

What is tested?

Ingredient Safety and Compliance (Cosmetic Regulation)

- Must comply with the Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS) regulations.
- All ingredients must be either:
 - Listed on the AICIS Inventory, or
 - Approved for introduction under a valid AICIS category.
- Certain ingredients are restricted or prohibited (e.g. specific preservatives, colourants, or fragrances).

Heavy Metal Content

- Testing is conducted to ensure lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium, and arsenic are not present above safe levels.
- Assessed under AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 where applicable (especially if marketed as a toy or used in play settings).

Microbiological Testing

- Especially important for water-based or cream-based paints.
- Ensures no harmful bacteria, yeasts, or moulds that could cause skin or eye infections.

Dermal Irritation & Sensitisation (Voluntary Testing)

- Patch testing to ensure product is non-irritating and hypoallergenic, especially for sensitive or child skin. This is voluntary, but often expected by buyers and early childhood settings.

Labelling Requirements

- Product must be labelled correctly in accordance with:
 - AICIS guidelines.
 - Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code (if health claims are made).

Labels must include:

- Full ingredient list.
- Usage instructions.
- Warnings (e.g. "Discontinue use if irritation occurs" or "Not recommended for children under 3").
- Manufacturer/importer name and contact details.



Why is it important?

- Avoids irritation, rashes, or allergic reactions on facial skin.
- Requires cosmetic ingredient compliance and correct labelling.
- Reduces risk of exposure near eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Non-compliant products may cause serious dermatological issues.

Best Practice for Educators

- Use only face paints clearly labelled as safe for children's skin.
- Avoid products without ingredient lists or in foreign-only packaging.
- Use clean applicators for each child (no double-dipping!).
- Patch test for sensitive skin when in doubt.
- Discontinue use if a child shows any sign of redness, rash, or irritation.



Important:

Do not use face paint if it has a strong chemical smell, expired date, or missing ingredient list.

4.8 Tools – Scissors, knives and bladed products

Cutting tools must be safely stored, age-appropriate, and subject to supervision — with restrictions on the use of sharp knives under state legislation.

In-scope:

- Children’s scissors, safety knives, guillotines, adult blades used in craft prep.
- Art tools with pointed or edged components (e.g. embossing tools, carving tools).

What is required / recommended:

Scissors:

- Blunt tips and rounded edges for early years.
- Spring-assisted models for inclusive use.
- Clear labelling of age range and hand dominance.

Knives:

- Child-safe models only (with fixed, shielded blades).
- Plastic-bladed or dull-edged models acceptable under direct supervision.
- Educators must comply with state or service-level knife handling policies.
- In some jurisdictions (e.g. NSW), sharp knives are considered restricted weapons under legislation when not used for domestic or occupational purposes.

Why is it important?

- Supports safe skill-building in fine motor tasks.
- Prevents accidental cuts, pokes, or stabs.
- Age-appropriate design and supervision reduce risk.
- Sharp edges in the wrong setting can result in serious injury.



Storage and use:

- Store in locked cupboards or out-of-reach containers.
- Use only under adult supervision.
- Sharps disposal procedures should be followed if using blades that break (e.g. craft knives, scalpel tools).

Best practice for educators:

- Conduct a **risk assessment** before introducing bladed tools into any activity.
- Document training and supervision for any child using cutting tools.
- Provide age-appropriate alternatives where possible.

4.9 Your role as an educator

As part of your responsibilities under **QA2 (Children’s Health and Safety)** and **Safe Work Australia**, you must:

- Check all art materials before use.
- Only allow access to age-appropriate items.
- Store chemicals and sharp tools securely.
- Keep SDS for all hazardous chemicals on-site and easily accessible.
- Supervise activities and maintain hygiene (e.g. handwashing after use).

Even common craft items (like glitter, markers, glue sticks) can pose risks if used incorrectly or without oversight.

4.10 Art & craft safety checklist

Use this when purchasing, unboxing, or setting up activities.

Checkpoint	What to Look For
At Purchase	Is the product non-toxic (with test evidence), or non-hazardous? Is it suitable for the age group? Has the supplier provided an SDS (if needed)?
Upon Delivery	Are lids secure and seals unbroken? Is there a GHS label or precaution warning (for sprays, solvents, etc.)? If so, follow the directions on the label.
Before Use	Is the item free of strong odour, residue or damage? Have allergens been identified (e.g. latex, gluten)?
During Setup	Are tools (scissors, cutting implements) age-appropriate? Are hazardous materials stored out of reach?
Ongoing Use	Are supplies used in a ventilated space? Are gloves, smocks, or masks used if needed? Is clean-up thorough?





5. Outdoor & playground equipment (including sports equipment)

Outdoor play and sports equipment used in early childhood settings must be structurally sound, age-appropriate, and regularly maintained to prevent injuries from falls, entrapment, or equipment failure. As various outdoor & playground equipment and sport equipment each has their own requirements and regulations, they are discussed in individual sections.

This section outlines the applicable safety standards and compliance guidance for **outdoor play equipment and sports gear** commonly used in early childhood environments. These products can range from fixed climbing structures to portable goals and balance toys.

The section is split by sub-category and covers:

- Playground equipment (fixed)
- Portable outdoor playground equipment
- Wheeled toys and trikes
- Soft fall mats
- Soccer goals
- Basketball systems

For each, we cover **mandatory standards** and **voluntary best practices** that help ensure safer outdoor play. Fall zones, surface impact, stability, and supervision requirements are all discussed.

5.1 Playground equipment (fixed installations)

Fixed playground equipment must be designed and maintained to minimize risks of falls, entrapment, and structural failure, ensuring children's safety during play.

In-scope:

- Permanent or semi-permanent equipment such as climbing frames, slides, swings, monkey bars, and timber/plastic structures used in outdoor play areas.

Exclusions:

- Portable or temporary items (covered under separate guidance).
- Equipment located in public council parks, unless installed or managed by the early childhood service.

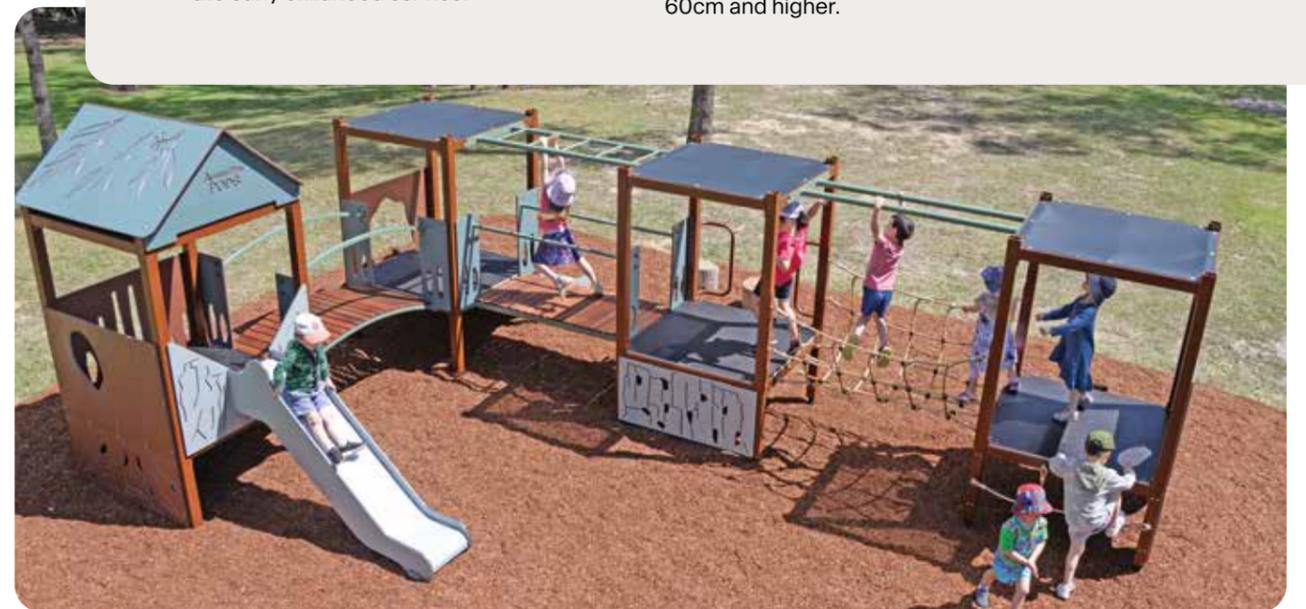
Applicable Standards:

Mandatory: No specific mandatory standard under ACL for fixed playgrounds, but

- National Quality Framework (QA3) requires services to ensure equipment is safe.
- Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws apply for staff and contractors.

Voluntary:

- AS 4685.1 – Playground Equipment and Surfacing (Parts 1–6).
- AS/NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing – Impact attenuation of surface materials (soft fall testing). Soft fall mats are required to comply with this standard when used with structures of 60cm and higher.



What is tested?

- Structural integrity (load-bearing capacity).
- Fall zones and critical fall height (CFH).
- Entrapment hazards (head, neck, limbs).
- Protrusions, sharp edges, surface temperatures.
- Spacing and access points.
- Surface impact attenuation.

Why is it important?

- Minimises injuries from falls, entrapment, or collapse.
- Ensures design meets fall height and safety zone requirements.
- Supports safe climbing and gross motor development.
- Uncertified structures can cause life-threatening injuries.

Best practices guidelines for educators

- Ensure all equipment is professionally installed and certified to AS 4685.
- Perform regular inspections for rust, splinters, loose bolts, or wear.
- Maintain adequate fall zones with compliant surfacing (e.g. soft fall or mulch).
- Supervise children closely, especially at elevated platforms or moving parts.
- Check that climbing structures over 600 mm have compliant impact absorption below – see soft fall mat section.

5.2 Portable outdoor playground equipment

Portable playground items like tunnels, balance beams, climbing domes and foam blocks must be stable, soft-edged, and easily monitored for wear and safe use.

In-scope:

- Non-fixed play equipment such as plastic or metal play frames, gross motor mats, modular balance paths, and freestanding plastic tunnels.

Exclusions:

- Indoor furniture moved outside (not UV-rated or designed for outdoor wear).
- Inflatable items (if used without proper supervision or anchoring).

Applicable Standards:

Mandatory:

- None currently, but fall under general safety provisions of the Australian Consumer Law.

Voluntary:

- Apply AS 4685.1 - Playground Equipment principles for spacing, stability, and entrapment.



What is tested?

- Structural stability
- Slip resistance and edge design
- Fasteners and modular attachment points
- Resistance to tipping or collapse
- Durability under UV exposure and moisture

Why is it important?

- Prevents tipping or structural collapse during play
- Ensures proper use and stability on different surfaces
- Supports flexible learning while maintaining safety
- Inadequate portable equipment poses severe fall risks

Best practices guidelines for educators

- Only use equipment on flat, stable ground with no trip hazards
- Ensure equipment is age-appropriate and used under direct supervision
- Regularly inspect for cracks, instability, or missing components
- Anchor or stabilise where applicable to prevent tipping
- Store securely when not in use to prevent unsupervised access

5.3 Wheeled toys & trikes

Wheeled toys and trikes must be stable, age-appropriate and free from pinch points or tipping risks to ensure safe use by young children.

In-scope:

- Tricycles, scooters, ride-ons, balance bikes and push-cars used in outdoor areas.

Exclusions:

- Motorised toys (covered under electrical section).
- Bicycle helmets or protective gear (regulated separately).

Applicable Standards:

Mandatory:

- Products intended for children under 36 months must comply with **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical safety** (small parts, tip-resistance).
- AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 - Migration of certain elements.



What is tested?

- Stability and tipping resistance.
- Strength of frame, seat and handlebars.
- Handlebar turn limits to prevent jack-knifing.
- Small parts / choking hazards
- Entrapment risk in pedals, wheels, axles.

Why is it important?

- Prevents falls, collisions, and over-speeding incidents.
- Ensures structural integrity and steering control.
- Poor design or lack of supervision can lead to injury.

Best practices guidelines for educators

- Use only on smooth, designated play areas away from stairs or slopes.
- Supervise closely to avoid collisions and speed-related falls.
- Check brakes, tyres, axles, and frames weekly for wear or damage.
- Ensure correct size for age group — feet should touch ground for stability.
- Clean regularly, especially handle grips and seats, to maintain grip and hygiene.

5.4 Soft fall mats

Soft fall mats are addressed separately due to their critical role in reducing injury from falls. When used under climbing equipment over 600 mm in height, their use becomes an essential safety requirement in early learning environments. While no standalone mandatory regulation applies specifically to soft fall mats, the requirement to use compliant impact-absorbing surfacing is effectively mandatory when such equipment is installed.

In-scope:

- Modular or single-piece impact-absorbing mats placed under play equipment.
- Portable indoor/outdoor soft fall surfaces used with climbing, tumbling, or gross motor play, used in fall zones of climbing areas of 60cm and above.
- Mats that claim compliance with AS/NZS 4422 Playground surfacing, or equivalent impact attenuation standards.

Exclusions:

- Decorative rugs or basic foam floor tiles not rated for falls.
- Mats used purely for comfort or insulation.
- Surfacing integrated into fixed playgrounds (covered under AS 4685 Playground Equipment + AS 4422 Playground Surfacing standards as a system).
- Yoga or gym mats not intended for impact absorption.

Applicable Standards:

Mandatory:

While there is no specific mandatory standard applicable to soft fall mats as standalone products under Australian Consumer Law, when used in conjunction with certain climbing equipment, the soft fall mat requires to comply with AS/NZS 4422 whenever it is used in combination with a play structure that has a free height of fall (FHOF) greater than 600 mm.

Voluntary:

- AS/NZS 4422:2016 – Playground surfacing – Specifications, requirements and test methods.
 - Applies to surfaces used in conjunction with climbing equipment and gross motor play.
 - Describes testing for critical fall height and impact attenuation.
- AS 4685 series – Design standards for playground equipment.
 - Requires soft fall surfaces in fall zones of climbing structures ≥ 600 mm.



Why is it important?

- Falls from height are one of the most common causes of injury in early learning settings.
- Even a fall from low equipment can cause concussion or broken bones without proper impact absorption.
- Soft fall mats reduce the severity of injury and are referenced in national safety standards and under QA2 and QA3 of the NQF.
- Poor-quality or poorly maintained mats can create new hazards, including trip and slip risks.



Important:

If a soft fall mat shows signs of compression or hardening, no longer provides effective cushioning, or has tears/exposed foam — **remove from use and replace immediately.**



Important:

Vinyl soft fall mats can get hot in direct sunlight and can cause serious injury. Always test the surface temperature of the mat prior to use.

What is tested?

Playground surfacing standard

- Impact attenuation (Head Injury Criterion – HIC).
 - This simulates a child falling head-first onto the surface. A HIC value above 1000 indicates a high risk of serious head injury.
- Thickness, compression, and rebound characteristics.
- Durability and weather resistance (for outdoor products).
- Slip Resistance and Surface Texture.
- Physical safety, free from sharp inclusions.

Best practices guidelines for educators

- Use mats that are appropriately rated for the height of the equipment they are placed under.
- Ensure mats are large enough to cover the required fall zone (generally 1.5–2 m from equipment edges).
- Position mats securely – avoid shifting, curling edges, or unstable layers.
- Check for deterioration, cracking, compression or loss of bounce.
- Clean mats regularly and ensure surfaces remain free from grit, moisture buildup, or mildew.

5.5 Portable soccer goals

Portable soccer goals must be designed to prevent tipping and include clear safety warnings due to a history of severe injuries and fatalities.

In-scope:

- Freestanding soccer goals used temporarily in outdoor areas, including foldable PVC or metal-frame models weighing 28 kg or more.

Exclusions:

- Inflatable or foam goals with no frame.
- Built-in or permanently anchored goal posts.
- Freestanding soccer goals weighing less than 28kg.

Applicable Standards:

Mandatory:

- Consumer Goods (Portable Soccer Goals) Safety Standard 2018 – enforced under ACL.

Voluntary:

- ASTM F2950 – Design safety for portable goals.
- Industry guidance on anchoring techniques.



What is tested?

- Tip-over resistance under simulated use
- Anchoring system effectiveness.
- Structural strength of goal frame.
- Warning label visibility and permanence.
- No sharp corners or loose components.

Why is it important?

- Prevents tip-over and crushing incidents.
- Requires proper anchoring and adult supervision.
- Must include clear safety instructions and warnings.
- Unanchored goals have caused child fatalities.

Best practices guidelines for educators

- Always anchor goals according to manufacturer instructions — no exceptions.
- Check frame for bent bars, loose joints, or tears in netting before each use.
- Never allow children to climb, swing from, or sit on the goals.
- Store away from play areas when not in use to prevent tipping incidents.
- Reinforce safety rules before each session and assign a staff monitor if needed.

5.6 Your role as an educator

As a duty-of-care provider under the National Quality Framework, educators must:

- Supervise all outdoor play with visibility and positioning in mind
- Set up equipment according to manufacturer guidelines
- Complete and document daily inspections
- Remove or report unsafe items immediately
- Anchor, stabilise, or secure any freestanding equipment
- Match activities and equipment to age and developmental stage.



5.7 Outdoor Equipment Safety Checklist

Checkpoint	What to Look For
At Purchase	Does the item meet AS 4685 or a mandatory safety standard?
On Arrival	Are labels present and legible? Are anchor kits or setup guides included?
During Setup	Has the item been assembled per instructions? Are moving parts secured?
During Use	Are parts clean, unbroken, anchored, and stable?
Ongoing	Weekly logs of maintenance, annual deep checks, rotation of high-wear items

5.8 Best practice for outdoor equipment use

- Maintain routine logs for all installed and portable equipment.
- Include surfacing checks as part of your WHS procedures.
- Conduct termly audits of physical environments using the QA3 framework.
- Prefer low-risk designs for under-3s (e.g. low platforms, enclosed climbers).
- Educate staff and relief educators about anchoring and age grading.



6. Cleaning, Hygiene & First Aid Products

Cleaning and hygiene products used in early childhood settings must be selected, stored, and used in accordance with safety regulations and best practices to ensure the health and safety of children and staff.

In-scope

- **Hazardous Chemicals:** Disinfectants, bleach, ammonia-based cleaners, and other substances classified as hazardous.
- **Non-Hazardous Products:** General-purpose cleaners, soaps, and other products not classified as hazardous.
- **Consumables:** Paper towels, tissues, nappies, gloves, and wipes.

Exclusions:

- Products (such as personal care products) not used within the early childhood setting.

Mandatory Standards and Regulations:

Hazardous Chemicals:

- Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations: Mandate the safe use, storage, and handling of hazardous chemicals in workplaces, including early childhood centers.
- Globally Harmonized System (GHS): Requires proper labeling of hazardous chemicals with standardized hazard statements and pictograms.
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS): Must be maintained and accessible for all hazardous chemicals used on the premises.
- Chemical Register: A register of all hazardous chemicals must be kept and regularly updated.

Non-Hazardous Products:

- While not subject to specific mandatory standards, non-hazardous products should still be used and stored safely to prevent misuse or accidental exposure. It is still recommended to keep an SDS on file.

Consumables

- While consumable products such as paper towels, tissues, nappies and wipes don't fall under any mandatory safety standards, these paper-based products fall under the Australian Illegal Logging Laws and must comply with requirements for Regulated Timber Products.
- PFAS Testing - PFAS (the 'forever chemicals') can be present in cleaning products due to their stain and grease repellent properties. The use, import and sale of products with PFAS is banned from 1 July 2025.

What Is Required?

- **Hazard Classification:** Determination of whether a chemical is hazardous based on its properties.
- **Labelling Compliance:** Ensuring labels meet GHS requirements, including hazard pictograms and precautionary statements.
- **Storage Conditions:** Verification that hazardous chemicals are stored securely and appropriately.
- **Accessibility of SDS:** Confirming that up-to-date SDS are available for all hazardous chemicals.

Why is it important?

- Correct use of hazardous chemicals reduces risk of chemical burns, poisoning, or inhalation.
- Requires safe storage and correct labelling for WHS.
- Must be clearly separated from children's areas to avoid incidents and injuries.
- Misuse or poor storage can result in medical emergencies.
- PFAS in cleaning agents can remain on surfaces children touch and play on.
- Improper disposal leads to PFAS entering waterways and soil.

6.1 Overview of warning labels



Product Type	Label Requirements
Hazardous Chemicals	Must include GHS-compliant labels with hazard pictograms, signal words (e.g., "Danger" or "Warning"), and precautionary statements.
Non-Hazardous Products	Should display clear usage instructions and any relevant safety information.

6.2 Chemical Storage

Hazardous chemicals such as bleach, disinfectants, cleaning sprays, and sanitisers are commonly used in childcare environments. However, improper storage can pose serious health and safety risks to children, staff, and visitors. The following guidance helps educators store chemicals safely and in line with national regulations and best practices.

Best Practice Storage Guidelines

- **Keep chemicals locked away:** Store all hazardous chemicals in a lockable cupboard that is inaccessible to children at all times (not just out of reach).
- **Use dedicated storage areas:** Do not store cleaning chemicals with food, toys, art supplies, or children's personal items.
- **Ensure ventilation:** Store chemicals in a well-ventilated area to prevent fumes from building up.
- **Retain original labels:** Always keep chemicals in their original, labelled containers. Do not decant unless necessary, and if so, ensure the new container is clearly labelled.
- **Keep Safety Data Sheets (SDS):** Maintain up-to-date SDS for every chemical used onsite. Store these in a central folder or digital file accessible to staff.
- **Avoid overstocking:** Only store the amount of chemical you need—avoid bulk storage unless there's a safe, secure place for it.
- **Separate incompatible chemicals:** Follow SDS guidance to store oxidisers, acids, and flammables separately to avoid dangerous reactions.
- **Keep containers sealed:** Always close bottles and lids tightly after each use to prevent spills or accidental exposure.
- **Dispose safely:** Follow your state's hazardous waste guidance to dispose of expired or unused chemicals. Never pour them down the drain or bin them with general waste.

Additional Considerations

- **Daily safety check:** Include chemical storage checks in your daily or weekly safety checklist.
- **Child-safe cleaning times:** Schedule use of strong cleaning agents outside of children's presence (e.g. after hours).
- **Labelled storage zones:** Use signage to clearly mark chemical cupboards: "CLEANING CHEMICALS – AUTHORISED STAFF ONLY".
- **Training:** Ensure all educators know where chemicals are stored and how to handle them safely.



6.3 Food Safety

Ensuring food safety in early learning environments extends beyond hygiene and nutrition. Products such as utensils, food preparation tools, tableware, appliances, and cleaning products that come into contact with food must meet recognised safety standards to avoid contamination and health risks.

This section outlines what's in scope, how products are tested, and what best practice looks like for educators.

In-Scope

- Plates, bowls, cups, cutlery, and lunchboxes.
- Food prep equipment (e.g. chopping boards, mixing bowls, appliances).
- Silicone and plastic moulds used in sensory or food play.
- Food-grade containers and drink bottles.
- Cleaning cloths and sprays used directly on food-contact surfaces.

Excluded

- Packaged food items (regulated separately under food safety laws).
- Furniture (e.g. highchairs are covered under a separate section).
- Non-food-contact toys or materials (unless used during pretend food play, assess on case-by-case basis).

Applicable Standards

Voluntary standards:

- **FDA Food Contact Compliance:** Recognised standard for materials in contact with food (USA Food and Drug Administration).
- **EU Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004:** Common in European-sourced products; ensures materials do not transfer harmful substances to food.
- **AS 2070:1999** (Plastics materials for food contact use): While not mandatory, this Australian Standard is widely accepted as best practice.

Note: Australia does not currently have a mandatory consumer standard for food-contact products like plates or lunchboxes, but the Food Standards Code (FSANZ) requires that food contact materials do not pose a safety risk.



Tip

When using hand sanitisers, choose hand sanitisers which contain at least 80% alcohol, as this concentration is proven to be more effective at killing germs and reducing the spread of infectious diseases in early childhood settings.



What Is Tested?

In FDA/food-contact compliance testing, products are assessed for:

- Migration of substances: Ensures harmful chemicals do not leach into food under heat, pressure, or over time.
- BPA/BPS and phthalate content: Common in plastics and restricted due to known health effects.
- Heavy metals (e.g. lead, cadmium): Often tested in coatings, glazes, or prints.
- Heat and dishwasher resistance: Ensures materials do not degrade with normal use.
- Surface porosity: Prevents bacterial build-up and cross-contamination.

Best Practice for Educators

- Only use products labelled "food safe", "BPA free", or with known FDA / AS2070 compliance.
- Separate food-contact and play materials — e.g. don't repurpose sandpit buckets as serving bowls.
- Avoid using damaged, scratched, or cloudy plastic items, which can harbour bacteria or degrade.
- Regularly clean with food-safe cleaning agents; avoid sprays containing harsh chemicals or fragrances on surfaces used for food.
- Store all food utensils and prep items in clean, dry, and enclosed areas away from play materials or art supplies.
- Use colour-coded cloths for cleaning food areas vs. bathrooms or craft.

Why is it important?

- Young children have developing immune systems, making them more vulnerable to foodborne illness or chemical exposure.
- Improper or non-compliant food-contact materials can cause chemical leaching, especially when heated.
- Damaged or low-quality materials can lead to bacterial growth or contamination.
- Using non-food-safe cleaning products on food surfaces can result in toxic residue ingestion.
- Good food safety practices reduce the risk of cross-contamination between play and food-prep areas — a common issue in early learning environments.
- Following recognised food-contact standards shows due diligence and supports compliance with Quality Area 2 (Children's Health and Safety) of the National Quality Framework.



6.4 First Aid Readiness

Accidents can happen quickly, from minor cuts to allergic reactions, and a prompt, well-informed first aid response is critical in keeping children safe. This section outlines essential first aid practices aligned with the National Quality Standard (QA2), Safe Work Australia, and best practice guidelines for early childhood education and care.

First Aid Requirements for Early Learning Environments

- First aid qualifications: At least one educator with current approved first aid, anaphylaxis, and asthma training must be present at all times and on excursions
- First aid kits:
 - Must be readily accessible, clearly labelled, and appropriate for the number and ages of children.
 - Kits should contain child-appropriate items (e.g. hypoallergenic plasters, saline eye wash, small bandages).
- A portable kit should be used on playgrounds, excursions, and transport vehicles.
- Emergency medication: Clearly labelled, in-date EpiPens, asthma puffers, or other emergency medication must be easily accessible (not locked) and stored according to medical management plans.
- First aid signage: Clear signage indicating the location of first aid kits and emergency contact numbers should be displayed in key areas.



Maintenance and Documentation

- Kit checks: Conduct monthly inspections of first aid kits to check expiry dates and restock as needed.
- Incident records: All incidents requiring first aid must be recorded using your centre's incident/accident forms and communicated to families on the same day.
- Training currency: Ensure staff renew first aid qualifications every 3 years (CPR every 12 months) in accordance with approved training providers.

Why is it important?

- Delayed emergency response can worsen outcomes in allergic reactions, choking, or injuries.
- Incorrect treatment may cause harm or mask symptoms.
- Lack of documentation can lead to legal and regulatory non-compliance.



Important!

Please ensure that all product incidents involving a product are reported to the supplier you purchased the product from. They have a mandatory obligation to report the incident to the ACCC within 48 hours.

6.5 Your role as an educator

- Safe Storage: Ensure all hazardous chemicals are stored in locked cabinets or areas inaccessible to children.
- Proper Labelling: Verify that all chemical containers are clearly labelled and not transferred to inappropriate containers (e.g., food or drink containers).
- SDS Maintenance: Keep an up-to-date file of Safety Data Sheets for all hazardous chemicals used in the facility and maintain a Chemical Register.
- Training: Participate in regular training on the safe handling and storage of hazardous chemicals.
- Emergency Preparedness: Be familiar with emergency procedures in case of chemical spills or exposure, including the location of first aid kits and emergency contact numbers.

6.6 Safety Checklist

Procurement	Storage	Usage	Disposal
Choose the least hazardous products necessary for effective cleaning.	Store hazardous chemicals in locked, labelled cabinets away from food and children's areas.	Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution and application.	Dispose of chemicals according to local regulations and guidelines provided in the SDS.
Ensure suppliers provide SDS for all hazardous chemicals.	Keep chemicals in their original containers with intact labels.	Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling hazardous chemicals.	Do not pour hazardous chemicals down the drain unless specified.

6.7 Best practices

- Risk Assessment: Conduct regular risk assessments to identify and mitigate potential hazards associated with chemical use.
- Minimise Use: Use the minimum amount of hazardous chemicals necessary and opt for non-hazardous alternatives when possible.
- Ventilation: Ensure adequate ventilation when using chemicals to prevent the buildup of fumes.
- Child Exclusion: Keep children away from areas where chemicals are being used until it is safe.
- Regular Training: Provide ongoing training for staff on chemical safety and emergency procedures.



7. Electrical Products

Electrical compliance is complex, and there are many different requirements, standards and regulators involved, depending on the type of electrical product, the number of electrical components involved, and the classified risk level.

This section outlines the applicable standards for electrical products commonly used in early childhood settings. These are categorised based on how the product is powered — battery, adaptor, or direct 240V mains connection — and the associated risk level under the Electrical Equipment Safety System (EESS).

Please note; the information in this section is general information only. Electrical compliance is complex, and specific standards may apply to more complex or specialised products which is not covered in this section.

We will cover the following areas of compliance:

- **Electrical Safety** – as regulated by EESS and state electrical authorities.
- **Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC)** – regulated by ACMA.
- **Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS)** – regulated by the GEMS Regulator.
- **Regulatory Compliance Mark (RCM)** – when and where this mark is required.

This section clearly outlines which standards apply to each product type, with examples specific to early learning environments.

7.1 Electrical Safety

Electrical safety standards ensure that electrical equipment is designed and manufactured in a way that protects users from hazards such as electric shock, fire, overheating, and mechanical injury. This includes construction, insulation, ingress protection, and component integrity.



Applicable Standards (but not limited to):

- AS/NZS 60335 series – Safety of household and similar electrical appliances
- AS/NZS 62368.1 – Audio/video, IT, and communication technology equipment
- AS/NZS 60950.1 – Legacy IT safety standard (now mostly replaced)

Who regulates it?

- EESS (Electrical Equipment Safety System), managed by state electrical regulators (via ERAC)
- Applies only to mains-powered products (e.g. 240V, or plug-in power supplies)

Why is it important?

- Prevents injuries and fatalities caused by electrocution or overheating.
- Especially critical in childcare where products may be handled by children or used near water or soft furnishings.
- Ensures compliance with state and national WHS laws and duty-of-care obligations under the NQF.

7.2 EMC – Electromagnetic Compatibility

EMC testing ensures that electrical products do not emit excessive electromagnetic interference (EMI) and are also resistant to EMI from other devices. It prevents disruption to or from other electronic equipment.

Applicable standards:

- AS/NZS CISPR 14.1 – EMC for household appliances and similar devices
- AS/NZS CISPR 15 – EMC for lighting and related equipment
- AS/NZS 61000 series – Electromagnetic immunity and disturbance levels

Who regulates it?

- ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority)
- All suppliers must comply with the Radiocommunications Labelling Notice 2017

Why is it important?

- Prevents malfunction or signal interference between products (e.g. hearing aids, radios, wireless toys)
- Reduces disruption to safety-critical systems (e.g. emergency alarms, medical equipment)
- Ensures smooth operation in settings with multiple devices in close proximity

7.3 MEPS – Minimum Energy Performance Standards

MEPS ensures that certain electrical products consume energy efficiently by limiting their minimum allowable performance. Products must meet baseline efficiency levels before they can be sold in Australia.

Applicable standards

- AS/NZS 4665.1 & .2 – External power supplies
- GEMS Determinations – Specific rules for regulated products like lighting, fridges, computers, etc.

Who regulates it?

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
- Enforced under the GEMS Act 2012
- Registration required through the GEMS Regulator

Why is it important?

- Reduces electricity usage and operating costs.
- Supports Australia's national carbon reduction and energy efficiency goals.
- Helps procurement teams in early childhood centres make sustainable, future-ready purchases.



7.4 RCM – Regulatory Compliance Mark

The RCM is not a test — it is a marking that signifies a product complies with EMC, electrical safety, and MEPS (where applicable). It acts as a one-stop evidence mark of compliance with all mandatory Australian electrical regulations.

Who regulates it?

Jointly governed by:

- **ACMA** (EMC / wireless compliance)
- **State electrical regulators / ERAC** (safety)
- **GEMS Regulator** (MEPS / energy)



Why is it important?

- Legally required for most plug-in or adaptor-powered electrical equipment sold in Australia
- Allows suppliers to demonstrate consolidated compliance
- Assures early childhood services that a product has been assessed against all key electrical requirements

7.5 Electrical product types

Below is a clearly structured grouping of electrical product sub-categories commonly found in early childhood settings. This framework is designed to help educators, centre managers, and procurement teams identify what type of product they are dealing with, and understand which compliance obligations (EMC, Electrical Safety, MEPS, RCM) may apply.

Battery-operated devices

Devices powered solely by replaceable or rechargeable batteries, with no connection to mains power.

Examples in early childhood:

- Battery-operated toys (musical instruments, remote-controlled animals)
- Light-up books
- Handheld torches
- Sensory items (vibration cushions, portable fans with batteries)
- Night lights (non-mains)

Products powered by an external adaptor (dc plug pack / charger)

Devices powered via a low-voltage external adaptor that plugs into mains power — often called adaptors or AC/DC converters.

Examples in early childhood:

- Light tables
- Sensory bubble tubes
- White noise machines
- Audio equipment (e.g. small Bluetooth speakers)
- Projectors or LED panels
- Tablet charging cradles (if the adaptor is external)



Direct plug-in products – level 1 (low risk)

Appliances that plug directly into 240V mains and are classified as low risk under EESS; suppliers must self-declare safety compliance.

Examples in early childhood:

- Small desktop fans
- UV steriliser cabinets
- Low-wattage table lamps
- Basic humidifiers

Direct plug-in products – level 2 (medium risk)

Appliances considered medium risk under EESS and must be registered on the EESS database by a Responsible Supplier.

Examples in early childhood:

- Microwaves used in breakrooms
- Toaster ovens (e.g. for baking activities)
- Bottle warmers (plug-in type)
- Benchtop cooking appliances used under supervision

Direct plug-in products – level 3 (declared articles / high risk)

High-risk products declared under EESS, which require mandatory third-party safety certification and registration.

Examples in early childhood:

- Power supply units (adaptors sold separately)
- Electric heaters
- Dishwashers
- Fixed electronic control panels (e.g. programmable room lighting systems)
- Electric hot water units

Wireless-enabled products (any category with radio communication)

Any product using Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, or other wireless connectivity must comply with EMC and radiocommunications labelling under ACMA rules.

Examples in early childhood:

- Bluetooth speakers
- Wireless-enabled tablets
- Remote monitoring devices (e.g. temperature, sleep tracking sensors)
- Wi-Fi baby monitors
- Smart lighting hubs
- Early years robotics with bluetooth features

Note:

Wireless capability can apply across battery, adaptor, or 240V products. RCM labelling becomes mandatory in these cases, even if the base product type is otherwise exempt.

Products with lithium or button batteries

Any device — battery-powered or otherwise — that contains a button or coin battery must comply with specific safety and labelling laws.

Examples in early childhood:

- Sound books with batteries
- Remote controls
- LED night lights
- Thermometers
- Musical toys



These products must meet the **Consumer Goods (Products Containing Button/Coin Batteries) Safety Standard 2020**.



PFAS in Electrical Products

PFAS chemicals are sometimes used in electrical products for their heat-resistant, non-stick, and water-repellent properties (e.g. wiring insulation, coatings on circuit boards, or waterproof seals). The use, import or sale of PFAS in products is banned from 1 July 2025. The absence of PFAS in electrical products is confirmed with our suppliers.

7.6 Electrical compliance matrix for childcare products

Sub-Category	Electrical Safety (EESS)	EMC	MEPS	RCM Marking	Notes / Conditions
Battery-Powered Products	✗ Not covered by EESS	✓ Required (if emitting EMI)	✗ Not applicable	✗ Not required unless wireless	Toy safety laws still apply (e.g. AS/NZS ISO 8124.1). RCM required if wireless function present.
Adaptor-Powered Products	✓ For the adaptor only (Level 3 if sold separately)	✓ Required	✓ May apply to the adaptor (e.g. chargers)	✓ Required for the device & adaptor	The end device may be exempt from MEPS, but the power supply is usually in scope.
Direct Plug-In – Level 1 (Low Risk)	✓ Supplier self-declaration (no certification required)	✓ Required	✓ If regulated product (e.g. lighting)	✓ Required	Responsible Supplier must be registered on EESS portal.
Direct Plug-In – Level 2 (Medium Risk)	✓ EESS registration required (no cert, but must be listed)	✓ Required	✓ If applicable	✓ Required	EESS database registration by Responsible Supplier mandatory.
Direct Plug-In – Level 3 (Declared Article)	✓ Mandatory third-party safety certification & EESS registration	✓ Required	✓ If applicable	✓ Required	Must be tested by a recognised certifier and listed on EESS. Applies to products like power supplies, heaters, etc.
Wireless-Enabled Products (any type)	Depends on base type (battery/adaptor/plug-in)	✓ Always required	✗ Unless base product is in MEPS scope	✓ Always required	Any wireless transmission (Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, etc.) triggers RCM labelling obligation under ACMA Labelling Notice.
Products with Button or Coin Batteries	✗ Not covered by EESS.	✓ If EMI-emitting	✗ Not applicable	✓ If wireless	Must comply with Consumer Goods (Products Containing Button/Coin Batteries) Safety Standard 2020: secure battery compartments, child safety tests, warnings, and documentation.

7.7 Best practice guidance for educators

- Only use electrical products with a valid RCM mark and AU plug with insulated pins.
- Keep all cords out of reach and secure any loose cabling with guards.
- Do not use near water sources unless specifically IP-rated for such use.
- Unplug devices when not in use, especially at the end of the day.
- Perform regular checks for damage to cords, plugs, casings, and switches.
- Store batteries in a locked container; never allow children to change them.

7.8 Labelling reference matrix for electrical products

Sub-Category	Required Labelling	Mandatory?	Notes / Details
Battery-Powered Products	Age grading (e.g. “Not suitable under 36 months”)	✓ (if applicable)	Required under AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 (toy safety)
	Battery warning (e.g. “Do not mix vold and new batteries”)	✓	Applies to all replaceable battery products
	Button battery hazard warning (if applicable)	✓	Required under Consumer Goods (Button Batteries) Safety Standard 2020
	Manufacturer/importer name & contact	✓	Required under ACL
	RCM mark	✗ (unless wireless)	Mandatory only if device includes Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, or other RF
Adaptor-Powered Products	Input/output voltage & current	✓	Usually printed on the adaptor + device
	Safety and use instructions	✓	For safe operation and adult supervision
	RCM mark (on adaptor and device)	✓	Required if connected to mains
	MEPS label (if external power supply)	✓ (if regulated)	Must comply with AS/NZS 4665 for EPS
Direct Plug-In – Level 1	RCM mark	✓	Signifies EMC + safety compliance
	Voltage/frequency rating	✓	Must indicate 230–240V / 50Hz
	Manufacturer/importer details	✓	Required under ACL
Direct Plug-In – Level 2	RCM mark	✓	Also must be listed on the EESS database
	EESS supplier registration	✓ (not on label, but must be verifiable)	Ask for EESS listing or Responsible Supplier ID
Direct Plug-In – Level 3	RCM mark	✓	Required and must be certified before sale
	Certification reference number (e.g. SAA, TÜV, SGS)	✓	Must match the registered article on EESS database
Wireless-Enabled Products	RCM mark	✓	Required under ACMA Labelling Notice 2017
	RF warning (e.g. for Bluetooth/Wi-Fi frequency)	⚠ Recommended	Included in instruction manuals or rating label
Products with Button/Coin Batteries	Button battery warnings on: product, packaging, instructions	✓	Strictly enforced under mandatory standard since 2022
	Battery compartment security label (if applicable)	✓	Must indicate tool access or child-proof features

8. Educational tools & learning aids

Educational tools and learning aids used in early childhood centres must be safe, age-appropriate, and suited to the developmental stages of the children using them. Although many of these tools do not fall under specific mandatory standards, they still present safety risks (e.g. choking hazards, magnets, batteries).

This section is divided into key sub-categories:

- Non-electronic manipulatives (e.g. flipbooks, flashcards, sorting sets).
- Magnetic learning aids (e.g. magnetic letters and numbers).
- Electronic tools and sound-enabled resources.

We outline mandatory requirements (e.g. for toys used by children under 36 months) and voluntary safety expectations. We also provide practical guidance for safe setup, supervision, and maintenance in classroom environments.

In-scope:

This category includes (but is not limited to):

- Manipulatives (e.g. counting blocks).
- Learning cards and flipbooks.
- Magnetic letters and numbers.
- Science exploration kits.
- Electronic learning aids (e.g. talking pens, sound tiles).
- Classroom tools (e.g. magnifying glasses, mirrors, timers).

Exclusions:

- Purely decorative items with no child-facing use.
- Non-educational toys (these items are covered under toy safety – Section 3.1).



8.1 Non-electronic educational tools

This section includes products such as maths or literacy manipulatives, flashcards, sorting trays, pattern blocks.

Applicable standards:

Mandatory Standard

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – The mechanical and physical properties** of the product need to be tested if the product is intended for use by children under 36 months. Not required for educational tools intended for children over the age of 3 years.
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of certain elements** (if the product is painted or coated).

Voluntary:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – The mechanical and physical.** Voluntary for products suitable for children aged 3 and up but can demonstrate that the product exceeds mandatory requirements.



What is tested?

The mechanical and physical properties

- Small parts – Checks for choking hazards (particularly for under-36-months).
- Sharp edges and points – Must not pose laceration or puncture risk.
- Compression and tension strength – Ensures components don't break off easily.
- Tear and shear strength – Applies to seams, joints, and soft parts
- Stability – Prevents tipping in ride-on or wheeled toys.
- Hinges, springs, and moving parts – Must not trap fingers or skin.
- Cords and strings – Assessed for length and strangulation risk.
- Accessibility of mechanisms – Batteries, projectiles, and small parts must be secured.
- Drop and impact testing – Toys must withstand rough handling.
- Swallowing hazard assessments – Includes removable parts and accessible components.

Migration of certain elements

- Migration (leaching) of heavy metals and toxic elements from:
 - Coatings (e.g. paint, varnish).
 - Plastics and polymers.
 - Inks, textiles, leather, wood.
- Elements tested include lead, cadmium, arsenic, barium, chromium (III & VI), mercury, selenium and antimony.

Labelling requirements:

- Age grading needs to be clearly visible on the packaging.
- Choking hazard warnings (if applicable), this shows if the product includes any small parts that should be kept out of reach.



8.2 Magnetic learning aids

Magnetic learning aids are given a separate section due to the serious health risks posed by high-powered or accessible magnets, which can cause life-threatening injuries if swallowed – especially in young children. Examples are magnetic tiles and magnetic letter/number boards.

Applicable standards:

Mandatory Standard AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical and Physical Properties

Applies to toys and learning aids with magnets, especially those intended for children under 36 months.

AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of Certain Elements

Applies where the products are coated, painted, or dyed, to limit heavy metal exposure (e.g. lead, cadmium).



What is tested?

- Magnetic flux index (strength): Must not exceed hazardous limits set by AS/NZS ISO 8124.1.
- Accessibility of magnets: Assesses whether magnets are small enough to be swallowed and can detach under stress.
- Durability and casing: Ensures magnets cannot break loose during regular use or cleaning.
- Toxicity of coatings and surfaces: Migration of lead, cadmium, and other heavy metals from paint or coatings.

Why is it important?

- Swallowed magnets can attract across intestinal walls, causing perforations, blockages, infection, or even death.
- Young children often explore with their mouths, and small magnets may not be immediately missed if detached.
- Serious injuries from magnetic ingestion have occurred globally, prompting bans or recalls of unsafe toys.
- Compliance with strength and accessibility limits reduces this risk, especially in early learning environments.
- Educators have a duty of care under the National Quality Framework (QA2 – Children’s Health and Safety).

Best practice for educators:

- Inspect magnet sets frequently for cracks, loose parts, or worn adhesives.
- Remove any product immediately if a magnet is missing, loose, or damaged.
- Do not use small or loose magnets with children under 3, regardless of labelling.
- Store magnetic sets out of reach when not in use.
- Always supervise group activities involving magnetic construction or sorting.



Labelling requirements for magnetic products:

Label	When is it required?	Why is it important?
“Not suitable for children under 36 months – contains small parts”	If any magnet or detachable part is a choking hazard.	Prevents use in infant rooms or toddler spaces.
“Warning: Contains magnets. Swallowed magnets can stick together across intestines and cause serious injury or death.”	If magnets are accessible or could become loose. Required where multiple magnets are present and ingestion risk exists.	Awareness of the presence of (loose) magnets in products increases the frequency of product checks in the service and helps prevent incidents.



Important!

If any magnet detaches, or a set arrives without age labelling or visible warnings – **remove from classroom use immediately** and report the product.



8.3 Electronic learning aids (battery operated only)

Electronic learning aids are treated as a separate category due to the combined risks of battery-related hazards, small detachable parts, and electrical safety concerns, especially in younger age groups. These products are popular in early learning for their interactive features but must be carefully selected and monitored for secure battery access, safe operation, and compliance with applicable toy and electrical standards.

Please note: a full overview of electronic products and devices can be found in section 3.6.

In scope:

- Talking pens and electronic flashcards.
- Sound-enabled books and touch panels.
- Battery-powered educational tablets (child-specific, not commercial tablets).
- Interactive learning mats and activity boards with lights, sounds, or vibration.
- Any learning tool designed for child use that requires batteries.

Exclusions:

- Products powered by wall adaptors or USB (covered under adaptor/electrical sections).
- Standard tablets, laptops or iPads used under supervision (regulated under general electrical product standards).
- Toys with no educational intent or classification.

Applicable standards:

Mandatory standards:

- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.1 – Mechanical and Physical Properties.** Ensures battery covers cannot be opened without tools and that moving parts are safe
- **Consumer Goods (Products Containing Button/Coin Batteries) Safety and Information Standard 2020.** Applies where lithium or button cell batteries are used in the product.
- **AS/NZS ISO 8124.3 – Migration of Certain Elements.** Applies to coatings and materials in contact with children.
- **ACMA EMC requirements** – For electrical products to ensure there is no interference with other devices using the radio frequency spectrum. See section 3.6 for more in-depth information.

Voluntary standards (commonly used):

- **AS/NZS 61558 or AS/NZS 60335.1 – General electrical safety** (for more complex items).
- **AS/NZS 62115 – Electronic Toy Safety.** When the product is not classified as a toy, this standard can still be used to demonstrate electrical compliance.



Warning:

Ensure that products which includes button batteries have a secure battery compartment and labelling. Stop use if accessible without a tool.

What is tested?

- Secure battery compartments – must require a tool to open.
- Size and retention of battery covers and fasteners.
- Small parts testing – to prevent choking hazard.
- Migration of toxic elements – especially from coatings or contact surfaces.
- Volume limits (for sound toys) – must not exceed safe thresholds (per ISO 8124.1, if applicable).

Why is it important?

- Button batteries can cause fatal internal burns within 2 hours if swallowed.
- Battery-operated toys are often viewed as safe but pose hidden hazards if poorly designed or maintained.
- Many products marketed online do not meet Australian safety standards, especially around battery access.
- Educators have a duty under WHS and the National Quality Framework to ensure products are secure and developmentally appropriate.

Labelling requirements for electrical products:

Label	When is it required?	Why is it important?
“WARNING: Contains button battery – keep out of reach of children”	On any product using button/coin cell batteries	Having warning labels ensure a higher awareness of the inclusions of button/coin batteries and the associated risks.
Age grading (e.g. ‘Not suitable for under 36 months’)	If small parts or internal components are accessible	Helps prevent inappropriate use
Battery safety instructions	All battery-operated products	Ensures safe handling and replacement
Supplier contact information	On packaging	Mandatory under ACL for traceability

Best practice for educators:

- Only use products with secure battery covers (preferably screw-fastened).
- Avoid items where batteries are accessible without a tool.
- Discontinue use if battery cover is cracked, missing, or insecure.
- Do not allow children to handle or replace batteries themselves.
- Check batteries regularly for leakage or overheating.
- Choose low-volume or adjustable sound settings to protect hearing.
- Store spare batteries out of children’s reach.



Important!

If a battery compartment opens easily, or a button battery is missing, loose, or found on the floor — **STOP use immediately and remove the product from the environment.**



What to look for when purchasing & receiving products

Pre-purchase considerations

Before adding new equipment or learning resources to your centre, ensure they are:

- Age-appropriate – Check that the product is suited to the age group in the room and carries the correct age grading (e.g. “not suitable under 36 months”).
- Separated by developmental stages – Avoid cross-use of items (e.g. trikes, furniture, puzzles) between toddler and preschool rooms unless safe and suitable for all ages.
- Appropriate for group size and supervision levels – e.g. no small loose parts in under-3s environments.
- Low-risk for allergens – Consider materials and ingredients, especially for:
 - Art and craft (e.g. paints, clays, glues, doughs).
 - Face and body products.
 - Sensory play (e.g. foam, slime, fillers).
- Safe for intended environment – E.g. outdoor equipment should be UV-stable and anchored; electrical items should suit the room’s power setup and ventilation.

On-delivery checks

When a new product arrives:

- Store the instruction manual in a clearly labelled and accessible place (physically and/or digitally).
- Check the product’s labelling and packaging for:
 - Age suitability.
 - Any warnings or installation instructions.
- The name of the supplier or manufacturer (you may need this later).
- Before discarding packaging, ask:
 - “Do we need any of this for safety or tracking?” e.g. batch codes, barcode stickers, technical diagrams.

Tip

Best practice:

Take a quick photo of the product label and/or box and save it to a “Product Packaging” folder on your shared drive. This can help trace issues later or support warranty claims.



Ongoing safety: maintenance & monitoring

The following maintenance and monitoring can assist you in keeping your centre safe, identify defect toys or equipment early, and remove any hazards from the learning environments.

Establish regular inspection intervals:

- Daily for high-risk or high-use areas (e.g. cots, art tools, sports gear).
- Weekly for general classroom or shared resources.
- Termly for in-depth audits or annual compliance reviews.

Define what to check:

- Simple visual checks: are parts intact, labels still attached, surfaces clean?
- Detailed reviews: measure wear and tear, test stability, confirm battery compartments are secure.

Keep records:

- Maintain incident logs and action taken.
- Record product replacements, repairs, or removals.
- Document when a product was last inspected.
- Establish regular inspection intervals:
 - Daily for high-risk or high-use areas (e.g. cots, art tools, sports gear).
 - Weekly for general classroom or shared resources.
 - Termly for in-depth audits or annual compliance reviews.



End-of-life product disposal

Although all our products are designed for long-lasting use, it is important to know when a product has reached its end-of-life and should be disposed of for safety reasons.

When to retire a product

Dispose of a product if:

- If it's damaged, cracked, or incomplete
- If it's missing a battery cover, restraint, or safety feature
- If it fails to meet current safety standards
- If it has been involved in an incident or near miss
- It is subject to a recall

Disposal methods by material type

General waste (landfill)

- What goes here: Broken plastic toys without electronic components, non-recyclable packaging, and items contaminated with food or hazardous substances.
- Note: Always check with your local council for specific guidelines, as some items may be recyclable in certain areas.

Recycling

- What goes here: Paper, cardboard, certain plastics (check recycling symbols), glass bottles, and metal cans.
- Note: Ensure items are clean and free from food residue. Refer to the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) for guidance.

E-Waste

- What goes here: Electronic devices such as computers, tablets, mobile phones, and battery-operated toys.
- Note: Many states have banned e-waste from landfills. Utilize designated e-waste recycling facilities.

Hazardous waste

- What goes here: Batteries, chemicals, paints, and fluorescent lights.
- Note: These items require special disposal methods to prevent environmental harm. Contact your local council for drop-off locations.

Environmental & safety considerations

Proper disposal is crucial to prevent environmental harm and ensure safety. Consider the following:

- Ensure that broken parts or sharp edges are wrapped sufficiently prior to disposal to avoid injuries.
- Separate recyclables where possible to facilitate recycling processes.
- Dispose of batteries, electronics, and chemicals according to local guidelines to prevent environmental contamination.

State-by-state end-of-life product disposal guide

This guide outlines appropriate disposal methods for various waste types commonly generated in childcare settings, such as e-waste, hazardous materials, and general recyclables. It is crucial for centres to adhere to these guidelines to ensure environmental responsibility and compliance with local regulations.

State/Territory	E-Waste Disposal	Hazardous Waste (e.g. batteries, chemicals)	General Recycling Guidance
NSW	EPA NSW E-Waste – contact your local council for information about collection and recycling services.	EPA NSW Hazardous and liquid wastes – information and guidance, check your local council for collection and recycling services.	EPA Recycling & Reuse – general information about recycling options in NSW.
VIC	EPA VIC E-Waste – contact your local council for information about collection and recycling services.	Sustainability Victoria – Hazardous household chemicals – information about managing and disposing of chemicals.	EPA VIC – Alternatives to landfill – information on how to redirect waste from landfill.
QLD	QLD E-Waste Recycling – find links for each specific type of e-waste on this website.	Brisbane Hazardous Waste Disposal – information and links to disposal options.	QLD Government Circular Economy and Waste Reduction – Learn how circular economy can make Queensland a zero-waste society.
SA	Which Bin SA – Electronic Waste – links to programs such as Unplug n' Drop, Mobile Muster, or contact your local council for drop-off points.	SA Household Chemicals and Paint Disposal – information and links to disposal options.	Which Bin SA – guidance for recycling per suburb, including useful recycling tips.
WA	WA Waste Authority – E-Waste – contact your local council for information about collection and recycling services.	WA Waste Authority – Hazardous Waste – find permanent facilities where chemicals can be dropped off, including a list of accepted items.	WA WasteSorted Schools – Support for schools in waste avoidance and resource recovery.
TAS	ReThink Waste Tasmania – E-Waste – links to Repair Cafes, or contact your local council for information about collection and recycling services.	EPA Tasmania – Controlled Waste – includes links and contact information for controlled/hazardous waste.	ReThink Waste Tasmania – Recycling options beyond the kerbside bin.
ACT	ACT Gov Recyclopeda – E-Waste – options and links for reuse or disposal of e-waste.	ACT Gov – Hazardous Waste – information about disposal option for hazardous waste	ACT Gov Recyclopeda – A guide for waste sorting and recycling.
NT	NT E-Waste Brochure – find links to nearest disposal locations and how to recycle your e-waste.	City of Darwin – Toxic & Hazardous Waste – information about disposal of hazardous waste.	NT EPA – Recycling and Reuse – Information about the circular economy

Tip

- Many local councils have specific drop-off events or depots for batteries, paint, or e-waste – always check your local council website.
- Most states now ban e-waste from landfill, and household chemicals must never go into general bins.
- The Recycle Mate App is a helpful tool for real-time guidance based on location and product type: <https://recyclemate.com.au>



What to do if something goes wrong?

Acting quickly and in a structured way in case of a safety concern or an incident involving a product helps prevent further harm, protects the wellbeing of children and educators, and ensures compliance with duty-of-care and reporting obligations. Timely action also supports clear documentation, faster resolution, and continuous improvement in safety practices.

Responding to a Safety Concern

- Stop use immediately of the affected product
- Remove from the play environment
- Record the issue with date, time, and description (photos if helpful)

Internal Reporting & Escalation

- Notify your centre manager or WHS officer
- Follow your centre's incident escalation policy
- Use your compliance log or Modern Star's reporting form (if applicable)

Recall Awareness

- Regularly check:
 - Product Safety Australia recalls
 - Manufacturer and supplier websites
- If you have been made aware of a recall notice by any of your suppliers, quickly act upon this notice and follow their guidance and instructions.

Contacting Suppliers or Regulators

- Contact your supplier to report safety issues or request evidence of compliance



Important!

If a product incident occurred where a person (a child, student and/or educator) required medical attention from a qualified practitioner, it is required by law to notify your supplier of the incident as soon as possible. Your supplier is mandatory required to notify the ACCC of the incident within 48 hours.

Glossary

Term	Definition
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission – oversees national consumer protection and product safety.
AS/NZS ISO 8124	A series of Australian/New Zealand toy safety standards including mechanical, chemical, and physical safety.
Button/Coin Battery	Flat, disc-shaped batteries that pose severe ingestion hazards, especially to children under 5.
EESS	Electrical Equipment Safety System – a national regulatory scheme for assessing and registering electrical products in Australia.
Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics	Guidelines outlining ethical responsibilities for early learning professionals, including safety and wellbeing.
EMC	Electromagnetic Compatibility – ensures electronic devices do not interfere with each other through electromagnetic emissions.
Entrapment Hazard	A design risk where a child's head, neck, or limb could become trapped, causing injury or suffocation.
GHS	Globally Harmonized System – system for classifying and labelling chemicals based on health and physical hazards.
Hazardous Chemical	A substance classified under GHS as posing physical or health risks (e.g. flammable, toxic, irritant).
MEPS	Minimum Energy Performance Standards – mandatory energy efficiency requirements for certain electrical products.
Mandatory Standard	A legally enforceable safety requirement under Australian Consumer Law (ACL). Products must meet these standards to be sold.

Term	Definition
National Quality Framework (NQF)	Australia's national approach to early childhood education standards and regulation.
Non-Hazardous	A product not classified under GHS as hazardous – may require caution depending on use and ingredients.
Non-Toxic	A product verified through testing to not cause health effects under normal use. Not interchangeable with 'non-hazardous'.
QA2 (Quality Area 2)	Part of the NQF focusing on children's health and safety.
QA3 (Quality Area 3)	Part of the NQF focusing on the physical environment and its safety and suitability.
RCM Mark	Regulatory Compliance Mark – indicates that a product complies with all applicable Australian standards for safety, EMC, and energy efficiency.
SDS	Safety Data Sheet – a document providing safety information about handling and storing (hazardous) chemicals.
Soft Fall	Impact-absorbing surface under playgrounds (e.g. mats, mulch, rubber) used to reduce injury from falls.
Tip-Over Hazard	The risk of tall or unstable furniture falling over and causing injury.
Voluntary Standard	A non-legally required benchmark that represents best practice in safety or quality.
WHS	Work Health and Safety – Australian laws governing workplace safety for staff and environments.

Appendix

Product Safety Standards Overview Table

This table provides a central reference for all safety standards cited throughout the guide, helping educators, procurement teams, and centre managers identify which standards apply to which product types.

Standard	Applies To	Scope	Mandatory / Voluntary
AS 4684	High chairs	Safety restraints, tipping, structural integrity	✔ Mandatory
AS 4685 series	Playground equipment	Structure, fall zones, surfacing	⚠ Voluntary (strongly recommended)
AS/NZS 2172	Cots	Structure, spacing, mattress fit	✔ Mandatory
AS/NZS 2195	Portable cots	Safety, stability, mattress, folding mechanism	✔ Mandatory
AS/NZS 4665.1 & .2	External power supplies	Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS)	✔ Mandatory (if in scope)
AS/NZS 60335.1 / 61558	Electrical appliances	General electrical safety	✔ Mandatory (based on product class)
AS/NZS 8811.1	Infant sleep surfaces	Mattress firmness testing	⚠ Voluntary (referenced in mandatory infant sleep standard)
AS/NZS ISO 8124.1	Toys, educational aids, magnetic toys	Mechanical & physical safety (e.g. sharp points, small parts)	✔ Mandatory (toys for under-36 months)
AS/NZS ISO 8124.2	Toys (certain categories)	Flammability of toys (e.g. costumes, tents)	✔ Mandatory (only for flammable toy types)
AS/NZS ISO 8124.3	Toys with coatings or coloured parts	Migration of heavy metals	✔ Mandatory
AS/NZS ISO 8124.4	Swings, slides and similar activity toys	Structural integrity and safety	⚠ Voluntary (expected for portable equipment)
AS/NZS ISO 8124.5	Toys and electrical play devices	Determination of sound levels	⚠ Voluntary (for noise safety in toys)
AS/NZS ISO 8124.6	Toys	Phthalates in toys (soft plastics)	⚠ Voluntary
AS/NZS ISO 8124.7	Finger paints	Ingredients, preservatives, and toxicology	⚠ Voluntary (widely expected for finger paints)



Standard	Applies To	Scope	Mandatory / Voluntary
Consumer Goods (Basketball Rings and Backboards) Safety Standard 2017	Basketball rings and backboards	Tip-over warnings, stability	✔ Mandatory
Consumer Goods (Button/Coin Batteries) Safety & Information Standard 2020	Toys and electronics with button/coin batteries	Secure compartments, warnings, packaging, instructions	✔ Mandatory
Consumer Goods (Infant Sleep Products) Safety & Information Standard 2024	Inclined sleepers, baby nests, portable sleep products	Incline, firmness, labelling, restraint bans	✔ Mandatory (from Jan 2026)
Consumer Goods (Portable Soccer Goals) Safety Standard 2018	Portable soccer goals	Anchoring, tip-over resistance, warnings	✔ Mandatory

Links to Key Regulators and Portals

Organisation	What They Do	Link
Product Safety Australia (ACCC)	Oversees consumer product safety and mandatory standards	productsafety.gov.au
EESS Equipment Safety Portal	Database and regulations for plug-in electrical equipment	equipment.erac.gov.au
Safe Work Australia	Guidance on workplace safety, including hazardous chemicals	safeworkaustralia.gov.au
AICIS (Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme)	Regulates cosmetic and chemical ingredients (e.g. face paints)	industrialchemicals.gov.au
Planet Ark Recycling Near You	Nationwide search for recycling drop-off and disposal programs	recyclingnearyou.com.au
Recycle Mate App	App-based disposal advice by location and product type	recyclemate.com.au



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