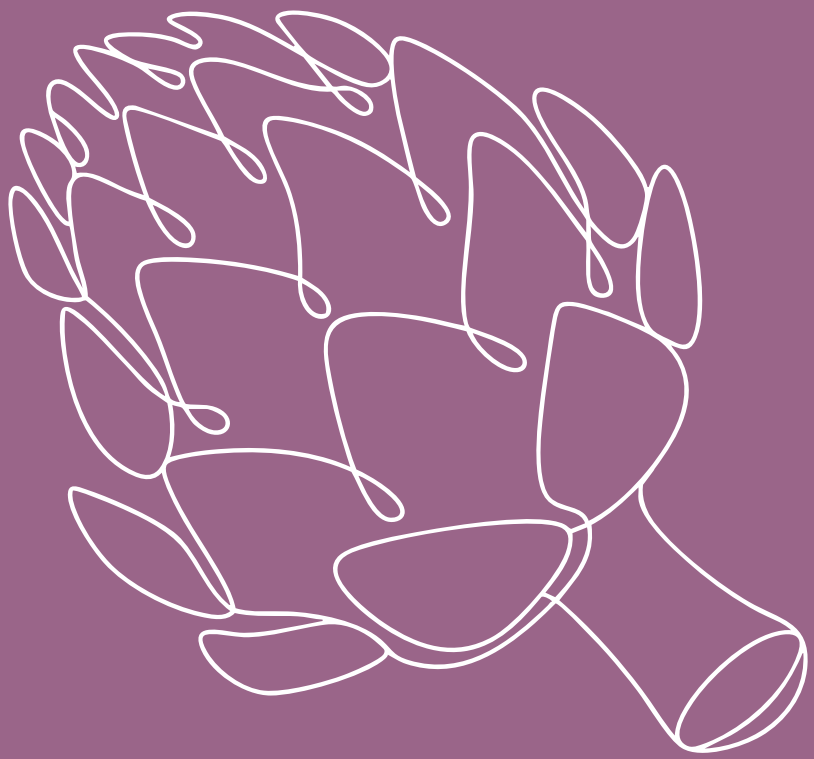
THE BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR
Early Childhood Education and Care Food Environment

Quality, Leadership and Governance

MODULE 6



EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
healthway

A project funded by Healthway and delivered by Edith Cowan University.

VERSION 1

The Best Practice Guide for Early Childhood Education and Care Food Environment
Module 6: Quality, Leadership and Governance

This Quality, Leadership and Governance (QLG) module is one of a series within *The Best Practice Guide (BPG) for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Food Environment, birth to 5 years*. The QLG module provides practical, evidence-informed guidance aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) v2.0 and the National Quality Standard.

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Disclaimer

- General guidance for ECEC (birth to 5 years) does not replace medical/dietetic/speech pathology/other allied-health advice.
- Advice may not be applicable to a particular individual's needs and should always be considered having regard to medical advice provided to an individual.
- Where concerns exist about a child's safety, wellbeing, growth, development, swallowing or health, seek timely medical advice per your service escalation procedures. For emergencies, call 000.
- Follow applicable laws, regulations and service policies, work within the scope of practice.
- References to EYLF/NQS are for alignment; state/territory frameworks may use different terms.

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands on which this guide was created across Australia, and recognise and respect the significance of their communities, cultures and histories.

Foreword

'Nurturing Healthy Futures Best Practice Guide' – launching September 2026

Early childhood is a powerful window for shaping lifelong relationships with food, health, and community. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services play an essential role in nurturing these foundations – not only by providing meals, but by creating environments where children feel safe, included, curious, and connected. The 'Nurturing Healthy Futures Best Practice Guide' has been developed to support this vital work.

This guide brings together practical, evidence based strategies to help ECEC services reflect and enhance the food environments they offer across metropolitan, regional, and remote communities. Funded by Healthway and delivered by Edith Cowan University, it reflects extensive consultation, research, and collaboration with educators, health professionals, families, and community partners. The result is a resource designed to be both aspirational and achievable – supporting services to embed nourishing, culturally responsive, and sustainable practices in their everyday routines.

The guide is organised into a set of interconnected modules that together form a holistic approach to food provision and learning in ECEC. It provides practical guidance on everyday mealtimes practices, menu planning and meal quality, food safety, and food education, alongside strategies to strengthen partnerships with families and embed best practice into service-wide systems to support consistency, sustainability, and long-term impact.

Together, these modules acknowledge that safe and supportive food environments are not created through single actions, but through everyday choices, relationships, and shared commitments. They recognise the diversity of communities in Australia and the importance of culturally safe, inclusive approaches that honour children's identities and family traditions.

By adopting the practices outlined in this Guide, ECEC services can help build strong foundations for lifelong wellbeing for young children – supporting them to thrive physically, socially, and emotionally.

I hope this resource empowers educators and leaders to continue building safe and supportive food environments where every child feels included and respected, and where everyday food experiences support connection and nourishment. By noticing and responding to children's cues and partnering with families, services can support children's wellbeing as they grow and learn.



Dr Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)

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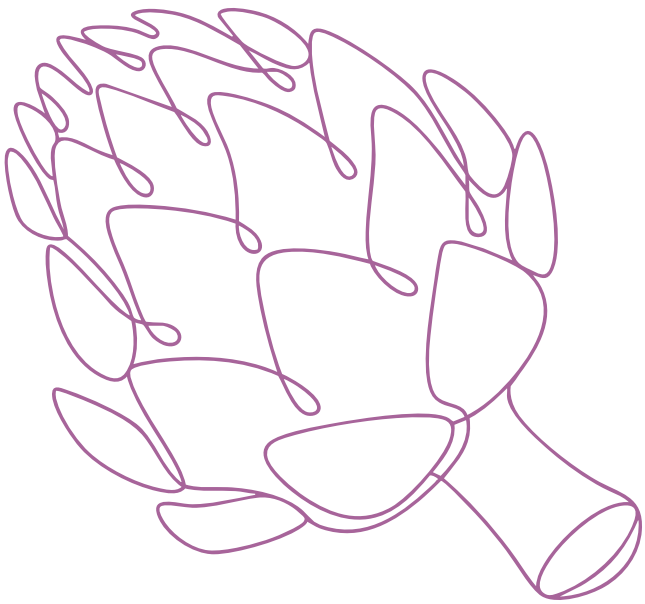
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Background

Quality, Leadership and Governance are central pillars in the role early learning settings play in children's growth, development and wellbeing. By meeting regulatory requirements and quality standards through stringent business procedures and continuous improvement practices, services can provide high-quality food environments for all children – shaping their thoughts, feelings, and practices around food and eating.

This Quality, Leadership and Governance (QLG) module aims to:

- Provide critical context for how the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) food environment is intertwined with National Law and Regulations.
- Support services to meet regulatory requirements, through specific resources and guidance.
- Provide practical guidance regarding food safety regulatory requirements, including the intersect between two separate regulatory bodies.
- Support services to enact quality improvement processes related to their food environment, through targeted, mapped reflection questions.

The sections below outline why this guide was developed, how it connects to the Artichoke Model and who it is designed for.

Why this guide was developed

Many Australian children spend long hours attending ECEC each week, and for many children the food provided in care makes up a substantial share of their daily intake. This creates both a significant responsibility and a genuine opportunity to nourish children well. Australian research consistently shows that many services do not currently meet guidelines for the provision of vegetables, meat and alternatives, and dairy, while discretionary foods are commonly included on menus.

The QLG module was developed to support service and broader organisational staff with the tools and knowledge necessary to ensure practices related to their food environment push beyond meeting regulatory requirements, and deliver high-quality outcomes specific to their context.

The QLG module sits within the Artichoke Model (Figure 1), which guides the overall structure for this Best Practice Guide.

What is the Artichoke Model?

The Artichoke Model: ECEC Food Environment Model[1] is a visual way of looking at the whole food environment in early learning settings.

Like the layers of an artichoke, the model places children's everyday food experiences at ECEC at the centre, with the people, places, systems and routines that shape those experiences being the 'leaves' surrounding and supporting the child. Each 'leaf' represents a key area of the food environment, and together they show how everyday practices, relationships, curriculum, policies and service systems all work together.

Where did it come from?

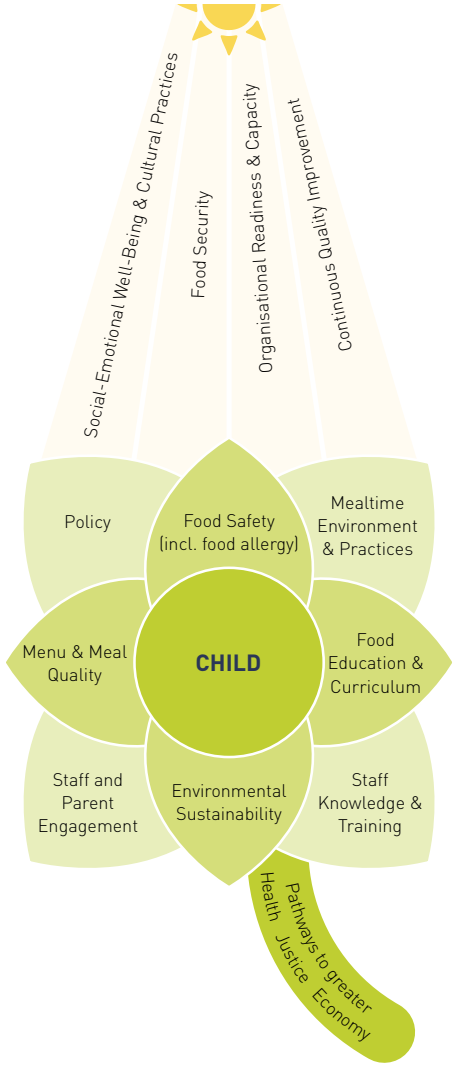
The Artichoke Model was co-designed in 2024 by members of the National Nutrition Network for Early Childhood Education and Care (NNN-ECEC), drawing on their collective experience as researchers, practitioners and policymakers.[1] Through collaborative discussion and visual mapping, the group identified the key components of food environments, creating a simple, sector-owned way of mapping the ECEC food environment that feels recognisable to services and usable in day-to-day practice.

What does it include and why?

The Artichoke Model maps 12 connected 'leaves' across the ECEC food environment, grouped into three layers:

- **What – food provided** (for example: Menu and Meal Quality, Food Safety and Food Allergen Management, Food Education and Curriculum, Environmental Sustainability)
- **How – feeding practices and support** (for example: Mealtime Environment and Practices, Staff Knowledge and Training, Staff and Family Engagement, Policy)
- **Environmental levers – service conditions that shape what's possible** (for example: Social-emotional wellbeing and Cultural Practices, Food Security of the ECEC service, Organisational Readiness and Capacity, Continuous Quality Improvement).

FIGURE 1: *The Artichoke Model*



Each leaf includes practical topics and reflection questions that services can use to think about where food and mealtimes already work well, where children might need something different, and what the next small step for improvement could be.

This Best Practice Guide builds on the Artichoke Model. The project team used the 12 'leaves' to scope and streamline key themes and sub-topics, then developed modules that turn the high-level map into practical recommendations, examples and tools for services. Each module zooms in on one or more parts of the Artichoke Model while still keeping sight of the whole service.

What does the Artichoke Model mean for QLG?

The QLG module is a culmination of practice and understanding which ties together multiple leaves in the Artichoke Model, including the 'Policy' leaf within the 'How – feeding practices and support' layer, and the 'Continuous Quality Improvement' leaf within the 'Environmental levels – service conditions that shape what's possible' layer.

For QLG, the Artichoke Model is a reminder that the impacts of high-quality leadership and governance are far-reaching, impacting all elements of food environments within ECEC services. The QLG module provides an over-arching lens within which to view the practical strategies outlined within other Best Practice Guide (BPG) modules.

Scope of the Quality, Leadership and Governance (QLG) module

The QLG module focuses on:

- Outlining the critical context for how the ECEC food environment is intertwined with National Law and Regulations.
- Providing practical links to resources and guidance to support services to meet regulatory requirements.
- Providing practical guidance regarding food safety regulatory requirements, including the intersect between two separate regulatory bodies.
- Supporting services to enact quality improvement processes related to their food environment, through targeted, mapped reflection questions.

What is not included?

This module does not:

- Replace or override current legislation, regulation, regulatory requirements, or service policies in your service or jurisdiction.
- Replace clinical assessment, diagnosis or treatment for feeding, growth or medical nutrition concerns.
- Replace a child's individual food allergy or healthcare/action plan, or advice from a child's treating health team or a dietitian.
- Focus on outside school hours care (OSHC), although some principles may still be useful in those settings.

ECEC staff and services should use this module alongside relevant regulations, service policies and any clinical advice for individual children.

Acknowledgements

This Quality, Leadership and Governance (QLG) module was developed through a strong, collaborative co-design process. For the purposes of citation and attribution, members of the Best Practice Guide Project Team, the Quality, Leadership and Governance Working Group,, together with those acknowledged under Workshop Development and Facilitation, Meetings Chair, and Additional Consultation, are collectively recognised as the Quality, Leadership and Governance Consortium. Contributions across the Consortium varied according to individual expertise and involvement and included Conceptualisation, Writing: original draft, and Writing: review and editing, as applicable to each contributor's role.

We sincerely thank the individuals and organisations represented across the Consortium for the depth of expertise they brought across ECEC regulation and quality improvement processes and practices, nutrition and dietetics, public health, government, peak bodies, training, and service delivery. Their generous time, practical insights, and commitment to improving food environments in early learning settings have directly strengthened the relevance, feasibility, and quality of this guidance.

We are especially grateful to the educators, service leaders, cooks, and chefs in early childhood services across Australia who shared their time, everyday experiences, and honest insights during development. Their knowledge grounded this Guide in real practice and reminded us throughout what truly matters at mealtimes.

We acknowledge the National Nutrition Network for Early Childhood Education and Care (NNN-ECEC) for their foundational role in developing the Artichoke Model and for their sustained commitment to improving food environments for young children across Australia.

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Our Working Group consisted of Assessment Officers from the Department of Communities, Education and Care Regulatory Unit, Government of Western Australia – with a particular focus on the reality of regional and remote services.

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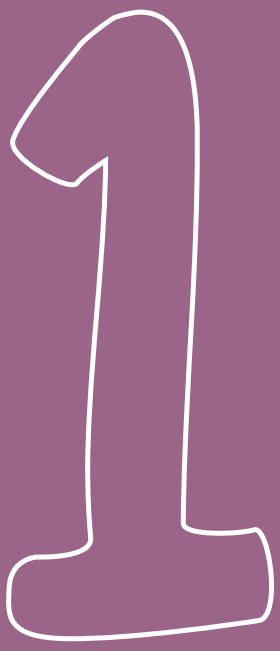
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SECTION 1

Education and Care Services National Law Regulations for Food Environments



Education and Care Services National Law Regulations for food environments

This section outlines the provisions of the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations[2] relevant to food environments in education and care services, including their relationship to the National Quality Standard.

To note, services should consider the National Law and National Regulations as they apply in their jurisdiction, alongside any relevant jurisdiction-specific requirements.[2] The section aims to support ECEC services to develop and implement effective policies and procedures as required by National Regulations and ACECQA – related to the food environment.

Importantly, it highlights the distinction that exists between (1) compliance (with National regulations legislated by jurisdictional law) and (2) quality improvement (underpinned by the National Quality Standard) in ECEC assessment. Although both are reviewed by Authorised Officers from the relevant regulatory authority, the perspective taken by officers is very different between the two areas.

1

Compliance
(with National regulations legislated by jurisdictional law)[2]

Services are required to comply with the applicable requirements of the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations. Regulatory authorities monitor and support compliance with these requirements as part of their regulatory functions.

2

Quality improvement
(underpinned by the National Quality Standard)[3]

Self-assessment, critical reflection and ongoing improvement processes support quality practice and continuous improvement against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

Elements of Table 1

Table 1 lists the regulations within the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 that are relevant to ECEC food environments. For each regulation, the table identifies the relevant elements of the NQS[3], supporting services in understanding their legislative responsibilities and the regulatory requirements related to food provision and mealtime practices in ECEC settings.

ACECQA guidance and resources

ACECQA provides guidance and resources to support approved providers and services in understanding and meeting their responsibilities under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

As an overarching resource, ACECQA's "Preparing NQF Policies and Procedures" supports services in developing and reviewing policies and procedures related to their food environment.

- Preparing NQF Policies and Procedures
- Six Reasonable Steps and Guidelines

TABLE 1: *Regulations within the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 that are relevant to ECEC food environments*

Regulation	NQS
PART 4.1 — EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE	
73. Educational program	
(1) This Part applies in relation to the program (the educational program) that is required to be delivered under section 168 of the Law to a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service. (2) An educational program is to contribute to the following outcomes for each child — (a) the child will have a strong sense of identity; (b) the child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world; (c) the child will have a strong sense of wellbeing; (d) the child will be a confident and involved learner; (e) the child will be an effective communicator. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators, including how the service will manage those in remote locations Early Years Learning Framework v2.0 Documenting the assessment and planning cycle QA1 – Educational program documentation for educators and teachers QA1 – Educational program documentation for approved providers	**QA1: Educational Program and Practices** Element: 1.1.1 1.1.3 1.3.1
74. Documenting of child assessments and evidence of development of educational programs	
(1) The approved provider of the education and care service must ensure that, for the purposes of the educational program, the following are documented — (a) for a child preschool age or under — (i) assessments of the child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program; and (ii) assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program; and (b) for a child over preschool age, evidence about the development of the program. (2) In preparing the documentation, the approved provider must — (a) consider — (i) the period of time that the child is being educated and cared for by the service; and (ii) how the documentation will be used by the educators at the service; and (b) prepare the documentation in a way that is readily understandable by the educators at the service and the parents of the child. **Notes for this regulation:** 1. This regulation differs from regulation 74 of the national regulations made by the Ministerial Council. 2. A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with subregulation (1). [Regulation 74 amended: SL 2023/186 r. 13.] **Please note:** Approved Providers should check any jurisdiction-specific provisions relevant to Regulation 74 – https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/national-regulations **ACECQA RESOURCES** QA1 – Educational program documentation for approved providers Documenting the assessment and planning cycle Element 1.3.1: Assessment and planning cycle QA1 – Educational program documentation for approved providers	**QA1: Educational Program and Practices** Element: 1.1.2 1.1.3 1.3.1

Regulation	NQS
75. Information about educational program to be kept available	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that— (a) information about the contents and operation of the educational program for the service is displayed at the education and care service premises at a place accessible to parents of children being educated and cared for by the service; and (b) a copy of the educational program is available at the following places for inspection on request— (i) in the case of a centre-based service, at the education and care service premises; (ii) in the case of a family day care service, at each family day care residence or family day care venue. **Note for this regulation:** A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with this regulation.	**QA1: Educational Program and Practices** Element: 1.3.3
PART 4.2 — CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY	
77. Health, hygiene and safe food practices	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that nominated supervisors and staff members of, and volunteers at, the service implement — (a) adequate health and hygiene practices; and (b) safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food — to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service. (2) A nominated supervisor of an education and care service must implement, and ensure that all staff members of, and volunteers at, the service implement — (a) adequate health and hygiene practices; and (b) safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food — to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service. (3) A family day care educator must implement — (a) adequate health and hygiene practices; and (b) safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food — to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the educator as part of a family day care service. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements Staying healthy guidelines	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.2 **QA3: Physical Environment** Element: 3.1.2
78. Food and beverages	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that children being educated and cared for by the service — (a) have access to safe drinking water at all times; and (b) are offered food and beverages appropriate to the needs of each child on a regular basis throughout the day. (2) A nominated supervisor of an education and care service must ensure that children being educated and cared for by the service — (a) have access to safe drinking water at all times; and (b) are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day. (3) A family day care educator must ensure that children being educated and cared for by the educator as part of a family day care service — (a) have access to safe drinking water at all times; and (b) are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements NQF guidance for Element 2.1.3 (Healthy Lifestyle)	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.3 **QA5: Relationships with children** Element: 5.1.2

Regulation	NQS
79. Service providing food and beverages	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service that provides food or a beverage to children being educated and cared for by the service must ensure that — (a) the food or beverage provided is nutritious and adequate in quantity; and (b) the food or beverage provided is chosen having regard to the dietary requirements of individual children taking into account — (i) each child's growth and development needs; and (ii) any specific cultural, religious or health requirements. (2) A nominated supervisor of an education and care service that provides food or a beverage to children being educated and cared for by the service must ensure that — (a) the food or beverage provided is nutritious and adequate in quantity; and (b) the food or beverage provided is chosen having regard to the dietary requirements of individual children taking into account (i) each child's growth and development needs; and (ii) any specific cultural, religious or health requirements. (3) A family day care educator who provides food or a beverage to children being educated and cared for by the educator as part of a family day care service must ensure that — (a) the food or beverage provided is nutritious and adequate in quantity; and (b) the food or beverage provided is chosen having regard to the dietary requirements of individual children taking into account — (i) each child's growth and development needs; and (ii) any specific cultural, religious or health requirements. (4) To avoid doubt, this regulation does not apply to food or a beverage provided by a parent or family member for consumption by the child. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements Allergy Awareness Food Allergy Week Focus **NATIONAL ALLERGY COUNCIL RESOURCES** National Allergy Council	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.3 2.1.2 2.2.1
80. Weekly menu	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service that provides food and beverages (other than water) to children being educated and cared for by the service must ensure that a weekly menu — (a) is displayed at a place at the education and care service premises accessible to family members of children being educated and cared for by the service; and (b) accurately describes the food and beverages to be provided by the service each day. (2) A nominated supervisor of an education and care service that provides food and beverages (other than water) to children being educated and cared for by the service must ensure that a weekly menu — (a) is displayed at a place at the education and care service premises accessible to family members of children being educated and cared for by the service; and (b) accurately describes the food and beverages to be provided by the service each day. (3) A family day care educator who provides food and beverages (other than water) to children being educated and cared for by the educator as part of a family day care service must ensure that a weekly menu — (a) is displayed at a place at the family day care residence or approved family day care venue accessible to family members of children being educated and cared for by the service; and (b) accurately describes the food and beverages to be provided by the family day care educator each day.	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.3

Regulation	NQS
(4) To avoid doubt, this regulation does not apply to food and beverages provided by a parent or family member for consumption by the child.	

ACECQA RESOURCES

- Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements
- Nourishing nutrition in early childhood education and care
- Element 2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle

90. Medical conditions policy

(1) The medical conditions policy of the education and care service must set out practices in relation to the following —

(a) the management of medical conditions, including asthma, diabetes or a diagnosis that a child is at risk of anaphylaxis;

(b) informing nominated supervisors and staff members of, and volunteers at, the service of practices in relation to managing those medical conditions;

(c) the requirements arising if a child enrolled at the education and care service has a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition, including —

(i) requiring a parent of the child to provide a medical management plan for the child; and

(ii) requiring the medical management plan to be followed in the event of an incident relating to the child's specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition; and

(iii) requiring the development of a risk-minimisation plan in consultation with the parents of a child —

(A) to ensure that the risks relating to the child's specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition are assessed and minimised; and

(B) if relevant, to ensure that practices and procedures in relation to the safe handling, preparation, consumption and service of food are developed and implemented; and

(C) if relevant, to ensure that practices and procedures to ensure that the parents are notified of any known allergens that pose a risk to a child and strategies for minimising the risk are developed and implemented; and

(D) to ensure that practices and procedures ensuring that all staff members and volunteers can identify the child, the child's medical management plan and the location of the child's medication are developed and implemented; and

(E) if relevant, to ensure that practices and procedures ensuring that the child does not attend the service without medication prescribed by the child's medical practitioner in relation to the child's specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition are developed and implemented; and

(iv) requiring the development of a communications plan to ensure that —

(A) relevant staff members and volunteers are informed about the medical conditions policy and the medical management plan and risk minimisation plan for the child; and

(B) a child's parent can communicate any changes to the medical management plan and risk minimisation plan for the child, setting out how that communication can occur.

(2) The medical conditions policy of the education and care service must set out practices in relation to self-administration of medication by children over preschool age if the service permits that self-administration.

(3) In subregulation (2), the practices must include any practices relating to recording in the medication record for a child of notifications from the child that medication has been self-administered.

QA2: Children's Health and Safety
Element:
2.1.2
2.2.1

QA6: Collaborative Partnerships with families and communities
Element:
6.2.2*

*Refer to the service's Medical Conditions Policy to determine whether the child's diagnosed condition (e.g. ADHD, ASD, or other diagnosed condition) is included in the service medical condition policy and therefore relevant to this regulation.

ACECQA RESOURCES

- Dealing with medical conditions in children
- Enrolment and orientation
- Allergy Aware
- Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements
- Food Allergy Training

Regulation	NQS
91. Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that a copy of the medical conditions policy document is provided to the parent of a child enrolled at an education and care service if the provider is aware that the child has a specific health care need, allergy or other relevant medical condition. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Dealing with medical conditions in children Enrolment and orientation Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.2 **QA6: Collaborative Partnerships with families and communities** Element: 6.1.3* *Dependent on medical condition
92. Medication record	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that a medication record is kept that includes the details set out in subregulation (3) for each child to whom medication is or is to be administered by the service. (2) A family day care educator must keep a medication record that includes the details set out in subregulation (3) for each child being educated and cared for by the educator as part of a family day care service to whom medication is or is to be administered. (3) The details to be recorded are — (a) the name of the child; (b) the authorisation to administer medication (including, if applicable, self-administration), signed by a parent or a person named in the child's enrolment record as authorised to consent to administration of medication; (c) the name of the medication to be administered and the medical condition the medication is being used to treat; (d) the time and date the medication was last administered; (e) the time and date, or the circumstances under which, the medication should be next administered; (f) the dosage of the medication to be administered; (g) the manner in which the medication is to be administered; (h) if the medication is administered to the child — (i) the dosage that was administered; and (ii) the manner in which the medication was administered; and (iii) the time and date the medication was administered; and (iv) the name and signature of the person who administered the medication; and (v) if another person is required under regulation 95 to check the dosage and administration, the name and signature of that person. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Dealing with medical conditions in children Enrolment and orientation Policy and procedure guidelines QA7 – Protection of Personal Information Medication record template	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.2 **QA7: Governance and Leadership** Element: 7.1.2

Regulation	NQS
PART 4.3 — PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
103. Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that the education and care service premises and all equipment and furniture used in providing the education and care service are safe, clean and in good repair.	**QA2: Children's Health and Wellbeing** Element: 2.1.2 **QA3: Physical Environment** Element: 3.1.2
105. Furniture, materials and equipment	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that each child being educated and cared for by the education and care service has access to sufficient furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment suitable for the education and care of that child.	**QA3: Physical Environment** Element: 3.2.2
PART 4.4 — STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS	
136. First aid qualifications	
(1) The approved provider of a centre-based service must ensure that each of the following persons are in attendance at any place where children are being educated and cared for by the service, and immediately available in an emergency, at all times that children are being educated and cared for by the service — (a) at least one staff member or one nominated supervisor of the service who holds a current approved first aid qualification; (b) at least one staff member or one nominated supervisor of the service who has undertaken current approved anaphylaxis management training; (c) at least one staff member or one nominated supervisor of the service who has undertaken current approved emergency asthma management training. (2) If children are being educated and cared for at service premises on the site of a school, it is sufficient for the purposes of subregulation (1) if the following are in attendance at the school site and immediately available in an emergency— (a) for the purposes of subregulation (1)(a), at least one staff member of the school who holds a current approved first aid qualification; (b) for the purposes of subregulation (1)(b), at least one staff member of the school who has undertaken current approved anaphylaxis management training; (c) for the purposes of subregulation (1)(c), at least one staff member of the school who has undertaken current approved emergency asthma management training. (3) The approved provider of a family day care service must ensure that each family day care educator and family day care educator assistant engaged by or registered with the service — (a) holds a current approved first aid qualification; and (b) has undertaken current approved anaphylaxis management training; and (c) has undertaken current approved emergency asthma management training. (4) The same person may hold one or more of the qualifications set out in subregulation (1). (4A) For the purposes of this regulation and regulation 153 — (a) an approved first aid qualification is taken to be current if — (i) in the case of emergency life support training and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation training that forms part of the approved first aid qualification — the training was completed within the previous year; and (ii) in the case of any other training that forms part of the approved first aid qualification — the training was completed within the previous 3 years; and (b) approved anaphylaxis management training is taken to be current if the training was completed within the previous 3 years; and (c) approved emergency asthma management training is taken to be current if the training was completed within the previous 3 years.	**QA2: Children's Health and Wellbeing** Element: 2.1.2 2.2.1 **QA4: Staffing Arrangements** Element: 4.1.1

Regulation	NQS
(5) In this regulation — *approved anaphylaxis management training* means anaphylaxis management training approved by the National Authority in accordance with Division 7; *approved emergency asthma management training* means emergency asthma management training approved by the National Authority in accordance with Division 7; *approved first aid qualification* means a qualification that — (a) includes training in the following that relates to and is appropriate to children — (i) emergency life support and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation; (ii) convulsions; (iii) poisoning; (iv) respiratory difficulties; (v) management of severe bleeding; (vi) injury and basic wound care; (vii) administration of an auto-immune adrenalin device; and (b) has been approved by the National Authority in accordance with Division 7. **Note for this regulation:** A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with subregulation (1). **ACECQA RESOURCES** Dealing with medical conditions in children First aid qualifications & training **NATIONAL ALLERGY COUNCIL RESOURCES** National Allergy Council	
PART 4.5 — RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN	
155. Interactions with children	
(1) An approved provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the education and care service provides education and care to children in a way that — (a) encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions; and (b) allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem; and (c) maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child; and (d) gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour; and (e) has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Interactions with children Video transcript – Why are positive relationships important for early learning? Embedding children's rights in everyday practice QA5 – Relationships with children	**QA1: Educational Program and Practice** Element: 1.1.3 **QA4: Staffing Arrangements** Element: 4.2.2 **QA5: Relationships with Children** Element: 5.1.1 5.1.2 5.2.2

Regulation	NQS
156. Relationships in groups	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must take reasonable steps to ensure that the service provides children being educated and cared for by the service with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with staff members of, and volunteers at, the service. (2) For the purposes of subregulation (1), the approved provider must have regard to the size and the composition of the groups in which children are being educated and cared for by the service. **Note for this regulation:** A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with subregulation (1). **ACECQA RESOURCES** Interactions with children Video transcript – Children play, learn and thrive together Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Children develop a sense of connectedness to groups and communities and an understanding of their reciprocal rights and responsibilities as active and informed citizens Standard 5.2 Relationships between children – Case study 1 Standard 5.2 Relationships between children – Case study 2	**QA1: Educational Program and Practice** Element: 1.1.3 **QA3: Physical Environment** Element: 3.2.2 3.2.3 **QA5: Relationships with Children** Element: 5.2.1 5.2.2
PART 4.7 — GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP	
160. Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that an enrolment record is kept that includes the information set out in subregulation (3) for each child enrolled at the education and care service. (2) A family day care educator must keep an enrolment record that includes the information set out in subregulation (3) for each child educated and cared for by the educator. (3) An enrolment record must include the following information for each child — (a) the full name, date of birth and address of the child; (b) the name, address and contact details of — (i) each known parent of the child; and (ii) any person who is to be notified of an emergency involving the child if any parent of the child cannot be immediately contacted; and (iii) any person who is an authorised nominee; and Note: *Authorised nominee* means a person who has been given permission by a parent or family member to collect the child from the education and care service or the family day care educator. See section 170(5) of the Law. (iv) any person who is authorised to consent to medical treatment of, or to authorise administration of medication to, the child; and (v) any person who is authorised to authorise an educator to take the child outside the education and care service premises; and (vi) any person who is authorised to authorise the education and care service to transport the child or arrange transportation of the child; (c) details of any court orders, parenting orders or parenting plans provided to the approved provider relating to powers, duties, responsibilities or authorities of any person in relation to the child or access to the child; (d) details of any other court orders provided to the approved provider relating to the child's residence or the child's contact with a parent or other person; (e) the gender of the child; (f) the language used in the child's home; (g) the cultural background of the child and, if applicable, the child's parents or any other family members;	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.2 **QA6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities** Element: 6.1.2 **QA7: Governance and Leadership** Element: 7.1.2

Regulation	NQS
(h) any special considerations for the child, for example any cultural, religious or dietary requirements or additional needs; (i) the relevant authorisations set out in regulation 161; (i) the relevant health information set out in regulation 162. (4) In this regulation — *parenting order* means a parenting order within the meaning of section 64B(1) of the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth; *parenting plan* means a parenting plan within the meaning of section 63C(1) of the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth, and includes a registered parenting plan within the meaning of section 63C(6) of that Act. **Note for this regulation:** This regulation differs from regulation 160 of the national regulations made by the Ministerial Council. **ACECQA RESOURCES** Enrolment and orientation QA7 – Development of child enrolment record	
162. Health information to be kept in enrolment record	
(1) The health information to be kept in the enrolment record for each child enrolled at the education and care service is — (a) the name, address and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner or medical service; and (b) if available, the child's Medicare number; and (c) details of any — (i) specific healthcare needs of the child, including any medical condition; and (ii) allergies, including whether the child has been diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis; and (d) any medical management plan, anaphylaxis medical management plan or risk minimisation plan to be followed with respect to a specific healthcare need, medical condition or allergy referred to in paragraph (c); and (e) details of any dietary restrictions for the child; and (f) the immunisation status of the child; and (g) if the approved provider or a staff member or family day care educator has sighted a child health record for the child, a notation to that effect; and (h) in relation to New South Wales, certificates for immunisation or exemption for the child, as required under section 87(1), (2) and (3) of the Public Health Act 2010 of New South Wales; and (i) in relation to Victoria, in the case of an education and care service specified in paragraph (a) of the definition of early childhood service in section 3(1) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 of Victoria — (i) an immunisation status certificate within the meaning of section 147 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 of Victoria that is issued in relation to the child and that is provided under section 143B of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 of Victoria; or (ii) details of any exemption in relation to the child under section 143C of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 of Victoria. **ACECQA RESOURCES** QA7 – Development of child enrolment record	**QA7: Governance and Leadership** Element: 7.1.2

Regulation	NQS
168. Education and care service must have policies and procedures	
(1) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that the service has in place policies and procedures in relation to the matters set out in subregulation (2). **Note for this subregulation:** These may include policies and procedures prepared by the approved provider in accordance with an education law of the participating jurisdiction. (2) Policies and procedures are required in relation to the following — (a) health and safety, including matters relating to — (i) nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements; and (ii) sun protection; and (iii) water safety, including safety during any water-based activities; and (iv) the administration of first aid; and (v) sleep and rest for children, including the matters set out in regulation 84B; (b) incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures complying with regulation 85; (c) dealing with infectious diseases, including procedures complying with regulation 88; (d) dealing with medical conditions in children, including the matters set out in regulation 90; (e) emergency and evacuation, including the matters set out in regulation 97; (f) delivery of children to, and collection of children from, education and care service premises, including procedures complying with — (i) for all participating jurisdictions other than Western Australia — regulation 99; and (ii) for Western Australia —section 165A of the Law as applying in Western Australia; (g) excursions, including procedures complying with regulations 100 to 102; (ga) if the service transports or arranges transportation of children other than as part of excursions, transportation including procedures complying with Chapter 4 Part 4.2 Division 7; (gb) the safe arrival of children who travel between an education and care service and any other education or early childhood service within the meaning of regulation 102AA, including the matters set out in regulation 102AAB; (h) providing a child safe environment, including matters relating to the promotion of a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the service; (ha) the safe use of digital technologies and online environments at the service, including — (i) the taking, use, storage and destruction of images and videos of children being educated and cared for by the service; and (ii) obtaining authorisation from parents to take, use and store images and videos of children being educated and cared for by the service; and (iii) the use of any optical surveillance device at the service; and Example for this subparagraph: The use of closed-circuit television. (iv) the use of any digital device issued by the service; and (v) the use of digital devices by children being educated and cared for by the service; (i) staffing, including — (i) a code of conduct for staff members; and (ii) determining the responsible person present at the service; and (iii) the participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements; (j) interactions with children, including the matters set out in regulations 155 and 156; (k) enrolment and orientation; (l) governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records; (m) the acceptance and refusal of authorisations; (n) payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service; (o) dealing with complaints, including matters relating to — (i) the provision of a complaint handling system at the service that is child focused; and (ii) the management of a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.	**QA2: Children's Health and Safety** Element: 2.1.2 **QA7: Governance and Leadership** Element: 7.1.2

Regulation	NQS
Notes for this regulation: 1. A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with subregulation (1). 2. This regulation differs from regulation 168 of the national regulations made by the Ministerial Council **ACECQA RESOURCES** Enrolment and orientation Governance and management Interactions with children Monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators, including how the service will manage those in remote locations Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements Child Safe Environment Policy and procedure guidelines	
169. Additional policies and procedures — family day care service	
(1) In addition to the policies and procedures set out in regulation 168, the approved provider of a family day care service must ensure that the family day care service has in place policies and procedures in relation to the matters set out in subregulation (2). (2) Policies and procedures are required in relation to the following — (a) assessment of proposed family day care venues and proposed family day care residences and reassessment of approved family day care venues and family day care residences, including matters to meet the requirements of regulation 116; (b) engagement or registration of family day care educators; (c) keeping of a register of family day care educators, family day care co-ordinators and family day care educator assistants under regulation 153; (d) monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators, including how the service will manage educators at remote locations; (e) assessment of family day care educators, family day care educator assistants and persons residing at family day care residences, including the matters required under regulation 163; (f) visitors to family day care residences and venues while education and care is being provided to children as part of a family day care service; (g) the provision of information, assistance and training to family day care educators; (h) the engagement or registration of family day care educator assistants. **Note for this regulation:** A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with subregulation (1). **ACECQA RESOURCES** Governance and management Interactions with children Monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators, including how the service will manage those in remote locations Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements	**QA7: Governance and Leadership** Element: 7.1.2

Additional support within the Best Practice Guide for food environments

Table 1 outlines National Regulations relevant to food environments and identifies relevant ACECQA resources and guidance. Table 2 identifies additional resources within the Best Practice Guide that may support services to apply these requirements in the context of food environments and continuous quality improvement.

TABLE 2: *Additional Support within the Best Practice Guide*

Regulatory requirement	Further support in the Best Practice Guide for food environments
PART 4.1 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE	
73. Educational Program	 **Food Education** Section 1 – Embedding Food-Based Learning in Everyday Practice Section 2 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences Section 3 – Food Themes and Learning Experiences Section 4 – Extending Learning Opportunities Section 5 – Partnerships and Collaboration for Food Education Opportunities
	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 3 – Supporting Food Preferences, Food Acceptance and Food Diversity
	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 7 – Menu and Meal Feedback
74. Documenting of child assessments and evidence of development of educational programs	 **Food Education** Section 2 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences: Preparing and planning; Developing and delivering – ideas, procedures and prompts for planning
PART 4.2 — CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY	
77. Health, hygiene and safe food practices	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 8 – Food Allergy and Food Safety
	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 7 – Designing Mealtime Approaches

Regulatory requirement	Further support in the Best Practice Guide for food environments
	 **Food Education** Section 2 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences: Risk awareness, common risk factors and safety
	 **Sustainable Food Practices** Section 5 – Local and Seasonal Food: Regulatory, food safety and food allergy considerations Section 6 – Gardens in ECEC services and settings: Risk awareness, common risk factors and safety
	 **Staff and Family Engagement** Section 4 – Supporting Families at Lunchbox Services: Safe eating (in the context of lunchboxes) Section 6 – Supporting Families of Children with Food Allergies
78. Food and beverages	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 2 – Australian Dietary Guidelines Section 3 – Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines Section 3 – Supporting Breastfeeding in ECEC services Section 4 – Introduction of Solid Foods (First Foods) Section 5 – Effective Menu and Meal Planning
	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 7 – Designing Mealtime Approaches
79. Service providing food and beverages	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 2 – Australian Dietary Guidelines Section 3 – Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines Section 3 –Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines: Supporting breastfeeding in ECEC services Section 4 – Introduction of Solid Foods (First Foods) Section 5 – Effective Menu and Meal Planning
	 **Staff and Family Engagement** Section 5 – Supporting Families with Children who Experience Disability Section 6 – Supporting Families of Children with Food Allergies
80. Weekly menu	 **Staff and Family Engagement** Section 1 – Communication with Families around Mealtimes, Meals and Menus: Communications regarding meals and menus

Regulatory requirement	Further support in the Best Practice Guide for food environments
90. Medical conditions policy	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 8 – Food Allergy and Food Safety
	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 7 – Designing Mealtime Approaches
	 **Staff and Family Engagement** Section 6 – Supporting Families of Children with Food Allergies
	 **Food Education** Section 2 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences: Risk awareness, common risk factors and safety
	 **Sustainable Food Practices** Section 5 – Guiding Principles within the Sociocultural Domain: Regulatory, Food Safety and Food Allergy Considerations Section 6 – Gardens in ECEC services and settings: Risk awareness, common risk factors and safety
PART 4.3 — PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
103. Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair	 **Sustainable Food Practices** Section 6 – Gardens in ECEC services and Settings
	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 7 – Designing Mealtime Approaches
	 **Food Education** Section 2 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences: Risk awareness, common risk factors and safety
105. Furniture, materials and equipment	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 7 – Designing Mealtime Approaches

Regulatory requirement	Further support in the Best Practice Guide for food environments
	 **Staff and Family Engagement** Section 5 – Supporting Families with Children who Experience Disability
PART 4.5 — RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN	
155. Interactions with children	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 2 – Responsive Feeding, and Hunger and 'Had Enough' Cue Recognition Section 3 – Supporting Food Preferences, Food Acceptance and Food Diversity Section 5 – Language, Body Image and Responding to Eating Concerns
	 **Food Education** Section 3 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences Section 5 – Partnerships and Collaboration for Food Education Opportunities
	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 7 – Menu and Meal Feedback
	 **Staff and Family Engagement** Section 1 – Communication with Families around Mealtimes, Meals and Menus Section 5 – Supporting families with Children who Experience Disability Section 6 – Supporting Families of Children with Food Allergies
156. Relationships in groups	**Food Education**  Section 1 – Embedding Food-Based Learning in Everyday Practice Section 2 – Cooking and Food Preparation Experiences Section 3 – Food Themes and Literacy, Numeracy and Science Activities Section 4 – Extending Learning Opportunities Section 5 – Partnerships and Collaboration for Food Education Opportunities
	 **Mealtime Environment and Practices** Section 7 – Designing Mealtime Approaches
	 **Menu and Meal Quality** Section 7 – Menu and Meal Feedback

Regulatory requirement	Further support in the Best Practice Guide for food environments
PART 4.7 — GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP	
168. Education and care service must have policies and procedures	 **Quality, Leadership and Governance** Section 1 – Education and Care Services National Law Regulations for Food Environments Section 2 – Food Safety Section 3 – Quality Improvement in Food Environments and the BPG
169. Additional policies and procedures — family day care service	 **Quality, Leadership and Governance** Section 1 – Education and Care Services National Law Regulations for Food Environments Section 2 – Food Safety Section 3 – Quality Improvement in Food Environments and the BPG

SECTION 2

Food Safety



Food allergy and food safety

Your legal obligations to provide safe food

In addition to the Education and Care Services National Law, ECEC services that provide food as part of their service will also be required to comply with state and territory food safety legislation.[4]

As a first step, contact your food safety regulator in the state or territory where your ECEC operates to determine to what extent the food legislation applies to you. Depending on your food handling activities and jurisdiction, one of the following scenarios is likely to apply:

1. You do not provide food as part of your service and are therefore not required to register/notify as a food business.
2. You are required to register/notify as a food business and comply with the general requirements of the Food Safety Standards.
3. You are required to register/notify as a food business and implement a food safety program.

Table 3 provides further details on the intent of the legal requirements stipulated in food legislation that may apply to your ECEC service.

Food allergen management

Effective food allergen management is essential for preventing harm to children with food allergies in ECEC services that prepare or provide meals for children with food allergies. Safe food handling practices must be implemented throughout food preparation, storage and service to prevent the unintended transfer of food allergens into meals intended for children with food allergies.

The National Allergy Council has developed a dedicated All about Allergens training course for ECEC. This free course provides additional guidance on food allergen management and may complement food handler training requirements that apply under relevant food safety legislation.

In addition, some Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that deliver Food Safety Supervisor training, such as those approved by the New South Wales (NSW) Food Authority, have incorporated the National Allergy Council's comprehensive food allergen management module into their training.

For ECEC services that have children with food allergies and are required to have a Food Safety Program, food allergen management procedures should be incorporated into the Food Safety Program.

TABLE 3: *Food safety principles and outcomes of applicable legal requirements*

Legal requirement	Food safety principles and outcomes
Not required to register/notify as a food business	ECEC services that do not provide food as part of their service are generally not considered food businesses. For example, when children bring their own food from home. Some ECEC services that have very minimal handling of low-risk foods may also be in this category.
Register/notify as a food business	Enable food regulators to identify food businesses, apply risk-based regulatory oversight to ensure food safety risks are managed, and to protect public health.
Have a food safety program	Provides a systematic approach to identifying hazards associated with the handling of food, and to ensure controls are implemented to manage those hazards. This requirement typically applies to food businesses that serve food to vulnerable populations (Standards 3.2.1 and 3.3.1).
Comply with the general provisions of the Food Safety Standards	The Food Safety Standards (Standards 3.2.2, 3.2.2A and 3.2.3) set out a risk-based, preventive approach to providing safe and suitable food. The Standards detail the outcomes that must be achieved while providing food businesses with the flexibility to determine how those outcomes are met.
Appoint a Food Safety Supervisor	Ensures food handlers receive appropriate supervision and guidance to support safe food handling practices. The Food Safety Supervisor's additional recognised food safety training enhances their ability to identify, prevent and manage food safety risks effectively.
Provide food safety training for food handlers	Ensures food handlers have the knowledge and skills necessary to handle food safely and maintain appropriate food hygiene practices. This outcome may also be demonstrated through competent practice to an Authorised Officer.
Keep records demonstrating food safety	Enables food businesses to monitor food handling practices, verify that food safety controls are effective, and demonstrate compliance with food safety requirements. This outcome may also be demonstrated through competent practice to an Authorised Officer.

Continuous improvement and building a strong food safety culture

Complying with the food safety legislation should be more than a box-ticking exercise. While documented procedures, records and inspections are important, they are only effective when they are consistently put into practice. A food safety system is only as strong as the people who implement it every day.

When non-compliances occur, the immediate issue is often only a symptom of a deeper problem. The underlying cause is frequently related to behaviours, attitudes, leadership, communication or the overall food safety culture within the business. Addressing these root causes leads to more sustainable improvements and helps prevent the same issues from recurring.

A practical approach to continuous improvement is the Know–Do–Follow Through model:

Know

Understand where your organisation currently stands.
Regularly review food safety practices, identify risks, investigate incidents and non-compliances, and encourage staff to report concerns without fear of blame.

Do

Implement meaningful improvements.
This may include improving procedures, providing additional training, strengthening supervision, clarifying responsibilities, or removing barriers that make safe practices difficult to follow.

Follow through

Monitor whether the improvements have been effective.
Review trends, verify that changes have been embedded into daily practice, and continue refining systems as new risks and opportunities are identified. Continuous improvement is an ongoing process rather than a one-off activity.

Building a strong food safety culture requires visible leadership and commitment from management, supported by adequate resources such as sufficient staffing, appropriate equipment, time for training, and effective communication. When people have the knowledge, tools and support to perform their roles safely, safe food handling becomes the normal way of working rather than a compliance obligation. A positive food safety culture encourages everyone to take ownership of food safety, speak up about potential risks, and continually look for opportunities to improve.

For resources, visit:

- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (2025) Food Safety Culture

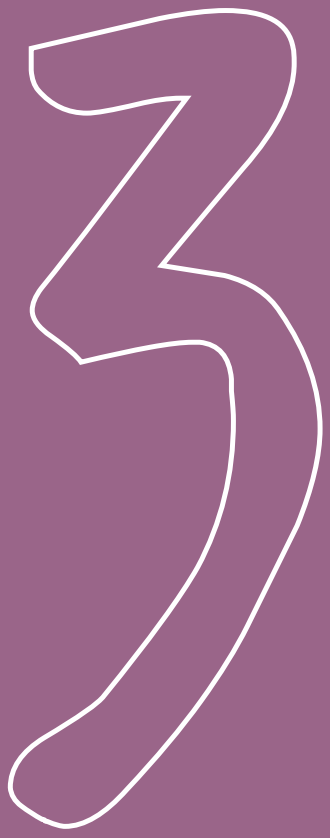
Your food safety regulators

The primary point of contact for ECEC services regarding food safety legislation and regulatory requirements are as follows:

- **ACT:** ACT Government – Health Protection Service
- **NSW:** NSW Food Authority
- **NT:** NT Department of Health
- **QLD:** Local Government where the ECEC is located.
- **SA:** Local Government where the ECEC is located.
- **TAS:** Local Government where the ECEC is located.
- **VIC:** Local Government where the ECEC is located.
- **WA:** ocal Government where the ECEC is located.

SECTION 3

Quality Improvement in Food Environments and the Best Practice Guide



Supporting self assessment in food environments for continuous improvement

Using the Best Practice Guide modules

The Best Practice Guide includes 6 modules as follows:

Module 1



Mealtime Environment and Practices

Module 2



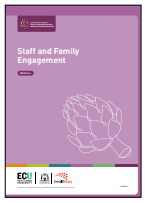
Menu and Meal Quality

Module 3



Food Education

Module 4



Staff and Family Engagement

Module 5



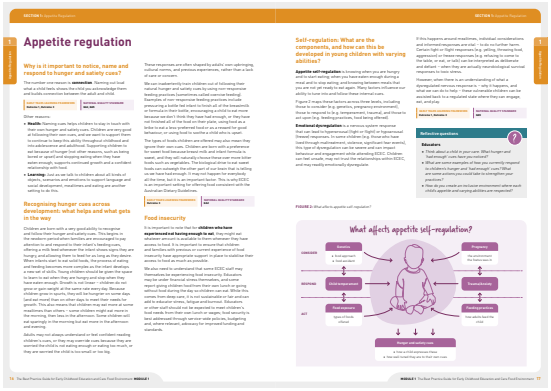
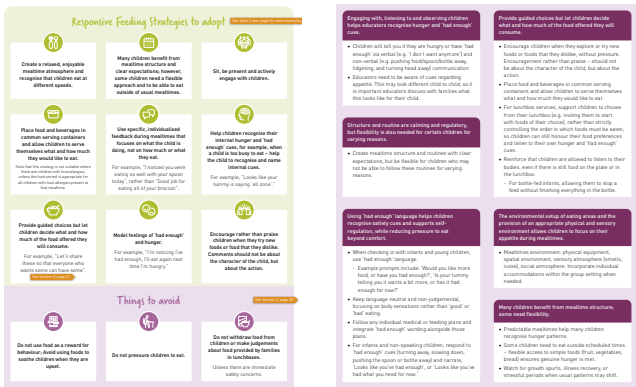
Sustainable Food Practices

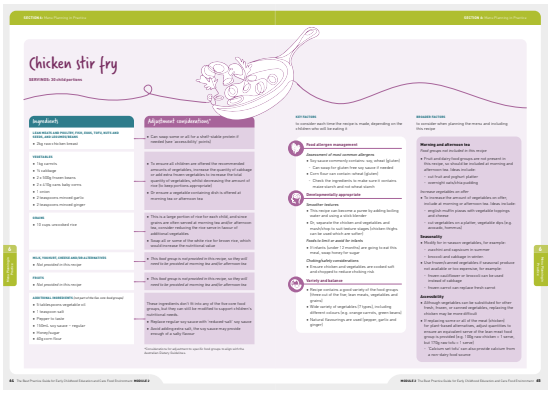
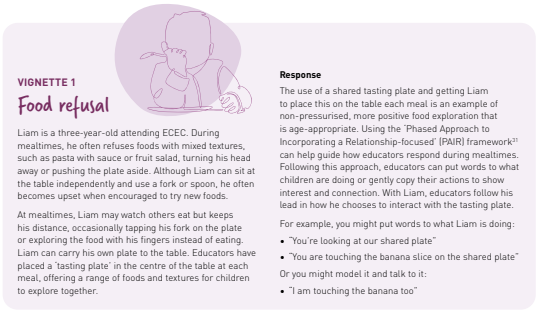
Module 6



Quality, Leadership and Governance (this module)

Within each module you will find support and guidance in the form of:

Support and guidance element	Example
Background information Supporting background information summarising current evidence and providing context to practical strategies and tools used in the guide.	
Principles and practical strategies Generally presented in bullet points and found in the following formats:	
Recommendation statements Highlight key points regarding language.	**RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT** **Moving beyond 'healthy' in food talk (QA 2.1.3)**

Support and guidance element	Example
Practical tools Practical tools underpinned by evidence and aligning to best practice with suggestions for continuous quality improvement.	
Case studies Detailed case studies outlining a service's objectives, process, learnings and outcomes.	
Vignettes including reflection and responses A short moment and experience used for reflection, learning and information.	
Links to EYLF and the National Quality Standard Show the links to the EYLF and NQS.	EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK **Outcome 1, Outcome 3** NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD **QA2, QA5**

Together, these elements can be used to support the following with respect to your service's food environment:

- Assess current practice.
- Identify service strengths.
- Identify areas for improvement.
- Critically reflect on how your service achieves quality outcomes for children and families.
- Share service practice with your families, community and Authorised Officers.

Reflective questions for food environment improvement

Reflective questioning using reflective questions can be a valuable approach to support Quality Improvement, assessment of programs and practices, and identifying areas for improvement.

Throughout each of the Best Practice Guide for Food Environment modules you will find reflective questions which relate to information covered in each section of each module.

The following section draws out reflective questions from each section of all guides.

Reflective questions

Educators

- *Think about a child in your care. What hunger and 'had enough' cues have you noticed?*
- *What are some examples of how you currently respond to children's hunger and 'had enough' cues? What are some actions you could take to strengthen your practices?*
- *How do you create an inclusive environment where each child's appetite and varying abilities are respected?*

Mealtime Environment and Practices

QUALITY AREA 2: Children's health and safety

2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle: Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

Mealtime structure

EDUCATORS

- *Thinking about your group of children, what opportunities are there for the development of social skills during mealtimes? How could you facilitate this? What teaching strategies would you employ?*
- *How effective is your current approach to managing food safety during mealtimes? How do you support casual staff to effectively manage food safety?*
- *How flexible is your service's approach to mealtimes in meeting children's individual needs and routines? How can you support your team with this?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *How do your service's mealtime practices honour the cultural traditions and include the food preferences of the children and families in your service? How is this reflected in your service philosophy and enacted in practice?*
- *What is your continuous improvement approach to managing food safety during mealtimes?*
- *How do you ensure casual staff's knowledge of your service's food safety practices?*

COOKS/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR

- *How could you include families' voices in your service's menu planning? What opportunities might there be for you to contribute to supportive mealtime environments and conversations?*
- *How does the services approach to menu planning, preparing and serving meals encourage children to eat according to their needs?*

Mealtime environment

EDUCATORS

- *To what extent are your mealtime experiences child-centred? How do you involve children in decision making?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *What is your service's approach to creating a relaxed, enjoyable mealtime atmosphere? Is this consistent across your service?*

Hunger cue recognition, autonomy and communication in food choices and the development of feeding practices

EDUCATORS

- *Think about a child in your care. What hunger and 'had enough' cues have you noticed?*
- *What are some examples of how you currently respond to children's hunger and 'had enough' cues? What are some actions you could take to strengthen your practices?*
- *How do you create an inclusive environment where each child's appetite and varying abilities are respected?*
- *What do responsive feeding practices currently look like in your service? What strategies are working well? What would you like to improve?*
- *How can you involve children in evaluating the success of mealtime practices? How can you include their voices?*
- *How do you ensure families feel heard and included when they share concerns about their child's feeding or food preferences?*
- *Think of a time when you felt that a child in your care did not eat enough food? How did you respond? Why? What actions could you take to strengthen your practice?*
- *What opportunities do you provide for children to enjoy food with all of their senses during mealtimes?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *What are your team's personal beliefs and biases about food? How do they influence the way they offer children repeated, pressure-free exposure to different foods and use of neutral, respectful language during mealtimes?*
- *Are any of these concepts new to you or your team? If so, what challenges you/them? Why? What further learning do you and your team require? Who do you need to discuss this with to suggest this as required support?*
- *How does your service work in partnership with families to understand their children's feeding needs, routines, and cultural practices? Are educator practices consistent across your service?*
- *What referral agencies/pathways exist in your community to assist families with feeding concerns? How can you ensure timely access to this information for your families?*
- *How can you support your team to reflect upon the language they currently use at mealtimes with children and strengthen their practice?*
- *How might you support educators who encounter family concerns about their child's eating? How might you extend their skills in partnering with families?*

COOKS/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR

- *How does our menu planning and food service support responsive feeding strategies?*
- *How does the way you plan and serve meals support children to explore a variety of foods without pressure and at their own pace?*
- *How do you ensure that the menu effectively caters to the diverse development needs of children across your service?*
- *How might your role contribute to responsive, inclusive approaches that support children's autonomy, belonging, and positive relationships with food?*

Menu and Meal Quality

QUALITY AREA 2: Children's health and safety

2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle: Healthy eating and physical activityare promoted and appropriate for each child

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.1.3 Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children):

- 78. Food and beverages
- 79. Service providing food and beverages
- 80. Weekly menu
- 136. First aid qualifications

Supporting breastfeeding

- *How does our service create a welcoming, respectful, and supportive environment for families who choose to breastfeed, express breast milk, or provide infant formula?*
- *How do we ensure that feeding times are viewed as valuable opportunities for connection, learning, and wellbeing, rather than simply care tasks?*
- *How do educators ensure they use respectful, non-judgemental language when discussing infant feeding choices with families, regardless of whether they breastfeed, formula feed, or use a combination of both?*
- *How effectively do we implement responsive feeding practices that follow each infant's hunger and 'had enough' cues, rather than focusing on predetermined feeding amounts or schedules?*

Introduction of solid foods (first foods)

- *How do we work in partnership with families to ensure solid foods are introduced at a developmentally appropriate time and in accordance with each infant's individual needs and family preferences?*
- *How do our mealtime practices support children's agency, autonomy and positive relationships with food from the earliest stages of life?*
- *How do we ensure our food preparation and service practices minimise choking risks while still supporting infants to experience a progression of age and developmentally appropriate textures?*

79. Service providing food and beverages

THE IMPORTANCE OF OPTIMAL NUTRITION AND CHILD HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

- *How confident are our educators, cooks, and leaders in understanding the nutritional needs of infants, toddlers and kindy aged children?*
- *What assumptions or beliefs about food, nutrition and children's eating behaviours may be influencing our menu planning and mealtime practice?*
- *Are all 5 food groups represented consistently across our menu cycle, including vegetable, diary and alternatives and meat/meat alternatives?*

AUSTRALIAN DIETARY GUIDELINES

- *Are our menu planning processes driven by children's nutritional requirement or by convenience, cost, habit and children's existing food preferences?*
- *How does our service demonstrate that food and nutrition are viewed as an essential component of children's health, wellbeing, learning and development rather than simply a care routine?*
- *If we reviewed our menu against the Australian Dietary Guidelines today, what strengths would be identified and what opportunities for improvement would emerge?*

EFFECTIVE MENU AND MEAL PLANNING

- *Are there barriers, such as budget, staffing, time or access to resources, that may be impacting menu quality, and how are we addressing them?*
- *How do we know whether our menu truly reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds and dietary needs of the families attending our service?*
- *In what ways do we review and evaluate our menus to ensure they continue to support children's health, wellbeing, and learning?*

79. Service providing food and beverages (continued)

MENU PLANNING IN PRACTICE

- *How well do we support cooks and food coordinators to undertake the complex responsibilities associated with menu planning, budgeting, food allergen management and food safety?*
- *How do we use mealtimes to support children who may experience food insecurity, varying attendance patterns, developmental transitions, or additional nutritional needs?*
- *When adapting recipes due to budget, seasonal availability, supply chain interruptions, cultural requirements or dietary needs, how do we ensure nutritional quality and food group balance are maintained?*

80. Weekly menu

SERVICES MUST DISPLAY A WEEKLY MENU THAT SHOWS PARENTS WHAT FOOD AND DRINKS ARE SERVED EACH DAY

- *How do we create meaningful opportunities for children to provide feedback about meals and menu options in ways that are appropriate to their age, communication style and level of participation?*
- *How effectively do educators observe, document and communicate children's responses to meals, including food preferences, engagement, enjoyment and food waste, to support menu improvement?*

OR

- *Are all children, including infants, non-speaking children and children with additional needs, provided with genuine opportunities to contribute feedback about meals and food experiences?*
- *How effectively does our service use feedback to reduce food waste while maintaining nutritional quality and variety?*
- *How do we ensure cooks, educators and families work collaboratively to support engaging mealtime experiences and continuous improvement of menu quality?*

136. First aid qualifications

- *How do we ensure all educators, cooks and staff understand and consistently follow each child's individual food allergy and anaphylaxis management plan?*
- *What systems are in place to prevent cross-contamination during food preparation, storage, serving and mealtimes, and how do we monitor their effectiveness?*
- *What processes do we use to verify that food provided to children is correctly labelled, prepared and served to the right child, particularly when special dietary requirements exist?*
- *How effectively do our policies translate into consistent practice during busy periods, staff absences or routine changes?*
- *What opportunities do we provide for ongoing professional learning in food safety, food allergen management and emergency response, and how do we assess staff competence?*

Staff and Family Engagement

QUALITY AREA 2: Children's health and safety

2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle: Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

QUALITY AREA 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities (all elements)

Child and family engagement and connection with home

- *How do we engage in sensitive, family-centred conversations when sharing observations about a child's eating, feeding or mealtime experiences?*

Communication with families

- *How do we work collaboratively with families to develop a shared understanding of each child's food allergy, individual needs, and strategies to support their safety, inclusion and wellbeing?*
- *Does feedback to families about children's mealtimes reflect ongoing observations and patterns in the child's eating experiences, rather than a one-off observation?*

Collaborative partnerships for transitions

- *How do we respond when family preferences, cultural practices or food traditions intersect with food allergen management requirements?*

Supporting families

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AT LUNCHBOX SERVICES

- *To what extent do our interactions with children and families reflect a strengths-based approach that avoids judgement, comparison or criticism of lunchbox contents?*

OR

- *When concerns arise about a lunchbox, do we approach families with curiosity and partnership, or do our assumptions influence the conversation?*
- *Do our lunchbox policies and practices genuinely support equity and inclusion for all families, or might they unintentionally disadvantage some families?*

Collaborative partnerships for transitions

- *What evidence do we have that all educators are confident and competent in implementing food allergen management procedures and responding to allergic reactions?*

Access and participation

- *How do we ensure mealtimes promote dignity, belonging, safety, relationships and participation for all children, rather than focusing solely on food consumption?*
- *To what extent do our mealtime environments and routines accommodate different ways of eating, feeding, communicating and participating, rather than expecting all children to engage in the same way?*
- *How do educators listen to and interpret children's communication during mealtimes, including non-speaking communication such as gestures, behaviour, proximity, refusal, sensory responses and emotional regulation?*
- *Does our service definition of 'participation' include children who are tube-fed, have sensory sensitivities, food allergies, medical needs, or who engage with food in different ways?*
- *Are there any barriers within our environment, routines or practices that may unintentionally restrict children's participation, comfort or enjoyment during mealtimes?*
- *To what extent do our mealtime and food-related practices support children with food allergies to participate fully and feel included, rather than different or excluded from their peers?*
- *How inclusive and responsive is our mealtime environment for children with diverse sensory, cultural, developmental, medical or feeding needs? What adjustments could further support participation and engagement?*
- *How do our mealtime environments and educator practices promote children's autonomy, belonging and positive relationships with food?*
- *What does inclusion feel like at the lunch table for this child?*
- *When a menu is modified to meet needs for food allergies or other medical conditions, is the child also socially included?*
- *Are alternatives planned as part of the shared experience, or added as an afterthought?*
- *How do we document participation, comfort and belonging, not only food consumption?*

Food Education

QUALITY AREA 1: Educational program and practice (all elements)

QUALITY AREA 2: Children's health and safety

2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle: Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

Embedding food-based learning in everyday practice

EDUCATORS

- *Think of a routine in your room. How could you deepen this to become a meaningful food related ritual? Are there any barriers that are stopping this from happening and how can they be overcome?*
- *In what ways do you foster children independence, agency and participation in preparing and caring for their mealtime environment?*
- *What observations have you made around children engagement with food related play? How have these observations informed your intentional input?*

Cooking and food preparation experiences

EDUCATORS

- *How do you currently involve children in planning cooking and food preparation experiences? Can you think of more opportunities to include their voice and input?*
- *Have you completed the relevant food safety and food allergen management training? Do you feel confident applying that knowledge during cooking and food preparation experiences with children?*
- *How does your service support new staff to build risk awareness around food and cooking experiences during induction? Is this revisited as part of ongoing professional development?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *How do you ensure staff have the skills, confidence and support to safely lead cooking and food preparation experiences with children? How would you know if a staff member didn't feel confident and what could you do about it?*

Food themes and learning experiences

EDUCATORS

- *How are the cultural backgrounds and food traditions of the children in your room reflected in your planned and spontaneous experiences? Are there any families whose traditions haven't yet found their way in?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *Does anyone on your team have the skills or interest to lead a garden program? What support, training or materials could you offer to encourage this?*

Extending learning opportunities

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *Think of an off-site experience or service you currently engage with. How could this develop into an ongoing partnership? Could it be sustained beyond a single term or year?*
- *How does your outdoor and on-site environment support children's ongoing access to food-related learning? Are there physical resources or spaces you could develop further?*

Partnerships and collaboration for food education opportunities

EDUCATORS

- *How do you invite family knowledge, recipes and traditions into your food education program in a way that feels genuinely collaborative? How do we help families see the value this holds for their child?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *Is there a community organisation your service already has a relationship with, even in another context, that could enrich food education if the partnership were extended?*
- *What would a genuine, reciprocal partnership with a cultural group in your community look like for your food education program?*

Sustainable Food Practices

QUALITY AREA 3: Physical Environment

3.2.3: Environmentally responsible: The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

Service cares for the environment

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *How do we weigh environmental factors, such as food miles, packaging and biodiversity in purchasing decisions? When cost, convenience and environmental impact conflict, how do we decide what takes priority?*
- *How does our menu planning ensure plant-based foods, like legumes and wholegrains, appear regularly across the menu cycle?*
- *Does our policy or quality improvement plan clearly define what "minimally processed" means for our service, or is this left to individual interpretation?*
- *What systems do we have for communicating between educators and the kitchen about attendance numbers, food experiences or changes that affect how much food is needed?*

Supports children to become environmentally responsible

EDUCATORS

- *How do we involve children in reducing food waste during mealtimes? What do we notice about their understanding of why it matters?*
- *How well do the foods and cooking experiences we offer reflect both what's local and in season, and the cultural food practices of the families in our care?*
- *How do we make sure conversations about food don't carry assumptions about who does the cooking or shopping at home? When we notice these assumptions coming up, how do we address them without singling anyone out?*
- *How do we balance reducing plate waste with respecting children's autonomy and their own "had enough" cues?*
- *How do we draw on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on plants and food to shape our garden as an ongoing partnership?*

SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- *How do we monitor whether food and drink offered across the day meets children's needs, without over or under catering? What signals tell us when this balance is off, and how quickly do we act on them?*

SECTION 4

Appendices



Appendix A – Glossary

Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation	Full form
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
BPG	Best Practice Guide for Early Childhood Education and Care Food Environment
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FE	Food Education module
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand
MEP	Mealtime Environment and Practices module
MMQ	Menu and Meal Quality module
NNN-ECEC	National Nutrition Network – Early Childhood Education and Care
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
OSHC	Outside School Hours Care
QA	Quality Area
QLG	Quality, Leadership and Governance module
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SFE	Staff and Family Engagement module
SFP	Sustainable Food Practices module

Key terms and definitions

Term	Definition
Artichoke Mode	A visual conceptual framework for understanding the whole food environment in Early Childhood Education and Care settings. Like the layers of an artichoke, the model places children's everyday food experiences at the centre, surrounded by the people, places, systems and routines that shape those experiences. The model includes 12 connected 'leaves' grouped into three layers: What (food provided), How (feeding practices and support), and Environmental Levers (service conditions).
Authorised Officer	Authorised Officers monitor, assess, rate and provide advice to ECEC services for Quality Improvement purposes.5
Best Practice Guide (BPG)	The Best Practice Guide for Early Childhood Education and Care Food Environment – a comprehensive guide providing evidence-informed recommendations for creating positive food environments in ECEC settings for children from birth to 5 years.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	Formal care and educational settings for children from birth to 5 years, including long day care, family day care, preschools and kindergartens.
Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)	Australia's national framework (version 2.0) that guides early childhood educators in developing high-quality programs for children from birth to 5 years. The framework describes the principles, practices and outcomes essential to support and enhance children's learning.
Food allergy	Food allergy is an immune system reaction to a food. Foods that cause an allergic reaction are called food allergens.

Term	Definition
National Nutrition Network – ECEC (NNN-ECEC)	A community of practice comprising researchers, practitioners, and government and non-government employees who collaborate to improve nutrition and food environments in early childhood education and care settings across Australia. www.nationalnutritionnetwork.com.au
National Quality Standard (NQS)	Australia's national benchmark for quality in education and care services, consisting of seven quality areas including Educational Program and Practice, Children's Health and Safety, Physical Environment, Staffing Arrangements, Relationships with Children, Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities, and Governance and Leadership.
Service leader	This may include roles such as director, nominated supervisor, coordinator, or other service leadership positions depending on the service structure and jurisdiction.

Appendix B – QLG Module Development Process

Stage 1: Scoping

Purpose: To develop the initial topic and question list for the BPG.

Approach: Using the Artichoke Framework as a basis the following process was completed:

- Alignment of the artichoke model to reduce duplication of themes and sub topics.
- Problem Analysis based on each theme and sub topic of the artichoke model.
- Based on initial problem analysis and associated problem trees adaptation to theme objectives, and associated questions.
- Development of background and foreground questions addressing each problem statement.

Who was involved: BPG Project Team

Stage 2: Evidence sourcing, co-design and question refinement

Evidence Sourcing and Co-Design

Purpose: Source relevant evidence (all forms), lived experiences and contexts.

Approach: Using the initial topic and question list Evidence Sourcing, System Mapping and Co-design was undertaken using the following approach:

- Literature reviews.
- Surveys representation from a wide range of centre types (e.g., centre-based care, family day care), meal provision models (meals provided onsite, lunchbox services) and locations (metropolitan, inner regional, outer regional, remote, very remote).
- Focus groups (ECEC cooks, educators, service leaders and Authorised Officers).
- BPG Advisory Group.

Who was involved

- BPG Project Team.
- Advisory group (review only).
- QLG Working Group.

Question refinement

Purpose: To review and provide feedback to refine the initial question list for the BPG.

Approach: Presentation of the process and associated outputs (i.e, themes and question list) for review and refinement.

Who was involved

- QLG Working Group.

Stage 3: QLG Guide development

Purpose: To develop the recommendations, strategies and practices and review associated supporting text for the BPG.

Approach	Who was involved
Induction Session and Background Session: To outline the process to date and review the evidence from the evidence sourcing and co-design process outputs.	• QLG Working Group • BPG Advisory Group • BPG Project Team
QLG Workshop 1: To develop the guide recommendation, strategies and background text - **Out of Session:** Review outputs of previous workshops	• QLG Working Group • BPG Project Team
QLG Workshop 2: To develop the guide recommendation, strategies and background text - **Out of Session:** Review outputs of previous workshops	• QLG Working Group • BPG Project Team
QLG Workshop 3: To develop the guide recommendation, strategies and background text - **Out of Session:** Review outputs of previous workshops	• QLG Working Group • BPG Project Team
QLG Workshop 4: To develop the guide recommendation, strategies and background text - **Out of Session:** Review outputs of previous workshops	• QLG Working Group • BPG Project Team
QLG Workshop 5: To develop the guide recommendation, strategies and background text - **Out of Session:** Review outputs of previous workshops	• QLG Working Group • BPG Project Team
Specialist Input	• Food, Environmental Health Directorate, Public and Aboriginal Health Division, Department of Health, Western Australia. • Education Consultants
Review and Design Process: Finalise QLG Module	• QLG Working Group • BPG Advisory Group (select members only) • BPG Project Team
QLG Guide Completed	

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