



2026 Playgroup Handbook



Welcome

Thank you for choosing to join Playgroup at Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC). BNC is a not-for-profit organisation offering a range of programs and activities for our community. To continue delivering high quality playgroups, we acknowledge the importance of family input, participation and communication and we view the children and parents as our partners in creating a positive experience for all.

We value and respect the individuality of each child, their family and background, the ancestral custodians of this land and shared insights and traditions that all stakeholders bring to the Centre.

This handbook contains some relevant policies and guidelines to ensure a common understanding of how our program runs. If interested, parents are encouraged to join the Children's Room Subcommittee, the Committee of Management, or any of the other decision-making bodies within the organisation which formulate and approve the policies that our Centre follows. Contact the office if you wish to view any other general Centre policies or procedures, or if you have any questions about the information provided.

Keep In Touch:

Office: (03) 8768 4400 or Email: playgroup@bncinc.org.au

For Centre updates and information see our website and follow us on Facebook and Instagram:



www.bncinc.org.au



www.facebook.com/beaconsfieldnc



www.instagram.com/beaconsfieldnc

Disclaimer:

Information included in this handbook is current at the time of its distribution. The review and update of policies and procedures at BNC is ongoing and may affect the currency of this information. BNC reserves the right to vary the information without notice. If necessary, please check with the office for the latest version of any information contained in this guide.

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Playgroup Guidelines

Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) aims to provide a venue and focal point that is community focussed, friendly, supportive, secure & stimulating. These guidelines have been developed so that all members have a clear understanding of what we need to do to ensure that our playgroups run smoothly & evolve according to community needs.

Alicia Alan, our Playgroup Facilitator, will be organising your activities before you arrive. Alicia also plays an active role in each session through: explaining and demonstrating the activities; ensuring the timetable is followed; conducting song and story time; and general assistance. Alicia is happy to hear and discuss any suggestions or queries you may have.

Structure of Playgroup Sessions

The playgroup sessions are set-up prior to each session commencing. All activities, craft & play equipment will be ready to use.

For the convenience and enjoyment of those attending playgroup we have adopted a structured timetable for each session:

9.00am - 9.50am OR 11.30am - 12.20pm	Indoor activities on tables and floor mats combined with free play.
9.50am – 9.55am OR 12.20pm – 12.25pm	Pack-up time; put toys in boxes, clear tables, wash brushes and containers, wipe tables. Please make sure that everything is packed away <u>before</u> starting snack.
9.55am – 10.10am OR 12.25pm – 12.40pm	Snack time. Please encourage your children to sit at a table whilst eating.
10.10am – 10.50am OR 12.40pm – 1.20pm	Outside play, weather permitting.
10.50 – 11.00am OR 1.20pm – 1.30pm	Songs and/or story time on the mat. Please feel free to join your child/children on the mat.
11.00am OR 1.30pm	Home time.

We have found that this time breakdown allows the children adequate time to enjoy a variety of experiences during the session. It also allows adequate time for parents to pack up and clean towards the end of the session without being rushed. We ask that all members of the group work together in a supportive and courteous manner to ensure all can benefit from the playgroup experience in a safe and enjoyable environment. Times within the session may vary depending on our focus or topic for a particular week.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Bring a snack and a drink for each child. Please encourage and pack healthy snacks. Food sharing amongst the children is not allowed but the responsibility for what is consumed by each child remains with the parent or guardian. The Centre promotes the principles of healthy eating in its Food and Nutrition Policy. The full policy is available upon request.
- The Centre is allergy aware – if your child has any allergies or food intolerances, please record it on the Playgroup Family Enrolment Form and inform the Playgroup Facilitator so your needs can be considered and met if required.
- Bring a change of clothes along with nappies and wipes if required.
- The activities set up may be messy; please dress your child appropriately.
- Dirty nappies should be disposed of in the outside bins located at the exit near the Maternal and Child Health Nurse. This is to avoid unpleasant smells within the room for other occupants as well as hygiene reasons.
- **Parents/caregivers are responsible for their own children whilst at playgroup.**
- Please do not bring children's toys from home. No war toys will be brought to or used at playgroup, e.g. toy guns, pistols, etc.
- We ask all adults to help maintain a safe environment for all children, e.g. watch that a pile of toys does not become climbing equipment and lead to a possible accident or stack equipment correctly to ensure it does not fall on top of someone. *(It is of course understood that accidents do happen, especially with children, but sometimes these can be avoided thanks to a watchful eye).*
- All hot drinks must be in an enclosed container and out of reach of small hands.
- Swearing or distasteful language from either parents/caregivers or children is not acceptable at BNC

Clean Up

Parents are required to clean up throughout every session. Clean up should be shared amongst all participants in a cooperative and considerate manner. The storage rooms and shelves have labelled boxes & storage containers to help keep everything in order, safe & tidy. Alicia is available during this time to assist with direction.

The list of clean up duties is detailed below and is a base requirement. However, should a spill occur throughout the session, it needs to be attended to immediately for safety reasons. Sponges, brooms and a mop are available in the room.

Have you helped?

9.50am OR 12.20pm

- Pack away toys and equipment.
- Wash paint/glue containers and brushes leave to air dry near bathroom sink area.
- Wipe down paint easel from paint spillage.
- Wipe down tables in preparation for snack-time.

10.10am OR 12.40pm

- Wipe down tables following completion of snack-time.
- Sweep floors following completion of snack-time.

10.50am OR 1.20pm

- Pack away toys and equipment from the outdoor area.

11.00am OR 1.30pm

- Prior to leaving, please check the room to ensure that you are leaving it in a clean state for the next group. This may require another check of the tables and floors.

Sign in Procedure

- On arrival at the Centre please sign your child in on the Sign In sheet. This is located outside the Children's Room door.
- Please fill in names of any extra adults & children who are attending the playgroup session.
- Please ensure you fill in the family record/ emergency details form after you have joined the playgroup and give to the Playgroup Facilitator.

Accidents

- Accidents will be attended to immediately.
- An ambulance will be called if required.
- All accidents or injuries are required to be written down in the Accident and Injury Book.
- All accidents will be reported to the Centre Coordinator.

Damage

In the case that damage occurs to the Centre, grounds or equipment, we would appreciate that you report this to Alicia or other Centre staff immediately. This helps us ensure all equipment is in good working order. Malicious, intentional damage may attract a fee for repairs or replacement.

Behaviour Management

- All parents/caregivers will be responsible for their children's behaviour at playgroup. Behaviour such as throwing sand, biting, hitting etc is not acceptable and it is expected that parents/caregivers will deal with this accordingly. These childhood behaviours do occur and probably all children at some time will exhibit aggressive behaviour towards another during play and if addressed immediately, this is acceptable.
- If the aggressive behaviour continues, each parent/caregiver is encouraged to discuss and share ways in which the behaviour can be discouraged. The playgroup is open to suggestions from parents/caregivers as to how they would like the situation to be dealt with and how other parents can help.
- If after a reasonable time has elapsed and the aggressive behaviour has not improved, then the Centre Coordinator will inform the Committee of Management for further steps to be taken depending upon the nature and seriousness of the behaviour. At all stages, the parent/caregiver is encouraged to discuss the situation.

Fees and Payments

The Centre has a complete Fees Policy which can be viewed on request. For Playgroup, the following terms apply:

- Each Playgroup session has 21 available places and fees are payable for the full term. Payment is due within the first two weeks of attendance.
- In setting fees, the aim is to provide a quality service while remaining affordable to users and being financially responsible with respect to funding the program.
- Payments to be made by cash, EFTPOS, direct bank transfer or cheque payable to the Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre.
- If fees are in arrears without an agreed payment plan, attendance may be suspended at the discretion of the Centre Coordinator/Children's Subcommittee until account is paid. The term fee is calculated based on the number of available sessions within a term multiplied by the sessional rate. If an enrolment commences during the term, a pro-rata fee will be calculated which is the term fee divided by the number of weeks in the term and multiplied by the remaining weeks.
- There is a discounted rate for a second sibling and a further discounted rate for additional siblings or babies. Sibling attendance must be within the same term to receive the discounted rate.

Annual fees

It is Committee of Management Policy that all families participating in Playgroup are Associate Members of BNC. The Annual Membership fee is \$15.00 per family or \$12.00 concession. Members are entitled to attend any programs running at the Centre.

Term fees

Term fees are calculated based on the number of available sessions in each term and advertised in the Centre's Term Program. For example, an average 10-week term has the following fee structure:

- 1st child - \$75.00 per term.
- 2nd child (6 months of age and above) - \$40.00 per term.
- 3rd child and subsequent siblings - \$25.00 each per term.
- Babies birth to 6 months of age (calculated as at first day of the term) - \$25.00 each per term.

To secure a place in the following year's Playgroup, a \$20 non-refundable deposit is required from enrolment day in November. This deposit is deducted from Term 1 fees. The deposit will be forfeited, and the place no longer held if not taken up within Term 1.

BNC understands that a class may not always be a good fit or the right timing for a child and allows for a trial class to be undertaken in certain programs prior to the term commitment. The trial class will incur a pro-rata fee for the session plus membership if not already a member. Trial classes are offered for Playgroup sessions which already have sufficient attendees to run.

Termination & Refund Procedure

- Families must pay for all sessions attended. Refunds in the case of payments made in advance will be made at the discretion of the Centre Coordinator.
- Make-up sessions are not available and there is no refund for absences.
- If payment has been made for the full term, one week's notice is required should a parent wish to remove their child from the program.
- If Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre terminates the program because there are insufficient children to make the program viable, a full refund will be given.

Complaints & Concerns

Complaints and concerns from parents or staff should initially be directed to either the Playgroup Facilitator or the Centre Coordinator who will endeavour to address the problem. If there is no satisfaction, the matter will be directed to the Children's Subcommittee for review. If necessary, the Children's Subcommittee will refer the matter to the Committee of Management for resolution.

Playgroup Policy

Background

Playgroups bring young children, parents, families and communities together to learn, develop and nurture through informal play activities and social interaction. Playgroups help families to have fun and relax together, and to build friendships and support networks that empower, encourage and assist.

The Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) holds facilitated Playgroup sessions in the Children's Room each week during school terms.

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to ensure that every BNC Playgroup session has a safe, healthy and caring environment that stimulates and encourages family participation and enjoyment.

Policy statements

The service at BNC is family friendly. It encourages parent or carer involvement, participation and feedback. All participants must be Centre members which includes agreement to abide by the Member Code of Conduct.

Relevant policies are agreed upon by staff, the Children's Subcommittee and the Committee of Management. The policy applies to the Committee, staff, families, volunteers and students involved with or who use the service.

The program ensures that all children regardless of gender, race ethnicity or background or ability are given opportunities to participate. are inclusive of all, creating an open, welcoming and friendly environment for all children and their families, no matter their circumstances, backgrounds or cultural identity.

The furniture, materials and equipment used in all BNC children's services programs are age group appropriate and monitored for safety.

Each session is limited to 21 children (of any ages) with a maximum of two parents/carers/special friends accompanying each child. This is the safest number for the Children's Room capacity and it ensures that all children will have the best opportunity to engage in the activities.

Insurance

The Centre is covered per Insurance Policy from VMIA for the State Government of Victoria funded Community Service Organisations.

Smoking

No smoking is allowed in this Centre.

Illness/Infectious Disease

Children should not attend the Centre if they display any of the following symptoms:

- High temperature above 38 degrees
- Diarrhoea or vomiting in the last 24 hours
- Severe cold or flu or any coloured mucus accompanying a cold or cough
- Conjunctivitis
- Tonsillitis
- Rashes, Cold sores, Ringworm, Thrush
- Head Lice

- Contagious disease (this may include Covid, chicken pox, croup, Gastroenteritis, German measles, measles, mumps, whooping cough, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, streptococcal, slap cheek, school sores)

Confirmation from a doctor may be required upon the child's return to ensure they have completely recovered from the illness and are no longer contagious.

Behaviour Management

Child safety is a critical consideration of our organisation and BNC is committed to enabling a cultural change that will mean protecting children from abuse and neglect is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. The Centre has robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that information, awareness and action is given to matters of child safety.

Our organisation's approach to behaviour management is based on consistency, reinforcing appropriate behaviour and modelling by setting positive examples of appropriate behaviour.

- All children, staff, parents and visitors have the right to feel safe at all times.
- All children, staff, parents and visitors are encouraged to care for others, the associated environment and property.
- No one has the right to disrupt someone else's enjoyment of the program.

Emergency Evacuation

We practice our emergency evacuation regularly. It is Centre policy that all children be involved fire drills. The Centre practices fire drills regularly (at least once a term) and all children and caregivers at the Centre will participate.

Roles and Responsibilities

Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly review and update policies and procedures to ensure they are maintained in line with best practice principles and guidelines and compliant with legislation requirements.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build warm, trusting relationships and actively support every family. • Plan, set up and facilitate a weekly program of activities
Parents/Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the successful running of the playgroup as detailed in the Playgroup Guidelines.

Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Background

Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) is committed to the protection, safety and wellbeing of children in its care, supervision or authority.

Compulsory minimum standards apply in Victoria for organisations that provide services for children to help protect children from abuse and neglect. The Commission for Children and Young People are the oversight body for the Child Safe Standards. The Standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice.

The Standards were initiated in 2016 and changes which strengthen child safety in Victoria have since been made. Eleven new Child Safe Standards replace the previous seven standards and principles and must be complied with from 1 July 2022.

Purpose

The aims of this policy are:

- to ensure BNC is well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.
- to provide awareness of the Child Safe Standards throughout the organisation to help identify gaps and then improve existing policies and procedures.
- to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Policy Statements

To create and maintain a child safe environment, BNC complies with the following Child Safe Standards:

Child Safe Standard 1

Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

- A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported at BNC.
- BNC acknowledges and appreciates the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people. Census figures identify less than 1% of the local population are Aboriginal and so BNC actively supports and facilitates participation, inclusion and a culturally safe environment for all with a genuine readiness to focus on the needs of potential Aboriginal participants.
- Racism is identified, confronted, and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child Safe Standard 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

- BNC makes a public pledge to uphold child safety through our Child Safety Statement of Commitment.
- Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at all levels.
- A Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers and a Member Code of Conduct provides guidelines for all participants on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- BNC's Risk Management Policy focuses on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

Child Safe Standard 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

- Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.
- The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.
- BNC offers access to relevant information in an age-appropriate way.
- Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.
- BNC has strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- BNC provides opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

Child Safe Standard 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

- Families participate in decisions affecting their child through constant liaison with educators and information provided at enrolment in the service.
- BNC engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible with our Children's Room handbook as well as electronic communication and an open invitation for verbal feedback and discussion.
- Families and communities have a say in the development and review of BNC's policies and procedures with annual surveys for members and the opportunity to join the COM or Children's Room Subcommittee.
- Families, carers and the community are informed about BNC's operations and governance.

Child Safe Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

- BNC understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- BNC pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.
- BNC pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.

Child Safe Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

- BNC has effective screening tools to assist the recruitment of suitable employees, contractors and volunteers to minimise the risk of inappropriate individuals entering the organisation.
- Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing.
- Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks.

- All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.
- Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

Child Safe Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

- BNC has a Complaints and Grievance Policy and Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy which clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approach to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- Complaints are taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- BNC has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Child Safe Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

- Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement BNC's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

- Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and associated procedures.
- The BNC Risk Management Plan considers risks posed by organisational settings, activities, and the physical environment.

Child Safe Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

- BNC regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.
- Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.
- BNC reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

Child Safe Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

- BNC policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards and are documented and easy to understand.
- Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.
- Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities

Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Document and review policies and procedures with a child safety focus• Promote and model a child safe culture
Staff/Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children whilst undertaking duties• Undertake training and education to keep children safe
Parents/Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comply with Member Code of Conduct

Child Safety Statement of Commitment

All children who come to Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre have a right to feel and be safe.

We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people accessing our services and this will always be our priority.

Our organisation:

- has zero tolerance for child abuse
- wants children to be safe, happy and empowered
- actively works to listen to and respect all children
- is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks
- has systems in place to protect children from abuse
- will take all allegations very seriously and respond to them consistently in line with our policies and procedures
- has legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety
- is committed to promoting a safe environment for children of any age, ability, gender, religion, culture and background. While all children are vulnerable, we understand the increased vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with disabilities.

We have specific, robust policies and procedures in place that support our Committee of Management members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments. Families are invited to contribute to their development and review via the Children's Room Subcommittee or Committee of Management.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Member Code of Conduct

Background

Our purpose at Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) is to advance social connections, education and public welfare by providing a venue and focal point that offers a wide variety of community services, activities and information to support the local community. We provide community support and a social, friendly, safe, secure and stimulating environment.

We aim to work together, with each other and with our members, to provide the best possible service to our community. BNC is committed to protecting the safety and wellbeing of all Centre stakeholders and engaging in positive, constructive relationships.

Member Code of Conduct

This Code applies to members of BNC and must be observed in any interactions related to the Centre to ensure the best possible experience for all. You agree to abide by this code as part of your membership application.

1. Abide by the law and BNC Policies and Procedures.
2. Aggressive, bullying or intimidating behaviour is unacceptable.
3. Comply with the reasonable directions given by BNC employees to foster a safe and welcoming environment within the Centre.
4. Be considerate, listen to other perspectives and refrain from harassing, discriminating or vilifying others based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, age, disability, background, beliefs or opinions.
5. Be respectful of the privacy of children, their families, BNC employees, volunteers and visitors. Do not take, email, text or post photos on social media of any person (besides your own child) without their consent or, in the case of another child, the consent of their family.
6. Raise any concerns in accordance with BNC's Complaints & Grievance Policy.
7. Refrain from smoking or vaping in or near the Beaconsfield Community Complex.
8. Not be adversely affected by alcohol or other substances.
9. Familiarise all family members and emergency contacts associated with a child's enrolment in our licensed Children's Room programs with this Code and commit that they will comply with the Code.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Not complying with this Code may have serious consequences. BNC will endeavour to resolve any matter involving breaches of this Code by facilitating discussion between the parties. If the non-compliance is serious or if, in the opinion of BNC, there is a risk of future non-compliance, BNC may take any action it considers appropriate in the circumstances. This may include cancelling membership at the Centre.

This Code was reviewed and approved by the Committee of Management on September 2, 2025.