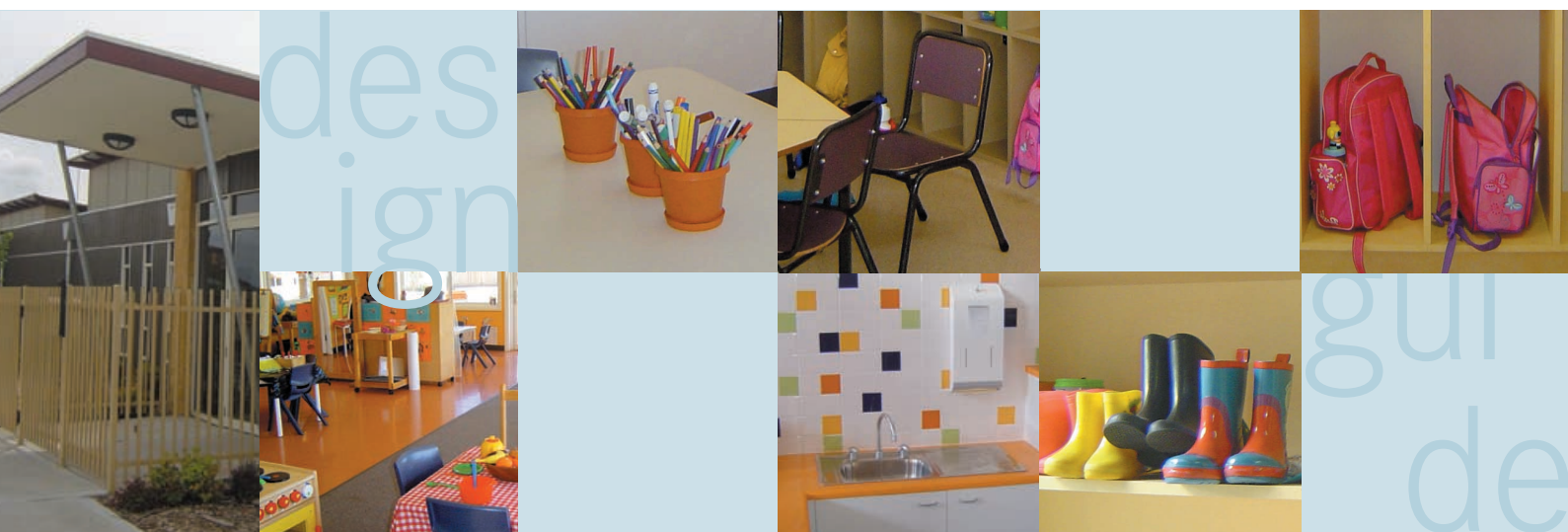


# Design guide for Victorian children's services





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Published by Office for Children, Victorian Government Department  
of Human Services, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

April 2005

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Also published on website [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/csguidelines](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/csguidelines)

Authorised by the State Government of Victoria, 555 Collins Street, Melbourne.

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## About the guide

### Foreword

The environment in which children are cared for – where they play, learn and interact makes an important contribution to the quality of these experiences. I am therefore pleased to introduce this new edition of the *Design Guide for Victorian Children's Services*. The guide provides useful information that will enable proprietors, licensees and operators of existing and prospective children's services to construct, alter or extend their facilities, creating inviting and caring environments for children.

The Victorian Government has a history of providing adjunct guides to aid the early childhood sector, this resource building on previous editions in a series of 'design briefs'. The Design Guide is provided as supporting material to the legislative framework in Victoria, specifically the *Children's Services Act 1996* and the *Children's Services Regulations 1998*. The Design Guide outlines minimum premises and building requirements in line with the legislation and in addition suggests best practice approaches. This approach will inspire and challenge those who use it as they progress through the multitude of decisions associated with their planning process.

The creation of the Design Guide as a navigable web resource is a new development. This user-friendly format enables the Design Guide to be available to a wide audience, both those in the early childhood sector and those within the design and construction fields.

As a community that values children, our priority must be to provide for the needs of all children where they live, play or are cared for. Their health, safety, education and wellbeing is paramount. The Government continues to make early childhood a priority as evidenced by this type of professional resource.

I commend this guide to you, confident in the knowledge that it will be a useful tool in the development of suitable environments for children.

**The Hon Sherryl Garbutt MP**  
**Minister for Children**  
**Minister for Community Services**

## Acknowledgements

The Design Guide was written by Denis Sweetnam of Sweetnam Godfrey and Ord, Architects and Facility Planners, with input from the Office for Children, Department of Human Services.

The Department of Human Services would like to thank the following organisations that provided information within the consultation phase of the preparation of the design guide. This occurred through focus groups and input to scoping documents and draft versions of the resource.

Acacia IndoChinese Children's Centre, Alpha Children's Centre, Association of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres, Bass Coast Shire Council, Batdja Preschool and Childcare, Brimbank City Council, Building Commission, Cancer Council Victoria – Sunsmart, Child Care Centres Association of Victoria, City of Boroondara, City of Casey, City of Glen Eira, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Greater Geelong, City of Melbourne, City of Monash, City of Stonnington, City of Whittlesea, City of Yarra, Darebin City Council, Department of Allergy Royal Children's Hospital, Community Child Care, Early Childhood Intervention Association, East Gippsland Shire Council, Early Childhood Australia – Victoria Branch, Environmental Education in Early Childhood, Fawkner Park Children's Centre, FKA Multicultural Resource Centre, Greater Shepparton City Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Horsham Rural City Council, Kindergarten Parents Victoria, Knox City Council Child Care Network, Maroondah City Council, Mary Featherston Design, Melton Shire Council, McKenzie Group, Moira Shire Council, Monash City Council, Monash University, Northern Grampians Shire Council, Peppercorn Management, Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria, Playworks Resource Unit, Reggio Emilia Information Exchange, Rural City of Wangaratta, Save the Children Fund Kindergarten Shepparton, Shire of Yarra Ranges, South Gippsland Shire, Uniting Care Early Childhood Services Victoria and Tasmania, VicSeg, Victorian Children's Service Association, West Wimmera Shire Council, Wyndham City Council.

Assistance from Department of Human Services regional staff, plus staff from the Early Years Unit and Capital Management Branch through the internal reference group is also acknowledged.

Thanks are extended to the following children's services that assisted with photographs for the resource.

- Bialik College Early Learning Centre, Hawthorn
- Deakin and Community Childcare Cooperative, Burwood
- East West Childcare Association, Fitzroy
- Green Park Casuarina Kindergarten, Horsham
- Gwendoline Children's Centre, Berwick
- Just Little People Early Learning, New Gisborne
- Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre, Carlton
- Melbourne University Family Cooperative, Carlton
- Monash Children's Centre, Clayton
- Numdaji Kwei Children's Centre, Bundoora
- Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, Essendon
- Rossmoyne Family Resource Centre, Berwick
- Shirley Robertson Children's Centre, Coburg
- Sweetlands Child Care Centre, Box Hill
- The University of Melbourne's Early Learning Centre – Research and Demonstration Preschool, Abbotsford
- Thomastown West Child Care Centre, Thomastown
- Wattle Hill Kindergarten, Burwood
- Yarralea Children's Centre, Alphington



## Background

The *Design Guide for Victorian Children's Services 2005* (Design Guide) provides guidelines that complement the *Children's Services Act 1996* (the Act) and the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* (the Regulations). Both pieces of legislation can be accessed at the website for Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents. ([www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au](http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au))

This 2005 resource supersedes previous editions.

Section 3 of the *Children's Services Act 1996* defines a children's service as:

*'a service providing care or education for 5 or more children under the age of 6 years in the absence of their parents or guardians; for fee or reward, or while the parents or guardians of the children use services or facilities provided by the proprietor of the service.'*

This includes services such as long day care, occasional care and kindergarten.

The Act is the statutory framework for children's services. Its purpose is to provide for the licensing and regulation of children's services. The Regulations specify the minimum standards that must be met by a children's service in its day-to-day operation. With the exception of some differences in premises requirements in restricted children's services, these standards are common across all licensed children's services in Victoria.

The Design Guide has been prepared as a generic resource. It is not based on a particular model for a children's service. It endeavours to address changing needs in the delivery of children's services programs including the establishment of multi-use or integrated children's centres. The intention is that the Design Guide will be useful to organisations and committees of management who are planning to start a centre, as well as professionals who are part of the design process.

The Design Guide endeavours to address the requirements for planning and designing **new** children's services, as well as altering or extending **existing** premises to comply with the Regulations. The information could also be used for voluntarily upgrading of facilities over time, beyond the minimum standards.

The information contained in the Design Guide is intended to be used to create safe and secure environments for the delivery of care and education programs that assist children's development and wellbeing.

The Design Guide outlines four levels of requirement:

- Essential: (E) items that, due to regulations or standards, are essential
- Desirable: (D) items that are not required by regulation, but are recommended as best practice features
- Optional: (O) items that may possibly be included due to configuration, size or setting, or as a preference decision
- Nil requirement (-) compliance with a requirement has been considered, however, no specific requirement is determined.

## Objectives and Intent

It is not the intention of these guidelines to give direction on all possible design features for children's services premises but rather to raise the awareness of key elements associated with the design and construction of these facilities in line with the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

It is expected that designers will conduct their own research that will incorporate concepts and notions identified in these guidelines. It is hoped that innovative solutions in the planning of a children's service will be the outcome.

### The Objectives

The Design Guide sets out minimum premises and building requirements in accordance with the Act and the Regulations. It also provides links to other critical regulations and standards, such as the Building Code of Australia (BCA), the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Other objectives are to:

- Promote innovative design solutions and approaches for meeting regulatory requirements
- Advocate best practice approaches, that is, above minimum requirements for children's services environments
- Outline the steps involved in the design and planning process.

## The Intent

The intent has been to prepare a user-friendly resource for a wide audience including design professionals, existing and potential service licensee's, children's services directors and staff, committees of management and parents.

It endeavours to:

- complement the outcome-based style of the Regulations and the BCA rather than providing only prescriptive information
- provide guidance for site selection, optimal site zoning and spatial relationship of the main elements
- provide examples of acceptable systems, joinery prototypes, equipment, fittings, materials and finishes.

## Understanding the service system

### Existing Service System – Children's Services

The term *Children's Service* encompasses a range of facilities that provide early childhood services. The term is defined in the *Children's Services Act 1996* (the Act).

Section 3 of the Act defines a children's service as:

*'a service providing care or education for 5 or more children under the age of 6 years in the absence of their parents or guardians; for fee or reward, or while the parents or guardians of the children use services or facilities provided by the proprietor of the service.'*

Services that meet the definition described in the Act are required to comply with the requirements of both the Act and the Regulations. Services that typically fall within that category are long day care, occasional care and kindergarten. However, other services may also match the definition, for example some early childhood intervention programs and specialist children's services. Where these meet the definition they require a licence to operate.

The service system in Victoria is also made up of a range of other early childhood programs. These include maternal and child health services, playgroups, outside school hours care programs, family day care, in-home care, and parenting programs. The broader allied health and community sector then also contains programs such as community health services, health promotion programs, counselling services, family support services, and other discrete professional services such as general practitioners and allied health therapists (for example speech therapy, nutritionists). Taking a broader step, complementary services within a community include municipal libraries, neighbourhood houses, and school programs.

Whilst the scope of the Design Guide covers those Children's Services as defined in the Act, the practical elements and design considerations described in the document could generally be applied to other service types.

A feature of the broader service sector in recent years has been to meet community needs by designing multi-use facilities, that is, a range of complementary service types within one building. A multi-use facility could be specifically focused toward early childhood services or encompass a broader range of services. Government has supported this change in infrastructure design in the early childhood sphere, through programs such as capital assistance for early childhood services providing funding for children's centres and new kindergartens.

Refer to multi-use facility in the section General Design Decisions for specific considerations that should be taken into account when a Children's Service is located within a multi-use facility.

In recognition that Maternal and Child Health services are a common service type to be co-located with licensed children's services, a section outlining specific considerations for Maternal and Child Health is included.

### Restricted Children's Services

A restricted children's service is one that has been licensed with the condition that no child is cared for or educated by the service for more than five hours per day and 15 hours per week.

Occasional childcare services, for example a childcare service in shopping centres, recreation centres and neighbourhood houses are often restricted licence children's services.

Restricted licence children's services do not need to meet the same premises requirements as standard license children's services. This is because children attend for less time.

The following Regulations **do not apply** to the premises of any restricted children's service:

- Regulation 42(1)(b) – provision of two children's rooms
- Regulation 42(4) – natural lighting in children's rooms
- Regulation 43(1)(a) – outdoor space with a useable area of at least seven square metres for each child cared for or educated by the service

Note: However, should outdoor space be provided it must be fenced in accordance with Regulations 43(1)(b), (c) & (d)

- Regulation 45 – the specified number of junior toilets, partitions and hand basins or troughs
- Regulation 46 – capacity to observe from the children's room the children using junior toilets.

Since 1 June 2003, restricted children's services must meet the child/staff ratios outlined in Regulation 24.

This document is managed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria (as of 27 August 2007)

## Exemptions

Under Section 6 of the Act, the Minister for Community Services may declare that all or any of the provisions of this Act do not apply to a children's service. This declaration is called an exemption. An exemption can only be granted to an existing licensed service and is usually only granted in exceptional circumstances.

Upon application, a licensed children's service may be granted an exemption in relation to a premises requirement for a specific time period. If so, an exemption notice will state the terms and conditions that apply for the period of the exemption. If an exemption is in force, the notice of exemption will be displayed beside the service licence. At the expiry of the exemption, the premises will be required to be in compliance with the Regulations.

## General design decisions

This section outlines features and principles that generally apply throughout a children's service. More specific and detailed aspects are discussed in subsequent sections.

### User-Focussed Design

Designing a children's service, which meets the relevant criteria can be a challenging task. Apart from resolving the usual building design issues relating to planning and building regulations, complexities stem from the need to understand the user, thereby providing a child focussed design. A design may need to cater for varying numbers of children, children of different age groups, or with varying levels of development and ability. This is then overlaid with the aspiration of designing an environment that promotes successful interactions between children, staff and parents on a daily basis and is also a supportive environment as a workplace for staff. Safety is an important component of design, especially in facilities to be used by children. Few building types present such a diverse range of functional, socio-cultural and ergonomic demands.

The design of a children's service should aim to achieve:

- An exciting and interesting place for children, which allows them to develop a range of skills, including thinking skills, social skills, emotional skills, physical skills and language skills.
- An environment which, while not duplicating the home, can give children a sense of place where they can play safely, rest, learn and communicate with other children and adults.
- Efficient planning and detailing which allows all occupants, including adults, to use the building without having to overcome too many obstacles.
- Buildings and grounds that are easy and economical to maintain.

For the designer these attributes imply the need for:

- Efficient and imaginative planning
- Sensitivity to scale beyond meeting purely functional needs, for example, considering the sense of volume and space to young children
- Care in selecting finishes and colours
- Detailing which is practical and safe
- Flexible use of space
- An understanding of how the natural environment can interface with the service
- An understanding of how a centre functions
- Familiarity with the principles of low energy design (eg solar).

A user-focussed view to the design of centres will be influenced by approaches such as:

- Understanding the use of learning spaces: indoors, outdoors and transition zones. Learning can take place in all three zones, with the transition zone between the indoor and outdoor providing an important space where children can withdraw and do separate activities whilst still being supervised.
- Viewing the whole service as a learning tool. This may occur from the elements of a buildings' design to the variety of garden plants. The facility itself can be used as a resource for exploring the physical, cultural and natural worlds and understanding how they work and interact. Opportunities to access nature and for interaction with the environment are to be encouraged.

The completed design of one children's service will vary significantly to the design of others. The design will depend on the needs of each individual service, the design values adopted and available budgets. Nevertheless, common functional issues related to the child, as the main user of the facility will apply to all services. These include:

- The interior design should where possible, provide a domestic scale with a secure atmosphere, but which also stimulates the child to explore and learn.
- The design should be tested to see how it is viewed from a child's perspective, to make sure that it is comprehensible and that child level views are available.

- Colour selection of finishes that is harmonious.
- The direct access from children's rooms to outdoor play spaces is desirable.
- Transparency between spaces by the use of clear glazed panels will increase the sense of connection between participants. Such vision panels can be screened to provide privacy when required.
- Windows of varying heights will provide different perspectives and different natural lighting to rooms.

Children's services are encouraged to reflect the diverse cultures, needs and interests of their user group and the community they serve. The centre should be welcoming to all families, respecting differences in:

- ability
- language
- culture and
- religion.

It is important to recognise that different traditions and life experiences abound, reflecting a variety of needs. The building and its facilities should be responsive, as much as possible, to meeting specific needs including those of:

- indigenous families
- families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and
- children and adults with disabilities.

Each user of the service should be provided with opportunities to feel comfortable and welcomed within their children's services. It is important to discuss at the design stage, issues of importance to a service, such as inclusive practices and the ability of spaces to create a sense of belonging for children, families and staff. Just as designers incorporate features to respond to noise or safety measures – a facility can ensure it meets the needs of children or adults using mobility aids such as walking frames or wheelchairs, children or adults with sensory disabilities, such as vision or auditory impairments, or other physical, intellectual, social or emotional disabilities. These features may extend beyond the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Designing for people with disabilities can enrich the environment for all. Examples of design considerations include:

- Providing an emphasis on tactile and olfactory features to create a more stimulating environment for everyone and especially those with a sensory disability.
- Selecting appropriate surface materials in the outdoor play space, so that both wheelchairs and prams don't have to navigate across loose materials, when suitable paths will help.
- The provision of additional handrails and strategically placed benches and platforms to increased participation by providing a variety of levels for access.

Design should eliminate physical barriers and provide access to and throughout the facility in compliance with the Building Code of Australia and be in accordance with the AS1428 Design for Access and Mobility.

The integration of relevant cultural architectural elements may help centres to promote both a sense of belonging and welcome. Whilst tokenistic measures should be avoided, a service could, at the concept planning stage, purposely reserve display spaces for cultural items, or incorporate specific architectural elements. In addition, outdoor play spaces and gardens can also reflect the community by planting relevant fruit trees and vegetables which could be used for food preparation. The use of colour or decoration in the outdoor play space could also reflect the culture of the families that use the service.

In respecting cultural traditions, the providers of the service could discuss with users, issues such as whether preparing a variety of meals, halal, vegan or kosher for example, may require additional space in the kitchen; or whether it is important that provisions be made for toilet areas – such that the sexes are separated, (whilst still maintaining compliance with building measures). These are just examples; there may be other ideas that could be incorporated at the design stage.

Another component of designing a user-focussed service is in promoting the welcome extended to parents:

For the designer these attributes include:

- Considering whether plans and space provisions can include features such as alcoves in the foyer or other spaces where ideas can be exchanged and experiences shared in an informal setting.
- Entrances to centres can be daunting and unfriendly, with no vision into the centre, small signs and unfamiliar security systems. Consideration at the design stage can overcome these negatives by enabling sight-lines from the administration room or foyer to the front entry, enabling staff to more easily greet parents and attend to centre visitors. Signage could incorporate symbols, colours and arrows that are readily recognisable, in addition to other languages of the population, which the centre serves.

## Interrelationship between space requirements and licence capacity

Prior to designing a new service or planning the alterations of an existing service, it is important to understand the relationship between minimum space requirements and the licence capacity of a service.

The *Children's Services Regulations 1998* specify minimum space requirements for children's rooms (regulation 42) and outdoor space (regulation 43). Children's rooms require clear space of at least 3.3 square metres for each child being cared for or educated in that room, and outdoor space with a useable area of at least 7 square metres for each child who may be cared for or educated by the children's service. A certification of area measurements [<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>] is required to demonstrate the amount of clear space in a children's room and useable area in the outdoor space.

The maximum number of children who may be cared for or educated by the children's service is specified in the licence. This is known as the licence capacity. The space in children's rooms and the outdoor space are both considered when determining the licence capacity. It is the lesser of these two spaces that is used to calculate the maximum number of children who may be cared for or educated by the children's service at any one time.

For example where a service intends to care for ten children aged under 3 years in one children's room, a number that neatly matches the staff/child ratio; at least 33 square metres of clear space must be available within that children's room.

If a service wants flexibility to meet the changing needs of a service to accommodate differing age groups and group sizes, this will need to be communicated at the design stage.

## Educational Philosophies

The early childhood field is characterised by a wealth of research and literature. A number of philosophies, theories, and approaches have evolved over time. Some children's services subscribe closely to one approach, whilst others purposefully choose an eclectic style. Others are directed and influenced by staff and parents from time to time.

It is recognised that alignment with specific philosophical approaches can bring with it, particular design ideals. Different interpretations about the use of space, types of equipment, furniture and design aspirations may have their source in different theories or practice perspectives for example Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Steiner, to name only a few. The recommendations within the Design Guide however, do not align with any one particular style, although best practice and innovation in building design are to be encouraged. The regulatory elements of legislation do not impede or define such design elements.

It may be useful early in the design phase to discuss and define both the providers and users expectations of educational styles, philosophies or approaches. It is important not to assume a design will facilitate specific operational styles.

## Multi-use Facilities

A Children's service could be located within a **multi-use facility**, that is, a range of complementary service types within one building. This is different to a **multipurpose** service where a combination of programs is provided within the one venue at different times across a week. Multipurpose services may, for example, provide occasional care on Mondays and Fridays and then use the same space for Kindergarten on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

Some multi-use facilities focus specifically on early childhood services, whilst others provide a range of community services. At one end of the spectrum multi-use facilities may be fully individual units under one roof; neither entrances nor facilities are shared. At the other end of the spectrum multi-use facilities are created with the express purpose of integrating facilities. For example staff may share staff rooms and kitchens, meeting rooms, receptions and waiting areas. There are of course others along the continuum. Those in the latter have been designed as a shift in service delivery models to improve access to services for families with young children. For those organisations considering building new or redesigning facilities this integrated approach would be highly desirable.

Co-location of early childhood services increases opportunities for an holistic approach to child development and provides the parent with a single physical location to visit. In addition, cross-discipline collaboration within centres and linkages with other services may broaden knowledge and skills and enhance service delivery – positively impacting both staff and services users, and improving outcomes for children. As with many single-use facilities, multi-use facilities can be operated in such a way that they engender increased community involvement and ownership in the facility. The make-up of multi-use facilities may be as diverse as comprising services such as: library, youth recreation facility, senior citizen activity centre, community health, maternal and child health, café space, art spaces together with a children's service.

Some multi-use facilities are designed with the expectation of shared spaces. For example, a space that usually operates as a kindergarten during the week may be used as the venue for a Saturday playgroup and on Sunday for Sunday school for older children. Alternatively, one section of an outdoor play space may be used for a celebration BBQ for the neighbouring Maternal and Child Health Service. Such uses, and specific needs of groups must be taken into account at the design stage if such adaptability and flexibility is to be realised.

One common multi-use approach is to design shared meeting rooms, or shared consultation rooms. Meeting rooms may attract sessions as varied as new parent classes offered by the Maternal and Child Health service, tai chi lessons, parent committee meetings and kindergarten orientation nights. Shared consultation rooms could be utilised by services as diverse as sessional early intervention services, family support services, visiting health professionals, the auditor, or used as breakout rooms during educational sessions. Such diversity carries with it management responsibility to follow an established reservation system, for set-up and clear-away protocols and for promoting respect of other users. In addition it is to be expected that such varied sessions will also require access to kitchen and toilet facilities. These possibilities must be explored at the design stage so that access routes and design for storage in addition to other elements can be accommodated.

Requirements for open spaces within rooms, appropriate furniture, separate storage for equipment, and ability to lock-off and create secure zones should also be investigated. Accessibility to the 'shared space' must not compromise secure areas, such as offices or staff rooms. Established entrance security arrangements must be governed by strict access protocols. These established protocols should not be compromised for example by handing out the keypad number or swipe card.

Multi-use of children's rooms increases the need for these rooms to be above minimum area standards, as it is not practicable for staff to pack up everything from the room to prepare for other users.

Multi-use of outdoor play spaces requires careful planning to ensure that the needs of different age groups or intended uses are not in conflict, in addition to the regular safety elements.

While recognising the synergy and sharing which co-located services can achieve, the individual services should not be compromised.

Where there are different sponsors, funders and operators, it is suggested that operational agreements be drawn up early in the project concept stage, and perhaps reassessed at occupancy.

## Occupational Health and Safety

It is important to note that whilst the focus of this guide is on fostering the development of appropriately planned early childhood environments; the design must facilitate and support not only the activities and safety of the children but also of staff.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* (Victoria) [<http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/>] and associated Regulations require employers to take practical steps to secure a safe and healthy work environment and to protect staff against risks.



One of the five national priorities set out in the National Occupational Health and Strategy 2002-2012 is to eliminate hazards at the design stage. The strategy, endorsed by the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council is accessible from the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission website. [<http://www.nohsc.gov.au/>] The responsibility for safe and healthy work environments falls on a wide range of parties, including those outside of the workplace such as designers, manufacturers, constructors or suppliers.

Considerations include:

- the use of non-slip floor surfaces
- rounded corners on exposed columns and joinery items
- fittings which might seem normal in domestic situations, such as sliding doors, being hazardous in children's rooms, as children unfamiliar with their operation can get trapped or injure fingers
- uneven surfaces, such as stepped thresholds, causing tripping
- design and location of fittings that enable safe manual handling, this is, avoid lifting problems, for example at change benches, cots and shelving
- ease of maintenance of the building, for example light fittings that are accessible for easy replacement
- providing appropriate ground surfacing in outdoor play spaces (refer Outdoor Play Guide).

The Building Code of Australia provides the standards with which the building design must comply. Other references include the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985*, and the associated Code of Practice for Workplaces and Code of Practice for Manual Handling administered by Worksafe, the health and safety arm of the Victorian Workcover Authority [<http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/>]. Australian Standards [<http://www.standards.org.au/>] are also an important source of information about occupational health and safety.

Manual handling is of particular relevance to the early childhood environment. Guides for manual lifting recommend storage so that low risk lifting occurs. Low risk lifting is generally between knee height and shoulder height. Heavy weights are best stored at waist height. Safe manual handling practices should be applied to individual workplaces.

## Security

Because of the vulnerable nature of the occupants, security in children's services is extremely important. There are threats from intrusion from unauthorised persons accessing children or breaking into the property while not in use. There is also the need for containment, that is, keeping children within the confines of the centre and not enabling them to leave without authorised supervision. If the centre does not have community surveillance, that is, if the site is isolated, then intruder protection may be required for the building after hours.

A good reference about planning safe urban environments is the 'Safer Design Guidelines' published by Crime Prevention Victoria [<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/>] and The Department of Sustainability and Environment [<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/>]. The introduction brochure of the Safer Design Guidelines can be obtained from both websites.

The Guidelines state that 'the design of the built environment should promote personal safety and help reduce people's fear of crime.' (p 4)

General aspects for security, which can be considered, include:

- clear sightlines, for example, careful landscaping that does not block sight lines, use of see-through fencing, mirrors, effective lighting.
- safe movement with good connections and access, for example, increased visibility with natural surveillance, clear signage, no entrapment points.
- mixed use and activities whenever possible to promote public use and self policing, for example, in proximity with other community activities such as schools, libraries, hubs.

To assist the management regime, a three level system of security is suggested for a typical service. Such a system differentiates between various categories of building users and proposes different zones for each. The levels are related to the user type, and are listed as follows in ascending degree of security:

- visitor – any space where an authorised visitor can enter (this includes children and parents)
- staff – a space which is only accessible to staff and invited visitors
- secure – a space which is accessible to specifically authorised staff.

There should be no public zones within a childrens service where a person can walk in without authorisation. Security should be in place to assess his or her reason for being there as soon as the person enters the site. Information about security and access should be displayed in a form that is easily understood by people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

While in some cases electronic security systems may be necessary, careful design which ensures permanent supervision of the front door and zoning of security levels can minimise this need. As well as reducing costs, this minimises the risk of security malfunctions and user frustration if the electronic systems are intrusive.

Security consultants should be employed if intruder alarm systems and after-hours surveillance is necessary

Further detail is provided in the section 'Front of Building' .

## Storage

A common grievance in children's services is the inadequacy of storage within the premises. It is critical that consideration be given to sufficient storage for a children's service at the design stage.

Storage needs include:

- children's indoor play equipment (preferably directly accessible to the relevant room)
- children's outdoor play equipment (often requiring more than one storage area / shed, depending on the play space layout and respective age group requirements)
- sleeping materials (cots, mattresses and linen)
- children's personal belongings (toys, jackets, change of clothing, medicines)
- prams and car seats
- foodstuffs – perishable and non-perishable (often as bulk purchase items)
- cleaning equipment including chemicals
- maintenance equipment including yard equipment
- a range of administrative records and reference materials.

Multi-purpose and multi-use facilities will probably have additional needs for storage.

It is important that the storage space is applicable to the storage item and the user. It must be considered whether the storage is to be accessed by children (eg lockers, books and toys) or by adults only (eg bulk storage, medical items, chemicals, electrical equipment). Some storage spaces may require ventilation – for example children's bedding and bed linen, chemical storage.

The height and depth of shelves (adjustable if required), storage spaces and the use of locks can be planned accordingly. Ergonomic guidelines to minimise reaching and lifting should be consulted in the design of shelving so that the occupational health and safety needs of staff are observed.

Storage of chemicals should be carefully considered as these are not always associated only with cleaning and cleaner's stores. Chemical storage should always be lockable. Consider also appropriate storage of medicines.

It is important that dedicated storage space be devoted to adequate storage of children's bedding and linen. This may include storage for stretchers, mattresses, pillows and other bed linen. It may be convenient for storage of such items to be within children's rooms, enabling children to assist with tasks and also not requiring staff to leave the room to obtain items, thus maintaining usual supervision. Vertical storage of mattresses in cabinets with divisions that separate and support the items has been found to work well. Pigeonholes above or beside the mattresses can accommodate other bedding items.

It may be preferable for storage of outdoor play equipment to be located as a component of the building, providing the advantage of insulation and lighting, rather than storage sheds in the outdoor play space.

Garden tools and garden supplies will require appropriate storage, as will the temporary storage of soiled nappies awaiting collection from laundry agencies. The service yard may need to accommodate such items.

## Sustainable Design

The overall objective of sustainable design is to minimise the impact of new or existing facilities and services on the environment through the implementation of sustainable design practices. This is achievable through:

- Low energy design – minimisation of non-renewable energy
- Minimal environmental impact – pollution control and recycling of resources
- Selection of appropriate materials and equipment for long life / low maintenance, safety, health and comfort.

The whole design team including the architect, building services engineers, quantity surveyor and landscape designer, together with the client, are encouraged to consider sustainable design approaches that may be applied to a project and ideally cooperate in setting and achieving environmental performance targets. The application of proven methods and the extent of innovation in this field will vary for each project. For example goals could be set in respect to the internal environment, including elements such as daylight and natural ventilation, indoor air quality and thermal comfort. Or goals could also be set relative to the impact of the proposed facility on the natural outside environment, including such things as greenhouse gas emission, water consumption and material selection.

In practice, professional consultants are required to follow the specific design strategies and actions as set out in the Building Design Profession manual: *Environment Design Guide*, published by the Australian Council of Building Design Professions, [<http://www.bdp.asn.au/>] February 2000. In addition there are building requirements through the Building Code of Australia related to sustainable design.

Particular attention is drawn to document GEN 1 of the *Environmental Design Guide*, pages 5 to 10 inclusive, titled 'Sustainable Design Strategies for Architects' and the following sub-headings:

Pre-design

Siting and planning issues

Concept design

Resources – material selection

Resources – energy

Resources – water and others

Construction management

Building operation and management.

It is recommended that energy performance targets established in the schematic design phase be based on the Building Energy Brief developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Victoria. [<http://www.seav.vic.gov.au/>]

Ideally professional consultants would check the performance of the actual project work and design against established targets at each phase, for example, design development, schematic design, documentation, tender and handover.

## Low Energy Design

The main objective of low energy design is to be energy efficient by employing current and proven cost effective technology and design techniques. A fundamental objective is to achieve appropriate levels of comfort for the users of the building whilst also maintaining minimal capital and recurrent costs.

What is required is well considered low energy consumption systems for the heating, cooling, ventilating and lighting of a service. Low energy systems may be either passive or active. Whilst it is understood that some active systems will be required for the effective functioning of a service, the adoption of passive systems is to be encouraged in the design of children's services. These include:

- orientation and shape of the building, which minimises wall surface exposure to west and east
- orientation of children's rooms and outdoor play areas to the north, to maximise controlled exposure to sunlight
- thermal efficiency of the site, for example, appropriate thermal resistance, orientation of windows, selection of glazing
- shading, including use of deciduous trees and integrated landscaping with building design, such as use of ground covers to minimise glare from light and reflective surfaces
- solar hot water.

## Minimal Environmental Impact

Reduced greenhouse emissions are possible through the management of waste by recycling, together with low energy consumption, and the selection of appropriate fuels, operating systems and materials with low greenhouse impact.

Children's services should consider adopting best practice in the areas of:

- selection of materials and finishes for construction and through the life of the building. Examples include: avoiding high volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and formaldehyde finishes present in many adhesives, paints and varnishes and allergenic floor coverings.
- using natural materials and those with low embodied energy, that is renewable materials such as plantation timber, natural fibre fabrics and carpets.
- water-wise practices, such as water conserving appliances and collection of rainwater for flushing toilets, and possible use for mechanical services (such as evaporative cooling, hydronic heating) and watering of landscaping.
- appropriate landscaping to enhance the thermal performance of the building through the strategic location of deciduous trees (for summer shading and winter solar access) and selection of water-wise plant species to minimise extra watering.

## Life Cycle Costing

Life cycle costing is used when comparing alternative design options, so as to provide an assessment of sustainability. GEN 10 of the *Environmental Design Guide* states that life cycle costing should include '*embodied energy considerations, which take into account the total cost of materials from the time they are mined, through manufacture, construction, usage and disposal.*

Life Cycle Costing is to be based on the assumption that the proposed service will have a service life of 30 years, which, with refurbishment at appropriate times, can extend its life to between 40 and 50 years.

## Site planning considerations

Site planning includes the selection of the land or buildings for a children's services, as well as the required and proposed uses across the entire site – not just the primary building/s. This section addresses:

- Site selection
- Optimum site zoning
- Multi-level facilities
- Outdoor play space
- Undercover play areas
- Front of building
- Car parking
- Fencing
- Service yard.

### Site Selection

The selection of an appropriate and suitable site is fundamental to the success of any centre. Major factors to be considered when selecting a candidate site should be reviewed, preferably in the following sequence:

### Regulatory Issues

Clarity of legal and regulatory aspects and conditions of the proposed or existing site will be required. Examples include:

- Status of the ownership – is the title freehold, crown land (with conditions of use) or otherwise?
- Status of previous consent for the use of the site and building – is the consent for the same use as a children's service or as a change of use?
- Planning Scheme – does the current site zoning permit the proposed site to be used as a children's service? If not, can the site be easily rezoned?
- Restrictive Covenants – is the site located in an area which has restrictive covenants or local requirements such as height limitations, plot ratios, landscaping requirements, requirement for audit of contaminated land, car parking provisions, heritage overlays, boundary clearances, building setbacks, flood zones, for example?
- Easements – does the Land Title show easements which may restrict the development of the site, such as sewer / water mains, pedestrian access ways, other rights-of-way, etc?

### Existing Building Issues

If an existing building on the proposed site is being considered for use as a children's service there are some fundamental items that should be checked including:

- Floor level – is the existing floor level low enough to easily meet disabled access requirements such as AS 1428.1 (Design for access and mobility) relating to ramps not steeper than 1:14 together with functional requirements for direct access from children's rooms to outdoor play space?
- Sill heights – are the sill heights of at least 50% of the required windows in the spaces to be allocated as children's rooms no higher than 1000mm above floor level?
- Building layout – is the existing layout suitable and the existing rooms sufficient in size to accommodate the spatial requirements of the proposed centre?
- Positioning on site – does the positioning of the building provide sufficient areas for outdoor play space, preferably in the northern sector of the site or does it leave long narrow, near useless areas?
- Building Services – are the existing building services (electricity, water pressure, sewerage, gas, information technology) sufficient and suitable for the building services requirements of the proposed centre?

## Location

Ideally, the location of the proposed site should satisfy both the needs of the users and that of the community it serves. Some of the factors that should determine the preferred location for developing a children's service include:

- The potential for the candidate site to fulfil the demand for children's services in the particular catchment area.
- Compatibility with the neighbourhood eg protecting children from excessive noise, and vice versa
- Safety of the neighbourhood and its roads
- Proximity to public transport
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Proximity to other community services such as schools, which will complement, not duplicate facilities
- Absence of noxious neighbours, including heavily trafficked roads (see 'Vehicular access' below) heavy industry, and power lines
- Availability of services such as gas, electricity and sewerage
- Likelihood of flooding
- Benefits or potential problems with existing vegetation and other features
- Potential of bushfire danger.

## Physical Attributes

Adequate size, geometry and orientation:

- As a rule of thumb, the site should allow for a building which in gross figures is approximately 10 sqm for each child place, plus useable outdoor play space of about 10 to 15 sqm for each child. This rule of thumb does not allow for car parking, at about 30 sqm per space. Depending on the actual site, planning requirements may include setbacks from boundaries.
- Minimum outdoor play space of 7 sqm per child.
- Shape or geometry which does not limit planning – square or rectangular sites are best, whereas narrow or irregular shapes are undesirable, since they are difficult to plan and supervise.
- Orientation, which puts children's rooms and outdoor play space on the north side.
- Slope of the land – adequate for drainage, but not too steep.

## Soil conditions

- Soil testing may be required for a planning permit with the local government authority. It is always required for an Application in Principle (AIP) with the Department of Human Services for a proposed children's service. Under the *Children's Services Act 1996*, the Department of Human Services is required to consider the suitability of the proposed use of the site as a children's service and whether any contaminants present constitute a human health risk. A soil assessment provides confirmation that the soil does not contain substances at levels that are harmful to human health and that the soil has no offensive odour. The four documents: Soil assessment guidelines (under development); Assessing the soil in children's services – guidelines for Environmental Consultants (under development); Environmental audit (under development); and Soil assessment summary report (under development) provide detailed information about the stages and requirements for soil assessment that apply to proposed and existing children's services.
- Stability and bearing capacity, if not known by the local government authority, should be tested by a qualified geotechnical engineer.

## Vehicular access to and from the site

- Influence of traffic routes on the amenity of the site (noise, air pollution, pedestrian safety)
- Ease of vehicular access to and from the site, particularly when on-site parking is required by the local government authority
- Ease of access by emergency vehicles, for example fire brigade, ambulance
- Ease of access for maintenance vehicles for example to replace soil, sand, impact absorbing surfaces.

## Optimum Site Zoning

The easiest sites to work with, as suggested, are those with a moderate slope, roughly rectangular, or of fairly square proportions and with the potential for having the main entry not on the same side of the building as the outdoor play space (which would ideally be on the north), as this tends to split up the outdoor play space. Main entry located on the west side should also be avoided because of exposure to hot summer sun. Ideally, the entry and drop-off should be on the east side, both for thermal comfort and for safe and direct transfer of children from the car to the footpath.

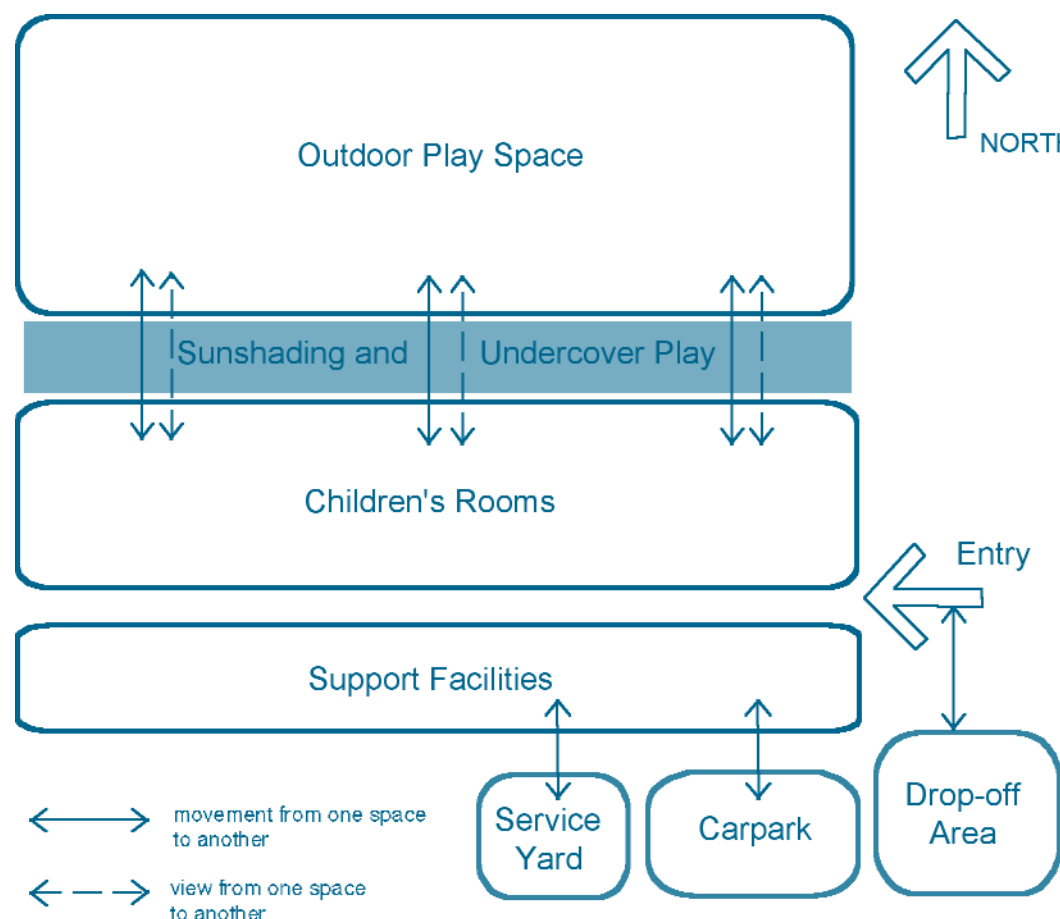
If possible a drop-off zone should be arranged with the local government authority whereby parents can park their car on the kerb or in a recess at the kerb for up to 20 minutes, while dropping off or picking up their child.

It is desirable that children's rooms be located on the north side of the building with direct access from each room to outdoor play areas, also in the north sector of the site. The transition zone between these two zones ideally would be a deep veranda which would at once provide sun control to the building and undercover play for the children (refer Undercover Play Area).

Staff and support facilities can be considered as a 'back of house' zone, providing service to the children's rooms while being conveniently located to one another for example, staff toilets adjacent to staff room, staff room close to staff planning room, community room near kitchen.

As service areas need convenient access to the street, care in the detailed planning is necessary to avoid the service yard becoming too prominent on the front of the building (refer Service Yard).

Car parking on the site can cause conflict between vehicle movement and pedestrian access. Separation of car parking away from the main entry can minimise this (refer Car Parking).



## Optimum Site Zoning

## Multi-Level Facilities

Above ground level children's service are services that have children's rooms or other facilities used by children, such as children's outdoor play space, located on a floor above the ground floor. Above ground floor centres create the potential for a more hazardous environment for children. These centres need to be designed and operated in such a way as to minimise risk.

Design issues, which will need to be addressed, include but are not limited to the following:

- egress, particularly regarding fire safety and during emergency evacuation.
- outdoor environments at roof top level – possible spread of infectious diseases from cooling towers, excessive noise levels from the general environment and specifically roof top plant equipment, wind tunnel effects, excessive glare or run-off from surrounding buildings, excessive shade during winter months or overexposure to sunlight in summer.
- easy or direct access between indoor and sufficient outdoor play spaces.
- the use of stairs alone, as the ordinary means of enabling children to move between different levels, or between indoor and outdoor areas increases the risk of accidents. Ramps to appropriate gradients or lifts are preferred alternatives for access to and from different levels. This form of access will also advantage children and adults with a physical disability.
- security – the use of shared entrances, lifts and stairs wells are the main areas of concern – ID numbers, swipe cards, video monitors and limited access to floors from lifts are all possible options.
- communication – ability to communicate between levels.
- toilet facilities – toilets should be available on all levels where children will be cared for or educated.

Guidelines for Consideration of Plans and Specifications for Proposed Multi-Level Children's Service, an appendix to the Children's Services Licensee's Handbook is available from the publications page of the Early Childhood Services section of the Department website.

## Outdoor Play Space

(See also Space Data Sheet 19 – Outdoor Play Space)

Outdoor play is considered to be a vital part of childhood experience. The outdoor environment and the programs that are planned in them, provide unique opportunities to develop and extend children's skills and concepts as well as fostering a sense of excitement about learning. In addition to physical development, outdoor play also supports social development and providing children opportunities for the development of self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. The outdoor play space is not an optional add-on to a children's service but an optimal component of the care and education of young children.

Regulation 43 Outdoor space, of the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* provides that:

- (1) *The licensee must ensure that –*
  - (a) *outdoor space is provided at the children's service with a useable area of at least 7 square metres for each child who may be cared for or educated by the children's service;*
  - (b) *any outdoor space is enclosed by a fence or barrier;*
  - (c) *the fence or barrier is at least 1.5 metres high measured from ground level; and*
  - (d) *a child being cared for educated by the children's service cannot go through, over or under the fence or barrier or any gate or fitting.*
- (2) *In calculating the area of useable outdoor space, pathways or thoroughfares less than 3 metres wide, car-parking areas, ancillary areas, storage sheds and other fixed items that prevent children from using the space must be excluded.*

As previously mentioned, where possible, provision of larger area standards is encouraged.

A quality outdoor play space will provide opportunities for children to explore and develop a relationship with the natural environment, gain a sense of freedom and self-exploration and learn the skills required to self-manage risk.



Providing quality outdoor play experiences for children involves more than providing a safe and well equipped outdoor play space and giving children time to run around and get fresh air and exercise. Optimal outdoor play spaces provide a variety of learning experiences; from active play to quieter activities such as sand play. A design that considers the integration of a number of characteristics, such as complexity and detail, natural environments, aesthetics, flexibility and change, and potential for manipulation by children, will enrich the play experiences available.

Natural play areas such as digging patches and gardens; active play areas for climbing and running; quiet play areas for dramatic and creative play, elements such as cubbies, sandpits and water play, together with individual pieces of equipment, can all contribute to providing a diverse outdoor play experience. Many indoor activities like painting or home corner can also be done outside in good weather if the space is planned for and appropriate furniture selected.

When designing outdoor play spaces, it is important to plan for appropriate ground surfacing. Impact-absorbing surfaces are required in outdoor play spaces to reduce potential injury to children as a result of normal play activity. Australian Standard (AS) 4422 (1996) Playground Surfacing, indicates that an impact-absorbing surface is needed wherever falls from play equipment are possible, that is, in the fall zone. Further information about impact-absorbing surfaces is provided in the Outdoor Play Guide.

The **Outdoor Play Guide** [<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>] is available on the Department of Human Services website. This resource is a comprehensive guide to the outdoor play area. The guide includes sections on:

- The importance of play
- Child focussed design
- Play area detail
- The landscape
- Large play equipment
- Safety
- Planning designing and constructing outdoor play spaces
- Considering the site
- Maintenance
- Solving common problems in outdoor play spaces.

## Undercover Play Areas

Undercover play areas adjacent to children's rooms is desirable for rainy day activities, for sun shaded activities from September to the end of April when solar radiation (UV) is high and for general sun control to the building. As mentioned previously this area can act as an important transition zone between the indoor and the outdoor learning spaces, where children can withdraw and do quiet play, or be used for noisy play or messy play.

A depth of 1800mm is considered minimum – however increased depths are preferable. If this extended roof will make interior rooms dark, acrylic sheet or glazed panels with UV protection can be incorporated.

Consideration should also be given for covered play areas within the outdoor play space for example sandpits. Some shade areas could be moveable or retractable for the winter months (Refer Outdoor Play Guide).

Appropriate tree planting can also compliment undercover play by providing protection from the sun and hot north and west winds in summer and sunny, protected areas for outdoor play in winter.

## Front of Building

(See also Space Data Sheet 01 – Front of Building)

The front of the building and point of entry to the service provides its first impression and should express a sense of welcome in scale and character, at the same time as providing practical elements of security.

Considerations for the front of building include:

- The approach to the centre to be easily identifiable and safe for arrival and departure of parents and children with due attention to the security of the site, both after hours and during operation.
- The main entry to be wet-weather protected and fitted with entry devices according to the agreed policy of security for the building.
- Provision of space/s large enough for parents to congregate in this area, (preferably under cover) greeting friends on their way in and out of the centre, in addition to inside the centre, are desirable features.
- The name and address of the centre to be clearly displayed.
- Security fences should preferably be see-through.
- Security lighting is necessary for use of the building during dark hours and for after-hours security.
- The location of internal spaces and glazing in relation to the front entry to be arranged to efficiently monitor arrivals and departures.
- The front gate to be fitted with a childproof opening device. Entry devices also include doorbells, intercom, keypads and card swipe pads. Additional entry mechanisms such as an intercom or buzzer to alert staff to action automatic latch releases may be necessary – as the door handle may be out of reach of people with disabilities.
- Large lockable letter box is preferable in the fence (even if the centre has a PO Box, as public and neighbourhood notices are often letter dropped).

## Car Parking

Car parking requirements are normally governed by local government authority policy. Issues include:

- the amount of car parking to be provided
- whether car parking is required on-site or on adjacent local streets
- if on-site where access / egress locations should be located relative to existing traffic patterns.

Car parking should be arranged so that pedestrian safety is always maintained. Layouts should be designed to avoid conflict between parents and children walking to or from the main entry and cars that are backing out of car spots. Separation of on-site car parking away from the main entry can help in this regard.

A child-proof gate between the front door and the car park or street will further improve safety for children.

Where possible a drop-off zone should be arranged with the local government authority whereby parents can park their car on the kerb or in a recess at the kerb for up to 20 minutes, while dropping off or picking up their child.

Car spaces for disabled persons should be located close to the centre. There should be a pathway which gives smooth access, required gradients, into and around the building.

Consideration should be given to providing a secure bicycle parking area.

## Fencing

The safety of children will be enhanced by appropriate enclosure of outdoor areas.

The nature of fencing and fittings is to be designed to ensure young children cannot climb, crawl, release latches or otherwise gain access beyond the outdoor area of the service.

Regulation 43 Outdoor Space, of the *Children's Services Regulation 1998* provides that:

*The licensee must ensure that –*

- (b) any outdoor space is enclosed by a fence or barrier;*
- (c) the fence or barrier is at least 1.5 metres high measured from ground level; and*
- (d) a child being cared for or educated by the children's service cannot go through, over or under the fence or barrier or any gate or fitting.*

This means that the fence should not be scaleable, should have no gaps in palings, or joins that a child could get through and should reach the ground at its bottom surface. If something renders a perimeter fence scaleable – whether it is the inside face of the fence or a fixture, fitting or piece of equipment or vegetation abutting the fence, then the fence is inadequate under the Regulations.

Caution in respect of siting fixtures such as uprights for sunshade structures that may cause fences to be scaleable, must be made.

The height of the fence must be measured from ground level on the internal side of the fence. Where there has been a build up of sand, soil or soft fall material or where a garden bed or sandpit abuts the fence the measurement is taken from this level. If an internal fence is either lower and / or scaleable and abuts the external fence the external fence would need to be a minimum of 1.5m high measured from the top of the internal fence.

It may be desirable to provide a double gate, that is lockable, to give vehicular access to service the outdoor areas.

It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure that the fence and gates are suitable and well maintained.

For further information refer to:

- Fencing guidelines for licensed children's services [<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>]
- Building Code of Australia – Vic HP104.3
- Australian Standards (AS1926.1 – 1993 Swimming Pool Safety) [<http://www.standards.org.au/>]

## Service Yard

(See also Space Data Sheet 21 – Service Yard)

It is recommended that the service yard have space for storing rubbish bins (at least two large wheelie bins), bins for recyclable materials, nappy bins and, if required, a clothesline. Easy access to the street is required for wheeling bins too and fro. Location of bins needs care, as there is potential that they may be used as egress for breaking into the building and also as a seat of fire when immediately adjacent to the building.

The service yard may also be the location to store containers of loose fill materials (eg pine bark) to replenish impact-absorbing surfaces in the outdoor play area.

Ideally the service yard should be located within easy access of the street and in close proximity to the laundry and kitchen, be screened and lockable and not used as a storage space for unwanted items.

## Internal spaces within a childrens service

This section pays particular attention to several functional internal spaces within a children's service. It provides a rationale for internal spaces that complements the Space Data Sheets, and provides background useful in the design of internal spaces.

It must be noted that Restricted Licence Services do not need to meet the same premises requirements as Standard Licence Services.

### Foyer

(See also Space Data Sheet 03 – Foyer)

The foyer is effectively the transition zone between the outside environment and the service. As with the front of the building the foyer should convey a welcoming feeling. It can also become an orientation point for a centre and an informal meeting place for parents. For those larger multi-use centres, a reception and waiting area may take on a similar role.

It is recommended that the foyer have direct access to the administration office with clear views up and down passageways to the children's rooms. This is shown diagrammatically in the space relationship diagram.

As the area may be noisy, the design should ensure that finishes and furnishings help to control or minimise noise. An airlock to the entrance may be considered to improve thermal performance and reduce noise penetration.

Display of information is an important function that takes place in the foyer. In addition to the requirement to display the licence in a conspicuous place at the main entrance (*Regulation 20*), the positioning of large noticeboards or alternative display systems in prominent positions in the foyer is desirable.

If the foyer is to be used for recording the arrival and departure of children within an attendance book, a designated space or pedestal will be required for this activity.

### Children's Rooms

(See also Space Data Sheet 08 – Children's Room 3 or > 3 years)

(See also Space Data Sheet 11 – Children's Room < 3 years)

#### Space

A physical environment that is specifically tailored for children is a critical factor in social, cognitive and physical gains for children, and in the quality of interaction between staff and children and the quality of the children's program. The provision of adequate space enables an environment to be created that fosters optimal growth and development through opportunities for exploration and learning.

Clear space in children's rooms provides each child with sufficient room to move independently, unencumbered by hazards. All children require space in which to play, observe others at a comfortable distance and to feel a sense of privacy.

Regulation 42 Children's Rooms, of the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* provides that:

- (2) *The licensee must ensure that the floor area of a children's room allows a clear space of at least 3.3 square metres for each child being cared for or educated in that room.*
- (3) *In calculating the floor area of a children's room, any passageway or thoroughfare less than 3 metres wide, any kitchen, toilet, shower area, cupboard or other storage area, door swing areas, cot rooms and areas permanently set aside for the use or storage of cots and any other ancillary area must be excluded.*

Other areas that must be excluded from the measurement of clear floor space include that under cots permanently set up including high cots, and fixed furniture, which is fixed to either the wall or floor.

A certification of area measurements [<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>] is required at application to operate a childrens service, to demonstrate the amount of clear space in all childrens rooms.

## Type and Number of Children's Rooms

Regulation 42 Children's Rooms, of the *Children's Services Regulation 1998* provides that:

(1) *The licensee must provide at the children's service*

(a) *a children's room; and*

(b) *at least two children's rooms if children under 3 years of age are being cared for or educated at the service.*

Children attending a children's service may range in age from babies up to twelve year-olds, depending on the programs available at the service. While the majority of services may focus on the under six years age group, some services also cater for school-aged children, through before and after school care programs (Regulation 7(e)). Where services provide school-aged care, consideration to usage of space and programming must be made. School-age children have different needs to those children less than six years of age, typically an interest in more sophisticated play activities and private spaces.

In order to assist providers, this Design Guide uses the following room groupings:

- Children less than 3 years of age
- Children 3 years and greater than 3 years of age

for **demonstration** of models only. Such models of children's rooms as less than, or greater than 3 years of age enables the demonstration in diagrams of the relationship to other facilities such as nappy change and food preparation.

It is common that the makeup of children's rooms follow age groupings and in larger services, multiples of rooms may be required to accommodate the licensed capacity. The mix of programs on offer, the age of children attending the centre and the number and size of children's rooms and their proximity to storage, nappy change facilities, toilets and food preparation areas will influence the chosen design.

These models are used as a demonstration and are not reflective of all service types, for example, kindergartens provide programs for single age groups, and some services may choose to group children in multi-age or family groupings.

## Sleeping Arrangements

Regulation 49 Requirements for cots, beds or stretchers, of the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* provides that:

*The proprietor must ensure that*

(a) *an adequate number of suitable cots, beds, stretchers or mattresses are provided for the use of sleeping children at the children's service;*

Given the importance of sleep to the wellbeing and safety of children, an adequate sleeping environment and opportunities for sleep must be provided. Where some cots are stored away after use it is important they do not impinge on space provisions, however, if permanently set up they cannot be included in the floor area calculation. If permanent cots are to be used a good arrangement is to provide a sleeping alcove where sleeping babies can easily be observed by staff.

The practice of designing fully enclosed cot rooms should only be included where operationally the service will provide staffing such that fully enclosed rooms are supervised at any time a child is occupying that room.

(Refer also Storage)

## Food Preparation

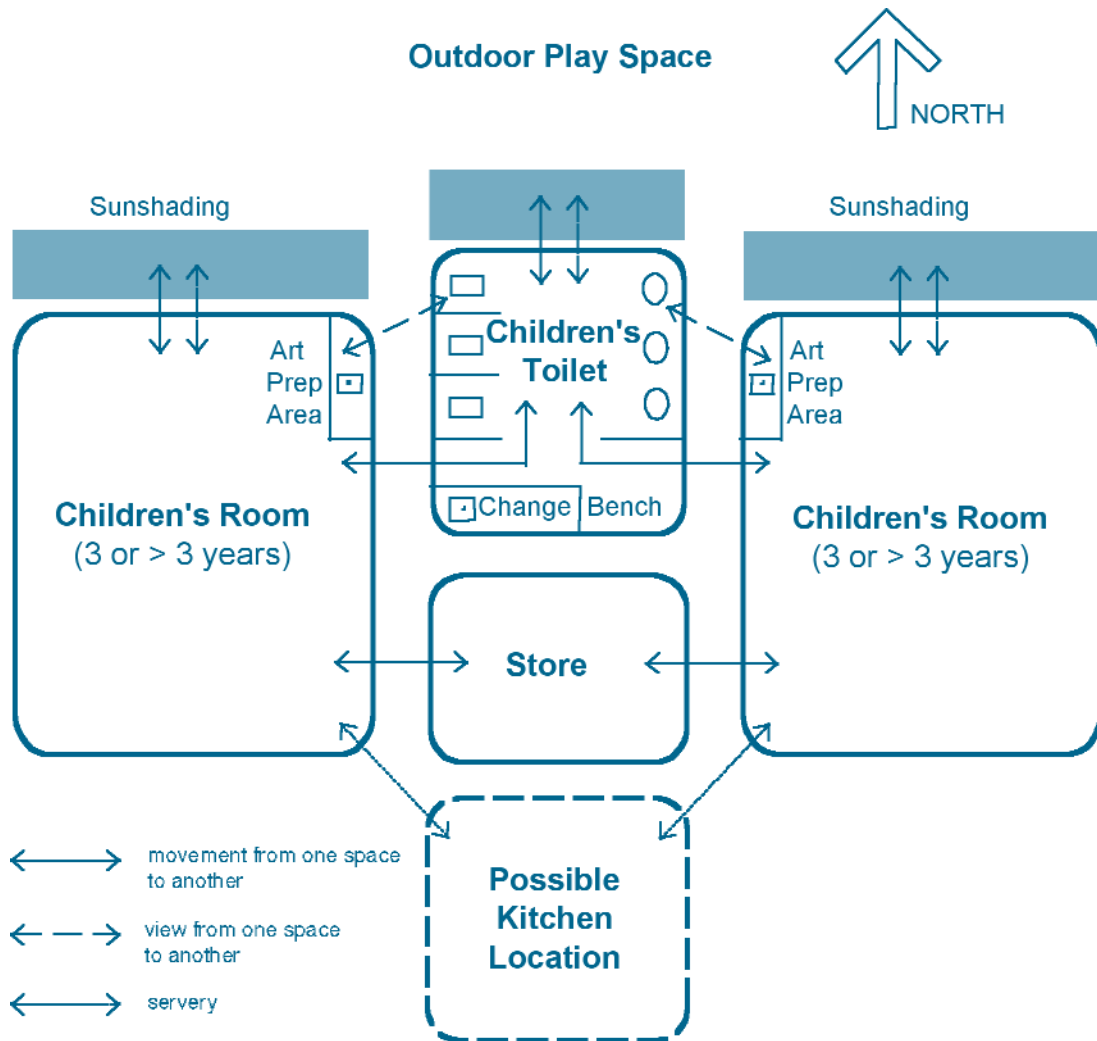
It may also be desirable to have easy access to food preparation areas in rooms that care for babies. Whilst a centre typically has a fully fitted kitchen accessible for all staff, it may be convenient to provide a small food preparation area close by or within the rooms that cater for babies.

For larger centres a separate food preparation area, shared by the babies rooms provides a good working arrangement.

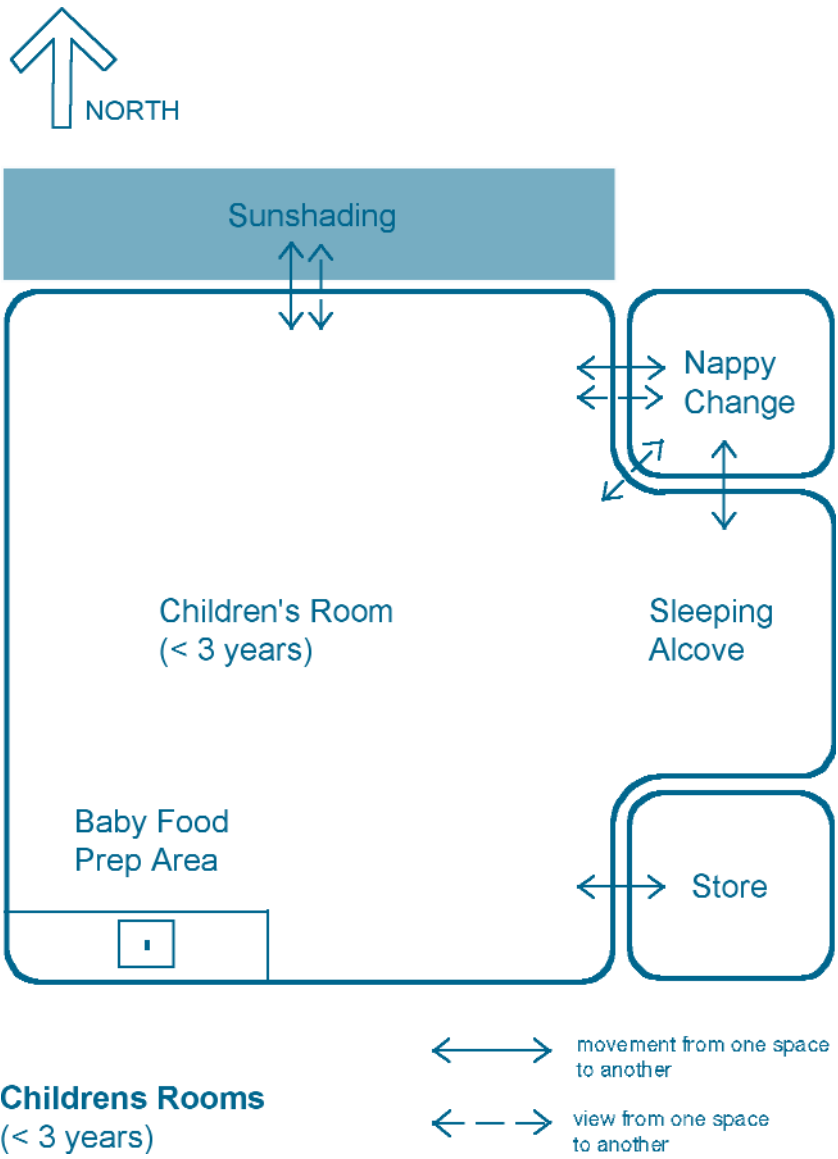
## Design Considerations

The design of children's rooms will benefit through the consideration of the following elements:

- Children's rooms are the venue for a range of activities – many types of play, sleeping and eating. Flexibility to cater for this diversity is necessary.
- A flexible means of re-arranging the space within the room is preferable to providing only fixed features. Flexibility to arrange the space for different activities, and to enable concurrent activities, for example small groups or individual play, or noisy play, messy play and quiet play. The shape of the room and adequate wall space can make this easier.
- Too many wall openings and fixtures, and implied pathways can cut across a room reducing the useable space.
- Giving children the opportunity for privacy by creating alcoves or devices for quiet activities or sleeping, but still maintaining adequate supervision.
- Providing interest through the use of colours, textures and lighting within the children's rooms to create a comfortable and stimulating environment.
- Having direct and safe access to the outdoor play spaces.
- Providing children and staff with direct access to storage of play materials and children's personal items.
- Providing wet areas for messy activities.
- Reducing noise levels by selecting soft finishes and furnishings to control reverberation, and choosing construction methods and planning arrangements that reduce transmitted noise.
- Design that promotes the protection of younger children from the active, vigorous play of older children.
- The design of a greater number of medium sized rooms – rather one or two very large rooms – providing increased flexibility for use of space.
- Children's rooms that are directly accessible, generally by corridor and not through other children's rooms.
- The alternative to a corridor is the creation of a shared internal space, for general use, providing a change of scene for activities for all, such as dance, dramatic play, gymnastics, or activities when wet outside.
- Making use of natural light, ventilation and solar heating by orienting children's rooms to the north or north-east, and designing roof overhangs to keep out the hot summer sun and let in the welcome winter sun. The planning and location of windows should provide opportunities for cross-ventilation wherever possible.
- Installation of art sinks within a children's room, at adult and/or child height.
- Proximity to the kitchen or direct access through a servery, mindful that kitchen noise should be able to be controlled.
- Proximity to toilets and nappy change facilities (example diagram below).



**Children's Rooms (3 or > 3 years)**  
Optimal Relationship between Spaces





## Children's Toilets

(See also Space Data Sheet 09 – Children's Toilet)

The following sections of the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* are relevant in considering the provision of toileting, hand washing and nappy changing facilities:

*Personal hygiene needs of children (regulation 35)*

*Toilets and hand basins (regulation 45)*

*Observance of children using junior toilets (regulation 46)*

The provision of junior toilets and hand basins helps to meet the developmental needs of children in children's services. The age and developmental level of the children must be considered in establishing the toileting requirements for children. Consideration of the needs of any children with a disability should also be made.

It is important to establish the age and number of children that will use a children's service at any one time, or in large services, the number of children using proximate children's room to toilet facilities. This will enable the provision of a sufficient number of toilet and nappy change facilities to ensure minimal delay for children requiring their use.

In compliance with the Regulations, it is essential that a service have not less than 2 junior toilets separated by partitions and not less than 2 hand basins or a hand washing trough serviced by two or more taps.

The Building code of Australia also provides for specific additional requirements for toilets within children's services (Vic Table F2.3).

- Two junior toilets for every 30 children and one additional junior toilet for each extra 15 children
- Junior toilets separated by partition between 150mm to 250mm above the floor and not less than 900mm or more than 1.5m high.
- Two wash basins for every 30 children and one additional wash basin for each extra 15 children
- Washbasins for use by children must have rim height not exceeding 600mm
- One bath or shower-bath.

A degree of privacy will be provided by the low, open toilet partitions.

The licensee of the children's services must ensure that children using junior toilets at the service can be observed by a staff member from the children's room or rooms which those toilets serve. Careful design of the area is required.

Safety underpins the requirement that staff in the children's room can observe and supervise children using toilets. Visibility into children's toilets allows staff to monitor and assist children where appropriate. It encourages self-reliance in older children whilst allowing staff to adequately supervise the children to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Note that staff may move to a position in the room that increases their ability to supervise children using junior toilets or to view children using junior toilets through mirrors or monitors. Further information is available in *Guidelines – toilets, washing and nappy changing facilities*. [<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>] The children's room should be set up in such a way that when a child is using the children's toilet, staff can see some part of, or the entire child.

The Building Code of Australia provides for specific additional requirements to the Regulations. In relation to observance of the children's toilets, the Code requires that children's toilets must be located in relation to the children's rooms and outdoor play spaces so that children using toilets can be observed by staff from each children's room and outdoor play space. (BCA Vic Table F2.3)

Design elements such as viewing windows may be utilised.

The intent of the provisions about observance of children using toilets is to ensure adequate supervision of children to make sure that children are protected from harm.

Most plans place toilet pans on a wall, which allows direct vision from the children's rooms, rather than backing onto the children's rooms.

A practical layout of door openings, hand-drying facilities and waste paper disposal is important to avoid messy and hazardous situations. The use of non-slip vinyl should be considered.

It is preferable to locate children's toilets so that a door can be included for direct access to and from the outdoor play space it serves, thus avoiding undue traffic through the children's rooms.

Generally, fixtures and joinery should be designed specifically for children, that is, taps that are easy to operate by children and appropriate hand dryers (refer Section – Hand Drying).

### Hand-Drying, Soap dispensers and Waste containers

Individual hand-drying facilities must be provided for children in children's toilet areas.

The use of paper towels for drying both children's and adult's hands is common. Alternatively electric hand dryers with low heat can be installed preferably between 1000 and 1200 mm above the floor. Investigate preferences in the planning phase.

Soap dispensers, preferable between 1000 and 1200 mm above the floor, and waste containers should be located near sinks and basins.

If individual towels are to be used, the hooks should be installed so that the towels do not touch.

### Nappy Change Facilities

(See also Space Data Sheet 12 – Nappy Change Area)

The children's rooms for children under 3 years of age will have requirements for access to facilities for nappy changing.

Regulation 48. Facilities for nappy changing, of the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* provides that:

*If children under 3 years of age are cared for or educated by a children's service, the proprietor must ensure that facilities are provided for changing nappies in a safe and hygienic manner.*

In some children's rooms, children will not be at a developmental stage to use junior toilets and nappy change facilities will be required. Observation of nappy change facilities is not required, however it is a desirable provision that protects both staff and children.

The nappy change function is equivalent to a toilet in regard to hygiene. It should be immediately accessible from the children's room, but still have adequate separation from food preparation areas. A location on an external wall with natural light and ventilation, supplemented by an exhaust fan, would be ideal.

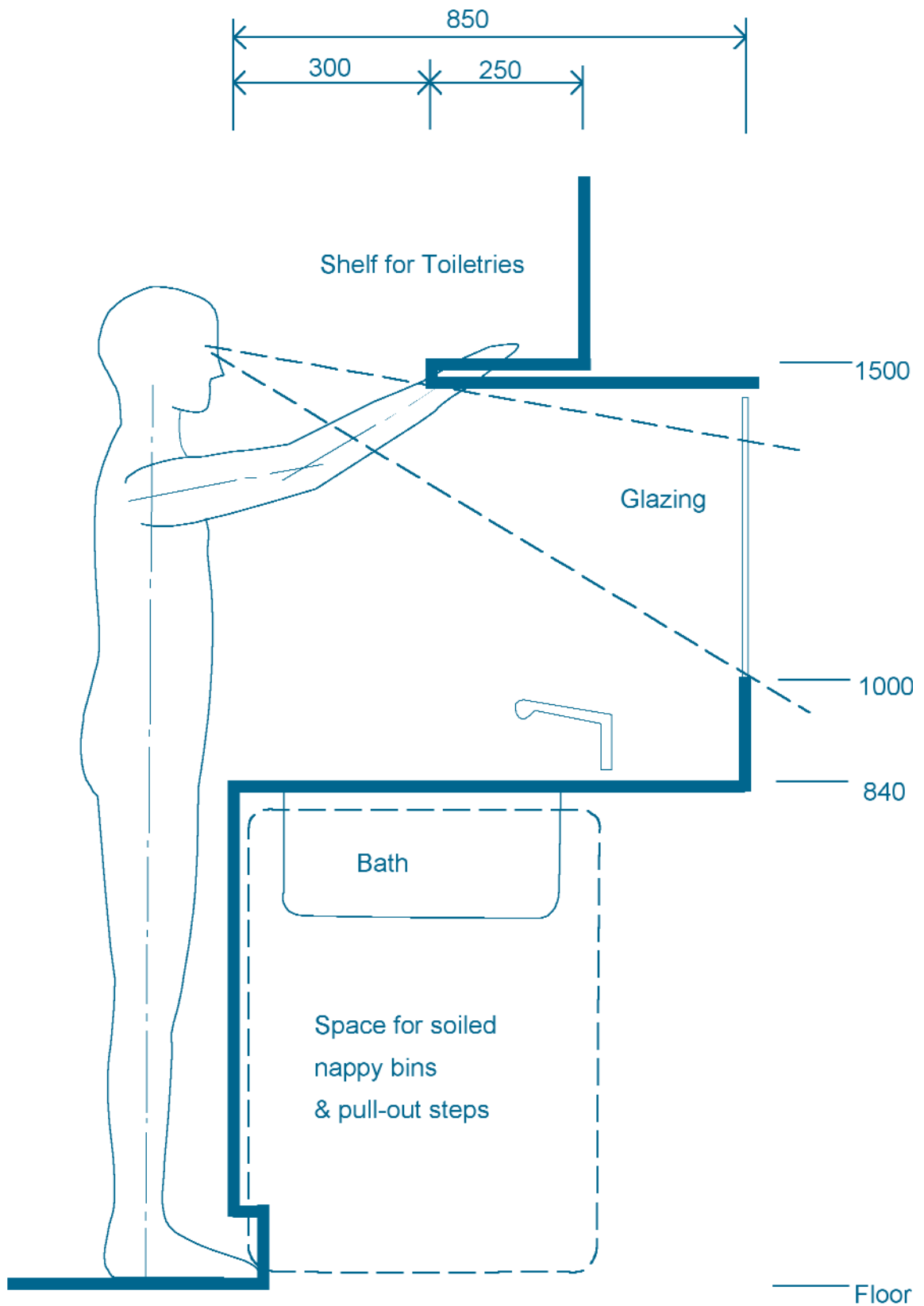
Of all the spaces in a centre, the nappy change room may be the most challenging to plan in detail. Staff should be able to reach the necessary toiletries, changes of nappy and clothing, tissues and soiled nappy bins without leaving the child unattended, and still have a view into the children's room. The design should provide for the hygienic disposal or storage of soiled nappies.

(Refer Section – nappy change bench for older children with special needs)

The Building Code of Australia provides for specific additional requirements in relation to sanitary facilities.

- Where a child under three years of age attends the service a bench type baby bath, with hot and cold water connected, and a nappy change bench in close proximity, must be provided. (Vic Table F2.3).

Awareness of this level of detail is needed at the initial design stage of a building because it may be difficult and costly to incorporate all requirements satisfactorily at a latter stage.



**Nappy Change Area - Example**  
Critical Dimensions

## Administration Room

(See also Space Data Sheet 04 – Administration Room)

The administration room (Regulation 44) is the area used by staff of the centre for administrative tasks, staff meetings, private discussions with parents, and liaising with staff and visitors. It is desirable that privacy be taken into account.

It is recommended that the room be located adjacent to the foyer with a view towards the approach to the building and not too remote from the children's rooms. To increase lines of vision, vision panels – glazing in the foyer and passageways, low enough to see both children and parents is often used. Children should not have unsupervised access to the administration room.

## Staff Areas

(See also Space Data Sheet 05 – Staff Room)

(See also Space Data Sheet 06 – Staff Planning Room)

(See also Space Data Sheet 16 – Staff Toilet & Shower)

It is desirable that adequate provision be made for staff of a children's service. Both a staff room and staff planning room are preferable. Staff need an area where they can rest and have meals during non-contact times with children.

Ideally a staff room has privacy from the rest of the centre with its own quiet environment and with access to an outdoor area if possible. Food preparation areas including sink, fridge, tea-making facilities and microwave are to be considered. If food preparation facilities are not provided within the space, a location near the kitchen should be considered, but only if safe transit of food and liquid can be achieved without entering spaces children have access to.

A staff planning room can be utilised to prepare programs, hold meetings with staff, other professionals or for larger sessions with parents/families.

Children must not have unsupervised access to the staff room or staff planning room.

The above is not an exhaustive list of possible staff amenities.

## Kitchen

(See also Space Data Sheet 14 – Kitchen)

(See also Equipment and Furnishings – Kitchen Equipment)

The size, fit out and location of the kitchen within a service may vary depending upon the planned use of such facilities. For example a kindergarten program may not see the need for a large kitchen, using the area for preparation of snacks and small cooking classes. A long day care service however may need to prepare several meals each day for all children attending the service. A full time or part time cook may be employed at the centre.

At a minimum the requirement for food preparation indicates the need for facilities to cook or to heat food, washing up facilities and refrigerated food storage (Regulation 50). It may however be desirable that a fully equipped kitchen be located within a children's service. A fully equipped kitchen can include features such as:

- walk-in pantry, or other generous storage provision
- large freezer storage, dishwasher, waste storage incorporating recyclable waste
- large cook tops to accommodate large saucepans
- equipment to facilitate preparation of food suitable for babies
- space for locating trolleys for meal distribution
- adequate bench space for setting out prepared meals.

The planning phase will need to consider all intended uses of food preparation areas, such as whether children may at times be able to enter the kitchen for activities with staff; or if school aged children will access the kitchen. Such intended uses will require careful planning to minimise hazards and may require the utilisation of child proof locks.

Some services have found the placement of the kitchen, partnered with a dining room, as a focal point within a centre to be most successful. A location relatively open to the foyer has also been found to work well.

A design that incorporates bench space that has a component that is accessible and safe for children for kitchen-based activities, or to view the kitchen and the meal preparations can also work well. Other centres locate kitchens adjacent to children's rooms and provide servery hatches. In larger centres, separate baby food preparation areas or kitchenettes are desirable proximate to the children's room to enable staff to easily access and prepare food.

Other factors are design elements for storage of tableware such as placemats, cutlery and drinking cups such that at appropriate times, children can access them. It is also important to ensure that food, beverages and stores entering and leaving the kitchen do not become hazards within the centre. A display board for children's special diets, menus and notices, is also desirable.

When planning services, designers will also need to be aware of requirements to provide a washbasin for kitchen staff to wash their hands. Additionally, and from an operational perspective, the *Victorian Food Act 1984* requirement for all food business to be registered with their local council, where a food business includes where food is provided as part of a service should be considered to ensure services are in compliance. Provisions also identify food safety programs and food safety supervisors.

## Other Internal Spaces

A children's service may also comprise the following internal areas (not an exhaustive list of possible areas):

- Pram Storage (See also Space Data Sheet 02 – Pram Storage)

A convenient location where parents may securely store prams or car seats.

- Visitor's Toilet (See also Space Data Sheet 17 – Visitor's Toilet)

This area may also comprise facilities for disabled persons.

- Community Room (See also Space Data Sheet 07 – Community Room)

A space for parents, visiting consultants, or meeting room.

- General Use

A general use space may be reflected by piazza space, dining room, arts room or music room. A space determined by the needs and interests of individual children's services.

- Storage for Children's Room (See also Space Data Sheet 10 – Children's Room Store)

- Storage of play materials and equipment. Storage of bedding.

- Laundry (See also Space Data Sheet 15 – Laundry)

Requirements of the Building Code of Australia include where a service accommodates children younger than 3 years of age, a laundry facility comprising a washtub and space in the same room for a washing machine is required (refer Vic F2.3). Restricted licence children's service are an exception.

Children should not have unsupervised access to laundry facilities.

- Cleaner's Store (See also Space Data Sheet 18 – Cleaner's Store)

Storage of cleaning materials and equipment.

## Maternal and Child Health Services

The information within this **Design Guide** has been expressly written for children's services as defined in the *Children's Services Act 1996* and the *Children's Service Regulation 1998*. Much of the information however, relates to practical design issues that could be applied across a range of early childhood settings. Thus many could be applied to the Maternal and Child Health service setting – at the discretion of the local government area.

The framework for the provision of the Maternal and Child Health Service is guided by the following overarching goal: *'To promote a comprehensive and focused approach for the promotion, prevention, early detection and intervention of physical, emotional or social factors affecting young children and their families in contemporary communities'*.

The vision, mission and principles that guide the Maternal and Child Health Service, are articulated in the document *Future Directions for the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Services (2004)*.

[<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>]

### What are the existing requirements for Maternal and Child Health facilities?

As with children's services, Maternal and Child Health (MCH) facilities must comply with the Building Code of Australia (BCA), local government provisions, and any relevant legislation, such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985*.

Specific to MCH in Victoria, are the MCH program standards. The standards were developed in 1995 and are currently being reviewed. Standard 10 is the only standard that specifically relates to the MCH building, it states:

The building in which the Maternal and Child Health Service is conducted meets occupational health and safety requirements in accordance with Section 21(2) and Section 23 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* and in accordance with local government authority occupational health and safety policies.

To support the achievement of standard 10, the following indicators are in place:

- The staff of the maternal and child health centre ensures that every precaution is taken to protect the users of the centre from hazards.
- The means of access to and from the centre and surrounds are safe and without risks to children, parents, staff or visitors.
- The Maternal and Child Health Service has written policies for fire prevention and protection, which are known to and followed by staff.
- The environment in which the Maternal and Child Health Service operates is safe and complies with relevant structural, health and safety standards.

### Spaces within a Maternal and Child Health Facility

To ensure MCH facilities are adequately designed, it is necessary to understand what types of activities take place in a service. They include:

- age and stage examinations of infants and young children
- confidential consultations
- immunisation sessions
- group activities
- health promotion programs
- management and administration tasks.

It is also useful to consider what other services may be expected to be conducted within the facility. For example, the space might also be used for visiting early intervention services and family support services or other health professionals. It is also important to understand the number of staff who may be using the facility at the one time, and the expected number of clients and consultations. This also includes group sessions.

Typically, the main spaces to be considered are:

- Waiting room
- Consulting room (multiple numbers may be required)
- Education room – group activities/health promotion
- Administration room
- Adult toilets
- Nappy change facilities that parents can access, with hand washing facilities
- Outdoor play area
- Storage facilities.

It is not the intention of this section to provide a prescriptive list of furniture, equipment and design features for MCH. Instead a range of queries is listed that could be explored with those involved in the development of new centres or the redevelopment of existing facilities. These may include existing or future users of the service, staff or managing bodies and those involved in the design or construction of the facility. It is important to consider whether these spaces and rooms are required to meet the needs of a specific service.

### **Waiting Room**

Some general considerations include:

- Is appropriate play equipment available in the waiting room for children birth to school age?
- Are there signs to toilets, nappy change facilities, food preparation areas and outdoor play space?
- Are the doors large enough to allow wheelchairs and double prams to enter?
- Is there adequate seating?
- Are audiovisual materials required such as a wall mounted television or monitor?
- Is it intended that the waiting room be used for group educational and discussion sessions. If so, how will this impact other MCH activities occurring at the same time?
- Is the display of information, notices or use of a whiteboard required for the waiting area?
- Does the waiting area need to accommodate space for prams?

### **Consulting Room**

Some general considerations include:

- Is the room balanced for the key activities of examination, discussion with parents and children, and desk/office work?
- Is the room soundproof for privacy?
- Is there adequate seating?
- Is there vision from the consultation room into the waiting room? If so can this be controlled to allow for privacy as required?
- Is there adequate space to conduct examinations (for example, 3.5 years MIST test requires space of 3 metres)?
- Is lighting adequate; maximum natural lighting possible; or are additional task lights required?
- Are childproof locks for cupboards or barriers required to keep children safe within the consultation room? (Young siblings may be in the room during examinations or discussions).
- Is the examination bench of adequate size (length and width) for a child to lie across the top of the bench? Does it also need to accommodate scales?
- Is the bench at optimal height for staff?
- Is a fridge required to store vaccines?

- Are hand-washing facilities available? Is the basin flush with the bench to avoid accidents by young children knocking against the basin?
- Is adequate storage available for cleaning materials so they are accessible between consultations?
- Are wall mounted hand towel and soap dispensers required?
- Are there adequate storage facilities for staff resources and records? (These may include filing cabinets, shelving, pigeon holes). Is lockable storage required for confidential records?
- Are there adequate electrical outlets for IT and other equipment?
- Is there appropriate play equipment for children?
- If there are multiple consulting rooms can a 'spare' room be easily accessed by other allied health professionals?

**Other desirable spaces include:**

- Food preparation areas that parents can access safely (eg prepare food for children, make tea/coffee)
- Staff room with kitchen facilities
- Display space for written materials / brochures.

**Consideration may also be given to:**

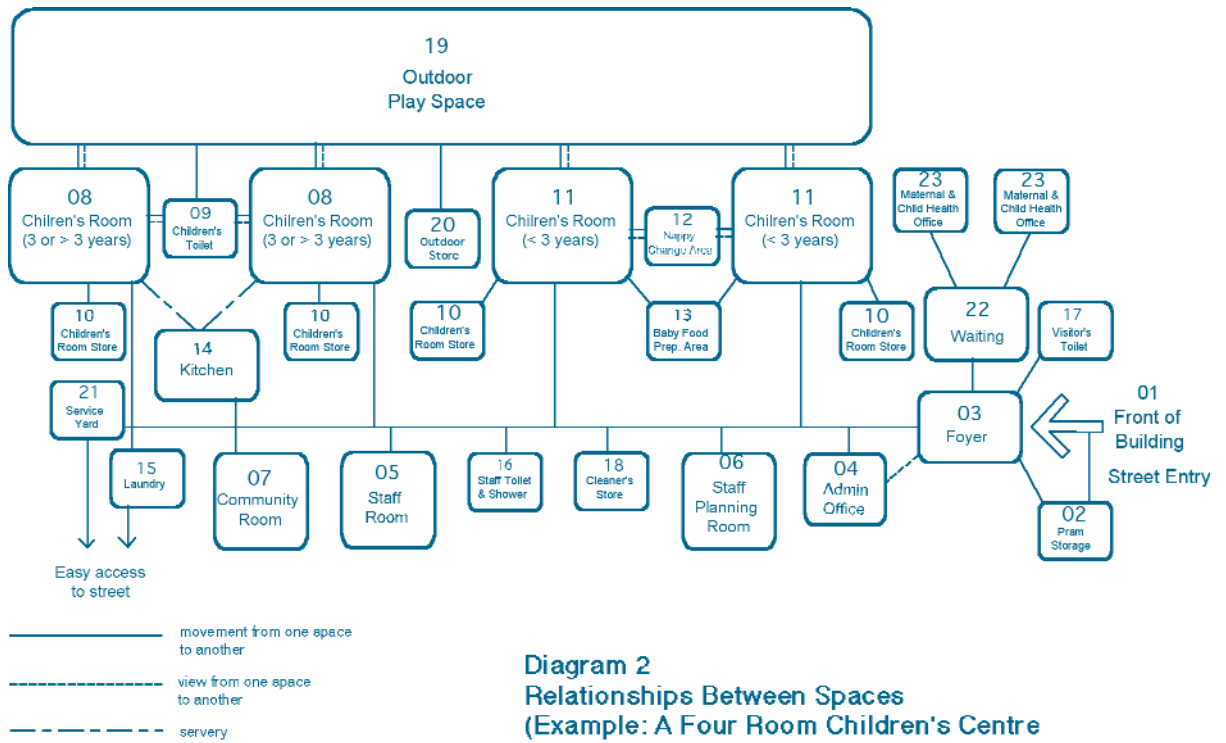
- Security. Staff may work on their own in the evenings and Saturday sessions. Is a panic button necessary? Does the facility have adequate external lighting? Is there adequate vision to the front entry – vision panels in doors? Are differing levels of security access required, for example from foyer into waiting room and consultation area? Is an intercom for 'buzz-in' access required?
- Safety. Are door hinge guards necessary? Are thermostatically-controlled mixing valves installed to avoid scalding? Are table edges rounded and surface edges bull nosed for safety?
- Sound proofing. Importance of enabling confidential discussions to occur.
- Design that enables direct access to spaces as is required, rather than creating thoroughfares across other spaces.
- Appropriate external signage for the service.
- Secure internal pram storage.
- Dedicated parking with security lighting
- Pedestrian access zones into the building entry.
- Adequate rubbish collection areas.

**If the MCH service is located in a multi-use centre some other considerations include:**

- Is their joint agreement about use of a foyer or reception area?
- Will the waiting room be specific to MCH or include those visiting other services within the centre?
- Is there a multi-use meeting room that MCH can utilise for education sessions, parent discussion groups etc? Is there appropriate storage for chairs so flexible use of the room can be made?
- Is there a reliable booking system that can be engaged to ensure access to the room?
- Is there lockable storage facilities available in the multi-use meeting room for MCH only access – so that materials do not have to be transported each time a session is planned.
- Are there appropriate directional signs within the building to the MCH service?

Below is a space relationship diagram that illustrates optimal relationships between rooms and spaces within a facility that provides both a children's service and a Maternal and Child Health facility.





**Diagram 2**  
**Relationships Between Spaces**  
**(Example: A Four Room Children's Centre**  
**Including M&CH Offices)**

## Building elements and services

This section pays particular attention to a range of building elements, services, items of equipment and fittings commonly required within a children's service.

Please note the use of following acronyms in this section:

Building Code of Australia (BCA)

Australian Standards (AS) [[www.standards.org.au](http://www.standards.org.au)]

*Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) [[www.scaleplus.law.gov.au](http://www.scaleplus.law.gov.au)]

### Windows

With careful design, windows can make an aesthetic contribution to a room, increase connectedness with neighbouring spaces and aid supervision. In considering the design of windows in children's services, regard to natural light, ventilation, safety and security is to be made. *Regulation 42* as stated below, requires compliance with natural lighting, impacting window size, location and height.

Regulation 42 (4) Children's rooms, of the *Children's Services Regulations 1998*, provides that:

*The licensee must ensure that natural lighting is provided in a children's room and that –*

- (a) *windows providing natural light have an aggregate light transmitting area, measured excluding frames, glazing bars or other obstructions, of not less than 10% of the floor area of the room; and*
- (b) *windows providing natural light are open to the sky or face a court or other open space to the sky or an open verandah, carport or other similar structure; and*
- (c) *The sills of at least 50% of the required windows are located not more than 1000 millimetres above floor level.*

The BCA also contains requirements regarding windows. Where this occurs, areas of glass and openable window areas should be measured accurately, exclusive of all framing members. The openable area is the free area available when the window is open. Doors should not be included in the calculation of the openable area.

In regard to glazed assemblies in external walls, refer to BCA B1.4(h) which identifies what items will need to comply with AS 2047 – 1999 Window in Buildings.

Desirable design elements include:

- The use of clear, not tinted or reflective glass to aid supervision by staff. (Exceptions include spaces such as adult toilets). Rather than using tinted glass as a solution to stop heat gain, consider external awnings or verandas to keep sun off the glass.
- Glass, within 750 mm where less than 1000 mm above the floor surface, must be safety glass to comply with AS 1288 – 1994 Glass in Buildings. Identification of safety glass should be clearly displayed on the panes (or evidenced by a suppliers order form).
- A preferred window sill height of 750mm (noting compliance with the Regulation 42 above) to give children better views.
- The inclusion in children's rooms of at least one window glazed to floor level, allowing very young children to see out of the room.
- Use of either double-hung or sliding windows, as awning or casement windows opening into outdoor play areas are safety hazards for children who may be injured by running into the edge of open sashes.
- Protecting windows with appropriate sun control from direct summer sunlight. Where the solution includes roof overhangs, it is recommended that they not be so wide as to prevent penetration of winter sun.
- Design that protects windows from drafts.
- Fitting of darkening devices, for example, Holland blinds.
- Supplementing south facing window walls with windows on a side wall (except west walls, unless adequate sun control is provided) to aid cross ventilation.
- Reducing the reliance on artificial light by maximising total window area providing increased natural light

- Consideration to windows of different height, size and shape
- Consideration of double glazing to reduce sound penetration from noise sources.

Design elements to be avoided include:

- Double hung windows that have an opening sash at floor level
- Use of sashless double-hung windows, unless the edges of the glass are clearly defined for safety
- Roof lights and clerestory windows in children's room, due to difficulty of installing devices to darken the room.

## Doors

The *Childrens Services Act 1996* and the *Childrens Services Regulations 1998*, make no reference to doors.

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) identifies a range of requirements for doors. A number of these requirements are highlighted in this section.

The BCA makes note of the following additional terms:

- exit – means any door that allows a person to leave the building
- required exit – means any door that is essential for a person leaving the building, such as fire and emergency egress.

Required features include:

- Generally, required exit doors (and doors in the path of travel to a required exit), must always be able to be opened from the inside, by a single hand downward or pushing action on a single device, which is located between 900 and 1200 mm from the floor, so that children cannot be trapped – refer BCA D2.21.
- Required exit doors must swing in the direction of egress. This would generally apply to the main entry and at least one other – refer BCA D2.20.
- If an exit door (required or not) from a children's service does not open to an outdoor space enclosed by fencing or barriers (in accordance with Vic H104.4) the latch must be located between **1500 and 1650 mm** above the floor, and the door must be self-closing – refer BCA Vic D2.21 (g).
- Generally, a children's room must have a doorway providing direct access to or from an outdoor play area, or a passage leading to the outside, or a fire-isolated exit – refer BCA Vic H104.2.
- Where a children's room accommodates more than 21 children, at least two doorways as widely separated as possible are required – refer BCA Vic H104.2.

Desirable design elements include:

- Door dimensions of between 800–900 mm wide and 2,000–2,200 mm high, ensuring the door is light enough to be operated by a child.
- In areas used by adults only, door handles located between 1500–1650 mm from the floor, to restrict child access.
- Use of lever type handles with the end turned in towards the door, together with vestibule locks (always openable) in doors used by children.
- Use of 2 leaf doors (with 1 side generally fixed in place) to enable large equipment and furniture to be moved in and out of children's rooms.
- Half glazed doors (clear glass) providing vision panels and allowing adult supervision and visual connection between rooms. (Half glazed as fully glazed doors can be heavy). Consider also half glazing in the bottom portion of the door so children can view through. Strip glazing, that is, down the side of the door caters for both children and adults.
- Use of 'stable door' in some rooms is desirable for traffic control of children – such as into kitchens.
- External doors in children's rooms and children's toilets should be able to be opened out against a wall and be latched securely (by a cabin hook, or similar) in the open position to prevent injuries to children running into open doors.
- Thresholds to external door should be continuous to a paved area (or similar) outside with the paving sloping away from the door.

- Use of hinge protectors, over door jambs, to protect children's fingers from getting caught.

Design elements to be avoided include:

- Large doors and heavy door closers that have the potential to trap fingers and injure limbs caught between the door and the frame.
- Sliding doors, as their operation is often confusing to children and they are especially unsuitable as escape doors. Use of overhead tracks fixed to the wall face is also to be avoided as the door can be pushed out of its track. Doors on floor tracks can trip children and make wheelchair access difficult. Where a sliding door is unavoidable, use a cavity sliding door unit with suitable doorstop or other finger-safe fitting to prevent jamming of fingers.
- Steps at thresholds providing obstacles for disabled access.

Access to main entry for people with disabilities.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the design of the main entry, to maximise access to the building. Where front entry doors have latches at between 1500 and 1650 high, the DDA requirements will not be met. Additional entry mechanisms such as an intercom or buzzer to alert staff to action automatic latch releases may be necessary.

## Stairs and Ramps

Sharp changes of level are to be avoided, especially within the building

Where steps or ramps are unavoidable, the requirements of the BCA should be followed

For ramps more than 1520 mm in length, AS 1428.1 – 2001 Design for access and mobility, permits a slope not steeper than 1:14.

It is recommended that balustrades are solid or with infills which do not have footholds for children to climb.

## Acoustics

As noise levels in children's rooms can be very high, attention to noise transmission between rooms and reverberation inside children's room is desirable. The attraction of open planning for functional reasons may quickly sour if sound isolation or containment cannot be provided.

It is recommended that floor to ceiling walls and full doors separate children's rooms from each other. In addition separation from the entrance area, which tends to be noisy and distracting may be practical.

If a feeling of openness and connection is desired, double doors which can be hooked back during some parts of the day may be preferable to clear openings. The balance of utilising doors solid enough to stop noise transmission when they are closed, yet light enough for ease of use by children, is to be considered. The use of internal glazing can reduce noise transmission while allowing a feeling of connection, and assist supervision.

Noise-absorbing surfaces such as acoustic ceilings, noticeboards and carpet will help reduce sound levels within rooms. Buildings with framed timber floors are particularly noisy, however careful use of soft floor coverings can be effective in reducing noise transmission.

## Finishes

The selection of finishes, their colour and texture for walls, floors, windows and other surfaces greatly impact the atmosphere of a room. Such selections contribute to whether a room presents for example as warm, institutional, home-like, cheery, and ultimately whether it is inviting or not.

## Wall Surfaces

Good quality, semi-gloss or low-sheen, wash and wear, acrylic paint is commonly recommended for wall surfaces. In wet areas, the BCA requirements are to be met, usually requiring impervious surfaces such as wall tiling, plastic laminated finishes (sealed at corners).

Colours and textures as well other elements such as mirrors can be utilised as alternative design features to enhance the space. A range of materials could be considered for such features including mosaic, stone, carpet or other tactile elements.

Innovative design elements for the display of children's art work can be incorporated.

Using wall surfaces such as display boards and other textures to help reduce noise levels should be considered.

## Floor Surfaces

Elements to be considered in selecting floor finishes include:

- health and safety (including low allergenic and non-slip finishes)
- comfort, (including texture, eg softness)
- mobility (prams and wheelchairs)
- hygiene and ease of cleaning and maintenance (washability)
- aesthetics
- noise transmission / reduction
- the role of flooring defining pathways and play areas.

Consider floor areas for quiet play, wet areas, eating areas or high traffic areas when selecting materials for the children's rooms. Carpet and good quality vinyl should be considered including soft backing types. Roll up rugs may be useful for quiet play and story telling areas.

In children's toilets and nappy change areas, non-slip washable vinyl with coved skirting is preferred rather than ceramic, quarry tiles or finishes with grouting.

It is recommended that outdoor ground surfaces be slip resistant, this includes hard surfaces such as paving and impact absorbing surfaces.

It is strongly suggested that manufacturers guidelines for the cleaning and maintenance of surfaces be retained and provided to the centre operators so that the best methods are employed.

## Window Coverings

Holland blinds of a thick, lightproof quality are excellent for darkening rooms at rest time. If the window receives direct sunlight reflective blinds might be considered, however, this is not a substitute for effective external sunlight shading.

Aesthetics and home-like environments are important. Curtains are not required to be treated with fire retardant under the BCA.

Pull cords associated with window covered should be considered carefully in regard to safety.

## Colour selection

The following discussion about colour has been enhanced by recommendations taken from the Child Care Design Guide (2001: A R Olds).

While colour selection is more art than science, colours themselves can excite, stimulate and subdue. Colour can transform a setting. It can achieve different spatial perceptions and impact moods. When used appropriately in a children's service colour can act as a background for children's creativity.

For infants' rooms Olds recommends pale soft colours such as peach, pinks, creams or toasted hues. While for toddlers rooms balanced colours such as greens, blue-greens or those with slightly more spark or calmness such as mellow yellows and purples. Four and five year old children generally prefer bright colours; especially red and yellow to more subdued tones. However the fully saturated primary hues of most plastic toys are not the best choices for the interior and furnishings of a centre. It is preferable that wall colour function as a non-intrusive backdrop, rather than focal point for the room. Olds recommends touches of bright, energetic hues on a simple harmonious and calming backdrop of soft colours.

This will ensure the built environment doesn't overpower the space and will enable features to be changed from time to time, for example seasonally or in line with program themes. It also enables the children's artworks and play items to stand out.

As some children spend 3 to 5 years in a centre, the consideration to varying colours from room to room could be made. Caution is also raised as to personal bias with colour selection.

## Fittings and Built-in Joinery

It is desirable that all bench tops or leading edges be rounded or bull-nosed and that all external or protruding corners also be rounded.

The selection of surfaces that are smooth, impervious and easily washable contributes to the easy maintenance of fittings and built-in joinery.

Consideration to the use of child proof latches on fittings and built-in joinery should be made. Latches may be installed to drawers and cupboards below bench top in rooms used by children, unless the joinery is intended to be accessed by children.

## Children's Lockers

Preferences for the location of storage for children's personal items differ from centre to centre. Some prefer lockers to be in children's rooms for supervisory reasons, so that children do not wander out to a corridor or foyer area when accessing items. Others prefer lockers to be in a common area near the entrance so the use of lockers does not distract children, or inhibit other uses for the space within the children's room. While both locations are acceptable, consideration to wall space for either option should be made. Consideration should also be given to the use of moveable / mobile lockers.

If a location outside the children's room is preferred, a room entry alcove - after entering the children's room may be an option. Such an alcove could provide for lockers together with perhaps the attendance book recording the arrival and departure of children and pigeon holes and notice display boards for notices to parents.

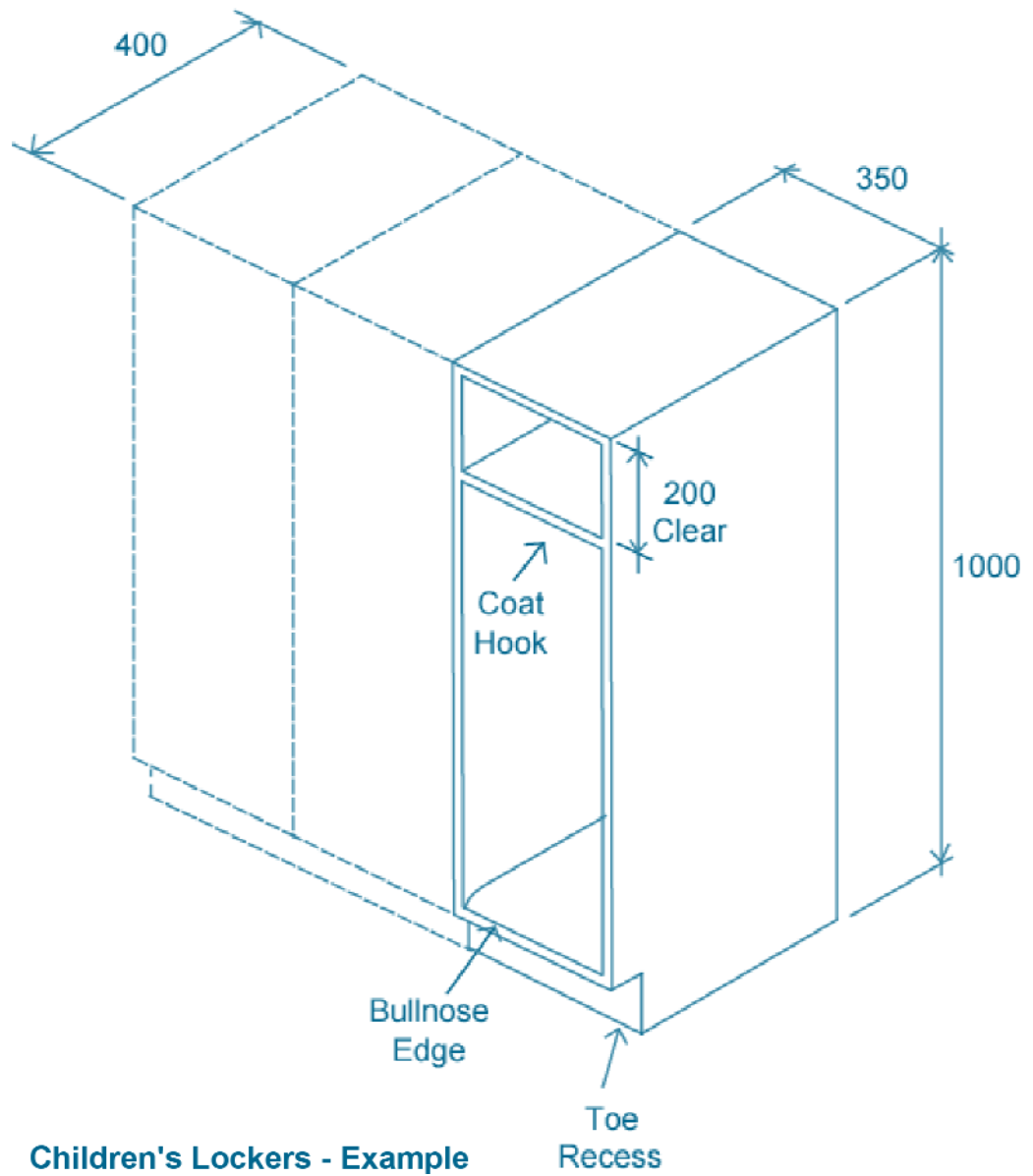
If lockers are to be placed in children's rooms, extra floor area may be required in these rooms to ensure that clear floor space of 3.3 sqm per child area is available exclusive of the lockers.

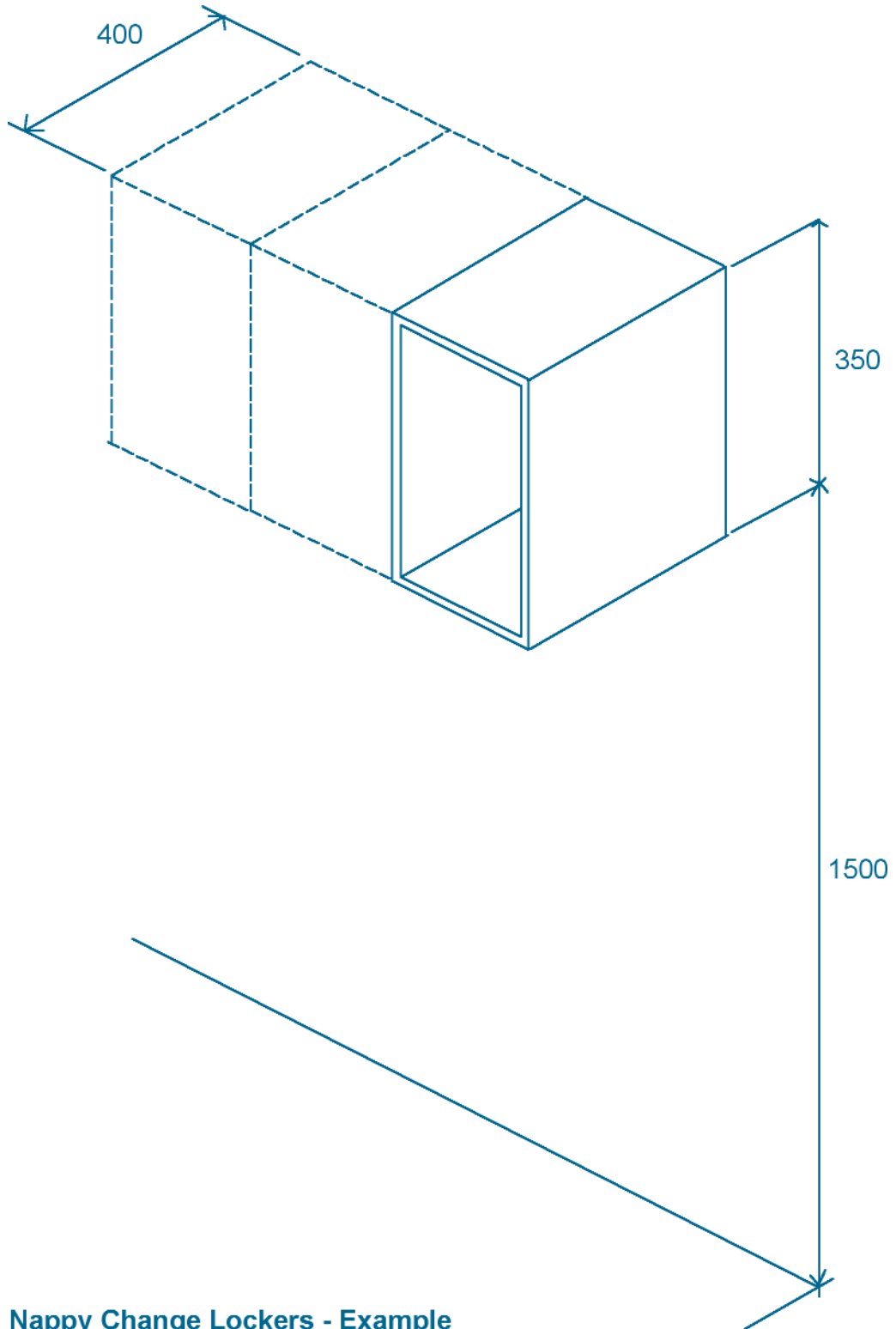
It is recommended that locker space be provided for each child, with spares available to cater for children attending on different days and sessions.

Lockers that provide sufficient space for hooks for hanging clothes and bags, space for shoes, room for personal items and toys, as well as a spot for notices work well. Locker doors are entirely optional. Lockers can be built-in or modular. However lockers should be installed in a manner which will not allow them to tip over if climbed on by children.

Where programs for school-age children are provided, it is recommended that suitable storage relevant to their needs be accommodated. Lockers for babies, for spare clothes, toilet articles, medications for individual babies are often located in the nappy change area.

Examples of locker designs are provided.





**Nappy Change Lockers - Example**

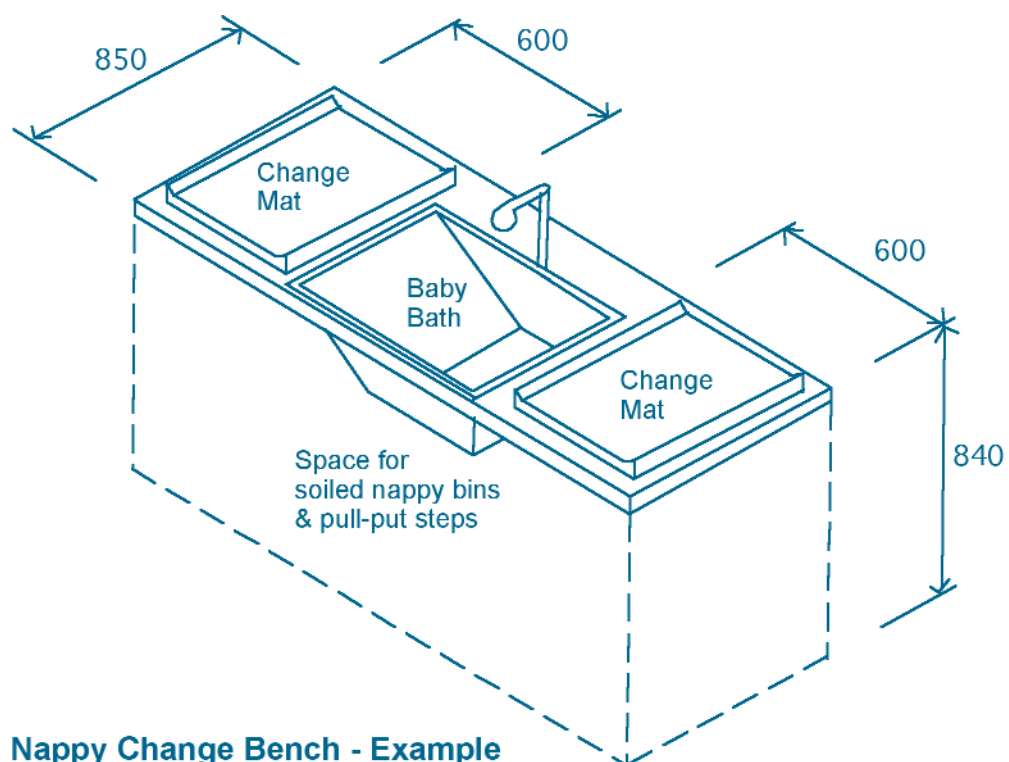


## Change Benches in Nappy Change Area

The preferred design for a change bench is one which allows changing the baby with its head away from the staff member. Preferred depth is 850 mm.

To cater for most adults, a height of 840 mm above floor level is recommended. Protruding corners and front edges should be rounded and all surfaces washable (for example plastic laminate). A covered foam rubber pad is usually placed on the bench.

A stainless steel inset bowl or stainless steel baby bath deep enough to bath a baby is required under the BCA Vic F2.3. When two change positions are provided, the bowl can be located between the two, illustrated in the diagram below.



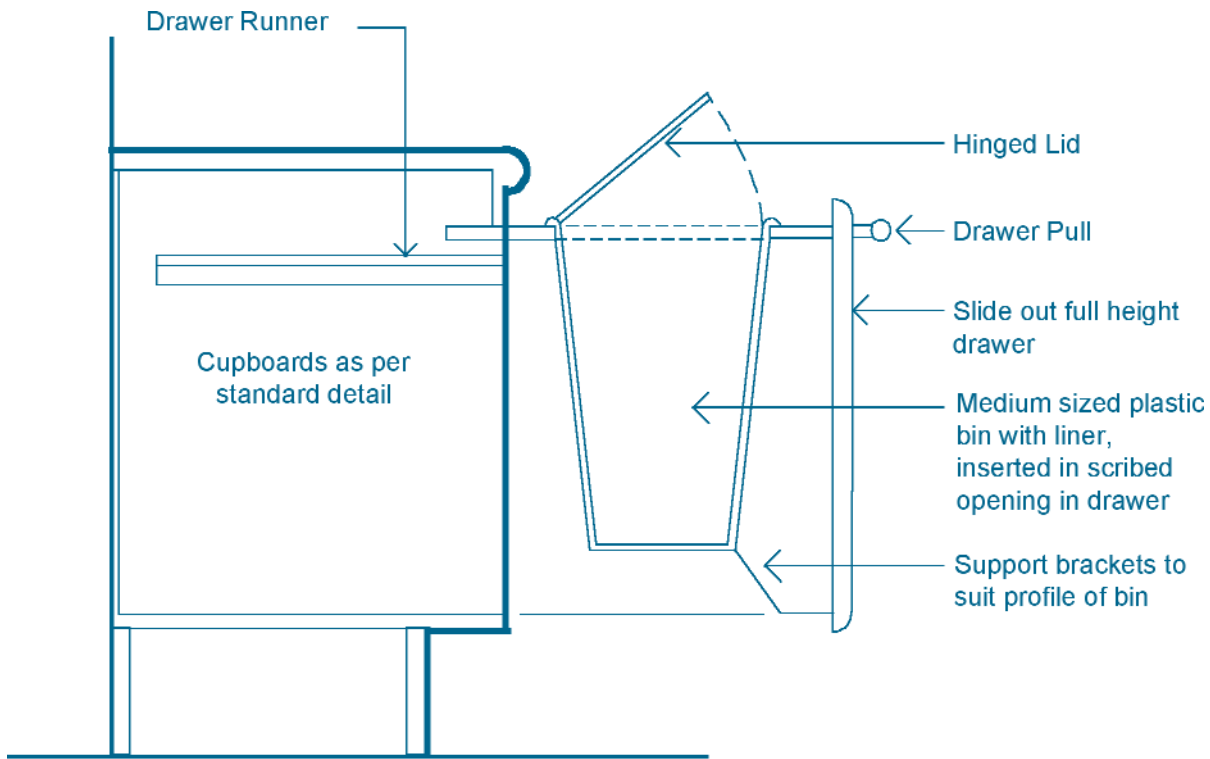
**Nappy Change Bench - Example**  
(Children < 3 years)

Ideally the bench would be positioned so that staff can see into the children's room while changing a baby.

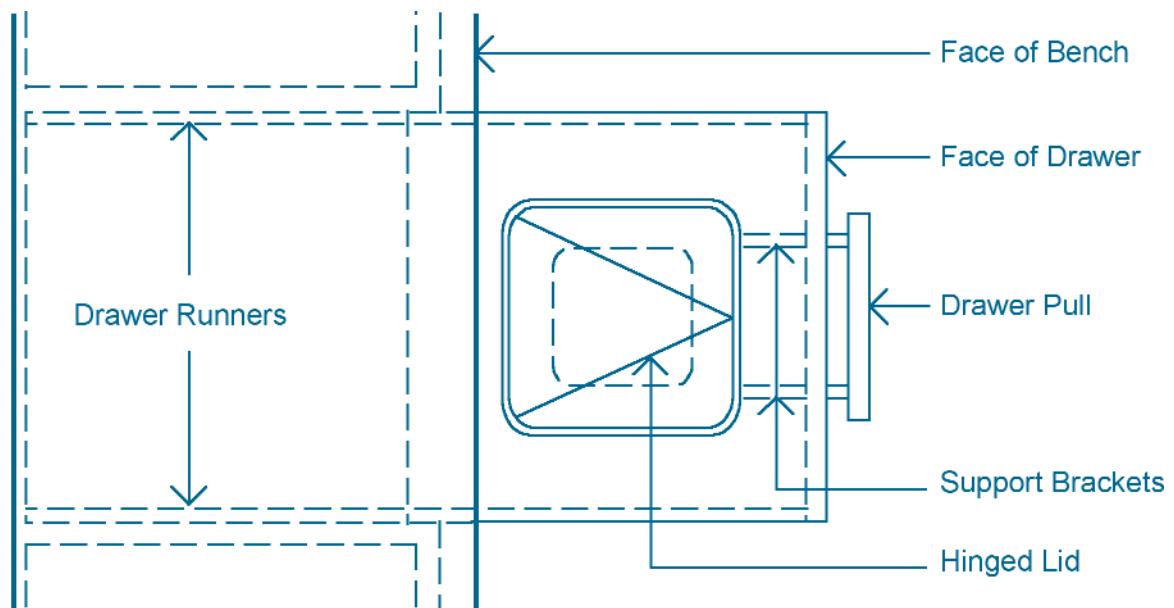
Taps and outlets should be convenient for staff to use and are usually positioned behind the bowl, to avoid potential accidents while children are being bathed. Elbow taps should be considered.

A high shelf to store nappies and gloves provides ready access to necessary items.

Allow space under the bench for covered bins for the disposal of soiled nappies and pull-out steps. Consider slide out bins or chutes in the change bench to bins below.



**Slide Out Soiled Nappy Bin (Section) - Example**

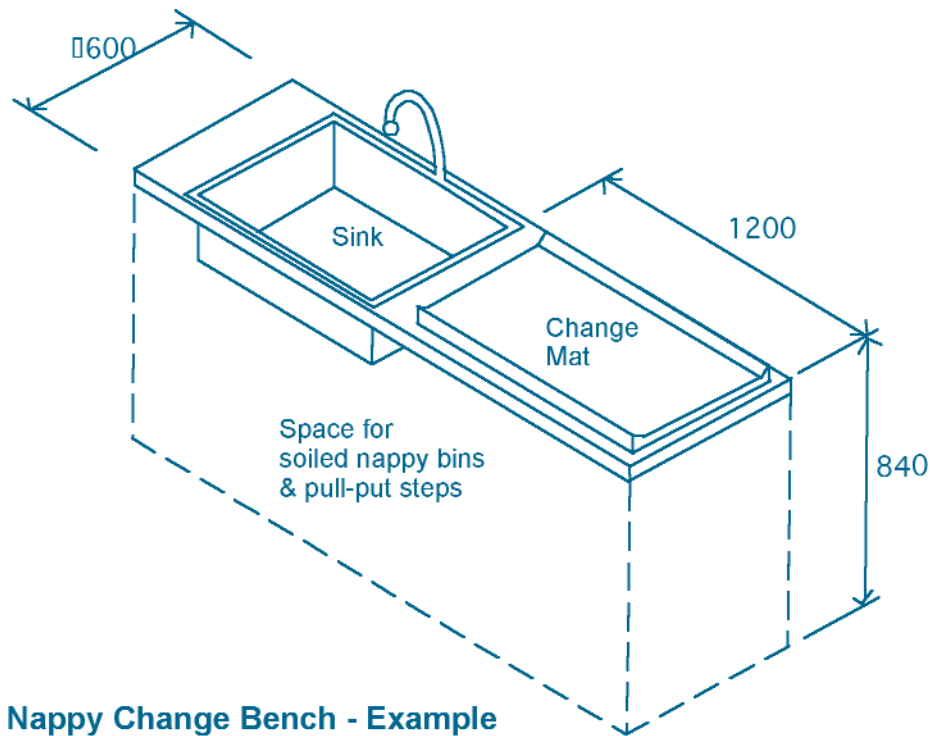


**Slide Out Soiled Nappy Bin (Plan) - Example**

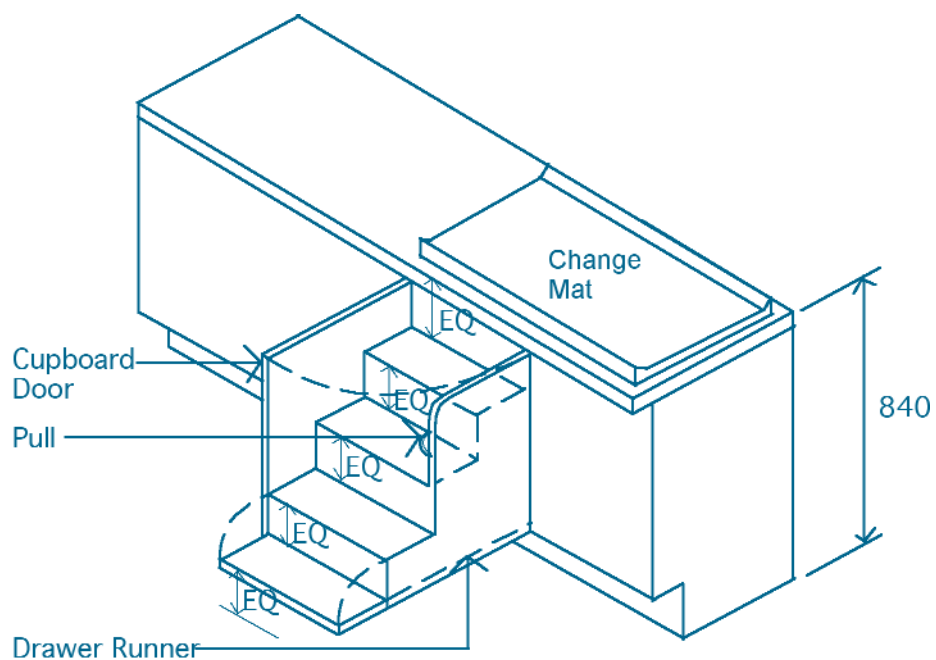
### Change Bench in Children's Toilet Area

A nappy change bench for older children with special needs is often best provided within the children's toilet area. This may be especially necessary if the centre does not cater for children less than two years of age. Some screening of the change area for increased privacy may be appropriate.

Again, it is preferable that children be changed with their head away from the staff member. For older children a length of at least 1200 mm is preferable, and the bench designed so the staff member stands at the end of the bench. It is desirable for the bench to incorporate pull-out steps for children that can negotiate steps, to alleviate the need for staff to continually lift children.



**Nappy Change Bench - Example**  
(Children 3 or > 3 years)



**Pull Out Steps - Example**

## Toilet Partitions

Junior toilets are to be separated by partitions, between 150mm to 250mm above the floor at the bottom, to a height not less than 900mm or more than 1500mm high. BCA Vic F2.5

They should be faced with a laminated plastic sheet or equivalent impervious material, and the top corners of each partition rounded. A secure support leg is preferred at the leading edge for strength and ease of cleaning.

## Display Boards

Generous provisions to display children's artwork and posters are recommended. If there is insufficient display board space the temptation for displays to be fixed to windows and doors, decreasing natural light and vision may occur.

A range of different finishes are available, for example, plastic laminated wainscoting whereby art work can be taped to the surface, easily removed without otherwise damaging the paintwork to the walls. Methods for securing art work should avoid pins or other hazards to children. Other materials such as Velcro, pegboards and magnetised boards should be investigated.

Display board in the same colour as surrounding walls works effectively.

Display boards or whiteboards may also be useful in other areas including the foyer, administration room office, staff room and kitchen. While messages, notices and children's art may be on show in these locations, it is essential that the service displays such items as the weekly menu and that the licensee displays the license in a conspicuous place at the main entrance.

## Equipment and Furnishings

The inclusion of preferred / proposed equipment and furnishings should be distinguished as early in the design process as possible, and regularly updated and monitored through the design, documentation and budgeting stages. It is important to note that a piece of equipment or furnishing which, when delivered on site does not fit within the designed built-in space (in terms of dimensions or plumbing or electrical supply points), may require unwanted alterations and extra costs during the construction phase.

### Kitchen Equipment

(See also Internal Space – Kitchen)

Large, heavy duty, commercial style equipment is often selected due to the quantities of food items being prepared and frequency of use. This however may not be the case in all services.

A large stove and oven is desirable in centres where meals are prepared for the children. A wide stove, preferably with six burners is recommended. A second warming oven can also be of benefit.

As many cooks prefer to purchase foodstuffs in bulk for fridge and freezer storage, separate fridge and freezer units may be necessary. Combined upright fridge / freezer with a separate door for each compartment should be considered. The decision usually depends on the size of the service.

The selection of a dishwasher with a range of washing cycles, especially a short cycle for lightly soiled plates and cups can be practical. As dishwashers may be noisy, they are best not placed where noise will be transferred to sleeping areas.

### Laundry Equipment

If a laundry is to be provided it is desirable that a heavy-duty washing machine capable of taking large loads, together with an externally vented dryer unit is considered. Front-loading washing machines are recommended for economical water consumption.

### General Furniture

Furniture adds to the overall feel of a room and can greatly influence the creation of a harmonious environment. It is important to consider the visual impact of furniture when purchasing pieces.

The careful selection and placement of furniture can produce a variety of results including:

- providing storage
- generating activity centres
- enclosing or opening spaces.

Criteria for furniture selection include: functionality, durability, safety (for example avoiding items with sharp corners) and stability. The easy cleaning and maintenance of materials should be considered. Furniture can be age appropriate and size appropriate. The relationship between individual pieces of furniture should be considered. If flexibility is important and a variety of room layouts are sought, then furniture will need to be moveable and adaptable to suit different locations and uses. If children are to move furniture, then it should not be too heavy. Modular styles may be appropriate.

Not all furniture needs to be small, an armchair or sofa can reflect a home environment.

If furniture is to be kept outdoors, it should be waterproof and able to withstand weathering by the sun.

It is important not to over supply furniture and crowd rooms.

## Natural Ventilation

[The Building Code of Australia \(BCA\) permits rooms to be naturally ventilated providing the natural ventilation complies with F4.6 of the code.](#)

Fixed ventilation such as wall grates and sash vents unless required by BCA or specific Australian Standards should be carefully considered for their performance. When present, they may inhibit thermal performance by letting unwanted exterior hot summer air into a building or allowing desired interior cool air to escape.

Manually operated natural ventilation such as doors and windows should be designed with a balance for the need for safety together with preferred natural circulation of air. For example double hung windows (sashless or otherwise) allow for the natural circulation of air while avoiding the safety hazards to children of casement or sliding type windows. Doors secured in the open position hard against the exterior wall provide good natural ventilation.

The effectiveness of natural ventilation depends on the ability for cross ventilation, that is, the natural flow of fresh air through a room. The design of cross ventilation will need to seek a balance between natural ventilation and unwanted drafts.

Ceiling fans may be considered, particularly if mechanical cooling systems are not provided.

Strong exhaust fans are recommended for all toilet areas, shower / bath and nappy change areas.

## Heating / Cooling

Maximising passive design that promote solar heating in winter, and exclude summer sun whilst inducing natural ventilation in summer is strongly advised. Passive design systems can promote ideal indoor environments, are usually inexpensive to adopt, reduce the capital cost for supplementary mechanical systems, helping to reduce running costs attributed to heating and cooling. Examples of passive design include:

- orientation and shape of the building to minimise surface exposure to solar radiation.
- thermal efficiency of the building site such as the use of insulation to ceilings and external walls, orientation of windows, selection of glazing performance.
- good shading design, including use of deciduous trees and integrated landscaping.
- solar hot water and air heating.

Where supplementary mechanical systems are necessary, the selection of flexible systems is often best for children's services. With the changeable Victorian weather, the ability to relatively quickly heat or cool sections of the building is often appreciated. This also enables responsiveness to differing uses within the building, for example management meetings or other community activities held in the evenings or at weekends requiring only one section of the services to be heated or cooled.

Heating systems include:

- individual units for each room such as electric wall or skirting units or gas wall furnaces, these may possibly utilise time clocks, thermostats and back vents to adjacent rooms.
- reverse cycle air conditioning units which also can be used for cooling, these are usually located on the roof or external walls.
- central heating, that is, a stem with a central mechanical plant which services the whole building.

Examples of central heating systems include:

- embedded floor heating in the concrete slab – reticulated electric wiring or gas heated water lines (considered inflexible for meeting rapidly changing weather conditions).
- ducted floor or ceiling air heating (reasonably flexible, but expensive to install and run, requires filters to prevent dust and pollen infiltration – not practical for ground floor slabs).
- hydronic heating – using hot water radiators, often integrated with the domestic gas or electric hot water system, is very efficient if using gas (does take up precious wall space).
- radiant heating units, usually mounted on the ceiling, provides heating to children when doors and window as are open to the elements, sensor activated they operate only as required.

Cooling systems include individual units for each room such as wall or window mounted electric refrigerated air conditioners, reverse cycle air conditioning units which can also be used for heating (usually located on the roof or external walls) and central cooling.

Examples of central cooling systems include:

- refrigerated cooling, usually ducted in the ceiling. This form of cooling is very effective, but expensive to install and run.
- evaporative cooling, usually ducted in the ceiling. This form of cooling utilises a more passive system than refrigerated cooling. It works well in buildings where doors are being opened all the time and outdoor air mingles with indoor air, as in children's services and primary schools. It is reasonably inexpensive to install and run, however not as effective as refrigerated cooling on very humid days. The cooling mode should then be stopped and the ventilation mode put on high.

## Electrical Work

All electrical work, including conversion of existing buildings, must comply with *Electrical Safety Act 1998*

[<http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/>] and the *Electrical Safety (Installations) Regulations 1999*

[<http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/>] and Australian Standard 3000:2000 – Electrical installation (also known as Wiring Rules).

Further information is available from the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector. [<http://www.ocei.vic.gov.au/>]

## Lighting

- To avoid unnecessary use of electric lighting and promote natural daylight, it is recommended that lighting in children's rooms be connected in two circuits (zones) so that lights near windows can be switched off when not needed. Such lighting can then be utilised to suit particular activities.
- A good quality, glare-free light is appropriate for working surfaces in children's rooms. A general light intensity of 400 lux on the working surfaces is recommended, however, a lower level of 300 lux is sufficient for general illumination.
- Light fittings can include a mixture of low energy luminaires for general lighting, task lighting and some warmer lights for accent and atmosphere.
- Where flexible track systems for spotlights or other lighting is preferred, these systems must be investigated at the planning phase.
- The installation of dimmers can assist to reduce lighting at sleep times, yet enable adequate supervision.
- It is recommended that light fittings be installed not less than 2000 mm above floor level or ground level externally. It is often preferable that light switches be mounted out of the reach of children at 1500 mm floor level.

- Security lighting should be vandal resistant.
- Give consideration to exterior lighting low to the ground.
- Emergency lighting including required fire exit lighting must comply with BCA requirements.

## Power Outlets

- The Australian Standard AS/NZS 3000:2000 Electrical Installations, requires residual current devices, commonly known as safety switches, to be installed to all electrical installation, alteration, and maintenance and repair work carried out.
- Power outlets should be located at a minimum height above the floor of 1500mm.
- As power boards are a potential hazard, sufficient power outlets should be provided to cater for demand and be located to suit the required tasks.

## Communications

### Telephones

The type and complexity of the telephone system will depend on the size of the children's service, and on the preferences of the providers and users. It is common for services to have two extensions, one for the administration room and one for the kitchen. Cordless phones allow for greater flexibility, and should be considered.

If the phones are some distance from the outdoor play space, an extension bell may be desired – however removing of staff to attend to phone calls must not impact on the required staff/child ratios. Appropriate phone placement should therefore be considered.

A separate fax line may be useful, or a multipurpose phone/fax may be appropriate depending on use.

In a multi-use centre with community facilities and school-age programs, a pay telephone located in the foyer is an option.

### Intercom

Some services find it useful to use intercoms between rooms, and in particular as a communication to the front entry.

Is it important to investigate the need for such devices at the planning stage.

### Computers

Computers may be appropriate at several points throughout a service, not just in the administration room. The thorough investigation of demand, preferred location of services and cost to install should be considered at the planning phase.

## Fire Services

The size and configuration of a building will determine the requirement to comply with specific clauses of the Building Code of Australia in respect of fire services including fire hydrants, hose reels, extinguishers, smoke detectors, emergency lighting and exist signs.

Fire hydrants are not required for buildings under 500 sqm (refer BCA E1.3). If the building is a standalone facility greater than 500sqm then fire hydrants in the adjacent street may be utilised provided that the consent of the Fire Brigade is obtained before work commences on site.

Hose reels are not required for buildings under 500 sqm (refer BCA E1.4). However, if the building is situated where internal hydrants are installed or required, then a hose reel must be included (refer BCA E1.4). If a hose reel is not required, water-charged extinguishers must be provided in the ratio of at least 1 per 500 sqm or part thereof. Specialised extinguishers to cover switchboards, cooking oils & fats in kitchens as well as flammable liquids, in excess of 50 litres are also required (refer BCA Table E1.6).

Where the BCA requires fire extinguishers, they need to be located, signed and mounted in accordance with AS 2444.

Generally, smoke detectors are not required in a children's service unless it is located in a building having a rise of more than 2 storeys (refer BCA Table E2.2a General Provisions).

Refer BCA E4 for any required compliance with emergency lighting and exit signs.

## Plumbing

Refer also to Section Children's Toilets

### Wash Basins

Wash basins used by children must have a rim height not exceeding 600mm. BCA Vic F2.3 / Regulation 45

### Toilet Fixtures

Toilets used by children must be junior toilets, except those in a restricted licence children's service.

### Hot Water to Children's Sinks and Basins

It is recommended that all hot water outlets to sinks and basins accessible to children be fitted with a thermostatically-controlled mixing valve set to a maximum of 45 degrees Celsius, located at least 1,500 mm above the floor. Consideration should be given to reducing the maximum temperature to 35 degrees for locations used for infant bathing.

If the hot water unit is located in a storeroom, it should be protected by a securely-fixed guard to prevent materials being stored against it.



## Space data sheets

### Background to Space Data Sheets

This section includes a series of space data sheets, both required and nominal, which specify design elements with regard to particular spaces within the proposed premises. These functional specifications are described on a one-sheet standardised form.

The contents of the space data sheets are intended to act as a definitive guide to the design team. The information uses a *briefing by exception* approach, so that the designer is not burdened with a mass of general information but accepts the general industry benchmarks and conditions, unless otherwise marked on the Space Data Sheet.

A Space Data Sheet is a description of an identified space in the proposed building. It provides information on space grouping, security classification, use, type of users, and specific design elements, such as related engineering services. While this format was originally devised for use by design professionals, the checklist approach and the standardised location of specific comments will assist anyone who wants information about the physical description of the spaces included.

The intended licence capacity of a service will influence the exact type, number of rooms and size of each space as will the philosophical approach of the provider and factors such as multi-use centres.

### Labels Used on the Space Data Sheets

The following key to the labels in the boxes on the space data sheets has been included to assist the reader or designer in understanding the information provided:

<b>Name of Space</b>	The name of an identifiable space or room that has functional requirements about which a designer needs to know.
<b>Revision Date</b>	The date of the last approved revision made to the space data sheet.
<b>Space Number</b>	The number allocated to this space to assist in compiling an order and to clarify diagrammatic relationships.
<b>Function</b>	A brief description of the activity or range of activities that normally occur in this space.
<b>Users</b>	Lists the range of persons who will use this space.
<b>Area of Space</b>	Minimum space requirements according to the <i>Children's Services Regulations 1998</i> , otherwise no specific requirement.
<b>Security of Space</b>	Zoned by security space categories A three level system related to the user type is proposed and listed here in ascending degree of security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visitor zone</b> – any space where an authorised visitor can enter (this includes children and parents).</li> <li>• <b>Staff zone</b> – a space which is only accessible to staff and invited visitors.</li> <li>• <b>Secure zone</b> – a space which is accessible to specifically Authorised staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Acoustic quality</b>	Description of noise problem and/or resolution
<b>Visual criteria</b>	Describes any visual relationships that must occur or is desirable between spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>View to</b> – notes whether it is important to be able to Supervise activities inside one space from another.</li> <li>• <b>View from</b> – notes whether it is important that activities within the space can be supervised from another.</li> <li>• <b>Other</b> – other criteria.</li> </ul>

<b>Lighting/Electrical</b>	Relates to lighting and electrical requirements:
• <b>Natural Light</b>	– notes whether natural light is a requirement.
• <b>Light Control</b>	– notes whether lighting control such as dimmers, sensors and timers is a requirement.
• <b>Artificial Light</b>	– notes whether artificial lighting is a requirement and if a particular type is preferred, eg fluorescent, incandescent, task lighting.
• <b>Power Points</b>	notes whether GPOs are required, their purpose, preferred number and mounting height.
<b>Hydraulic</b>	Specifies whether water connection is required, and if so, what type:
• <b>Water</b>	– notes water requirement, such as hot and cold water, hose reel, thermostatic control.
• <b>Sink</b>	– notes the type of sink, basin or trough required.
• <b>WC</b>	– notes the type of toilet required or preferred.
<b>Mechanical</b>	Relates to whether a space requires heating, ventilation or cooling devices:
• <b>Heating</b>	– notes whether required.
• <b>Ventilation</b>	– notes whether required.
• <b>Air Cooling</b>	– notes whether required.
<b>Communications</b>	Relates to basic communication requirements:
• <b>Phone</b>	– notes whether public, private, extension or cordless phones are required.
• <b>Other</b>	– notes any other requirements, such as intercom, fax, modem, security keypad, computer.
<b>Door Furniture</b>	Notes specific door furniture requirements.
<b>Storage</b>	Notes type of storage requirements.
<b>Display</b>	Notes type of display requirements.
<b>Finishes</b>	Relates to finishes of internal surfaces:
• <b>Floors</b>	– notes requirements and preferred finish, such as vinyl, carpet.
• <b>Walls</b>	– notes requirements and preferred finish, such as paint, tiles.
<b>Relationship with Other Space</b>	Illustrates in diagrammatic form, the preferred relationship with other spaces for accessibility.
<b>Furniture/Fixed Fittings</b>	Schedules the items that are required or & Signage Considerations preferred.
<b>Design Considerations and Comment</b>	Describes any critical, necessary, or recommended requirements not covered elsewhere.

## Space Data Sheets (see separate document for full space data sheets)

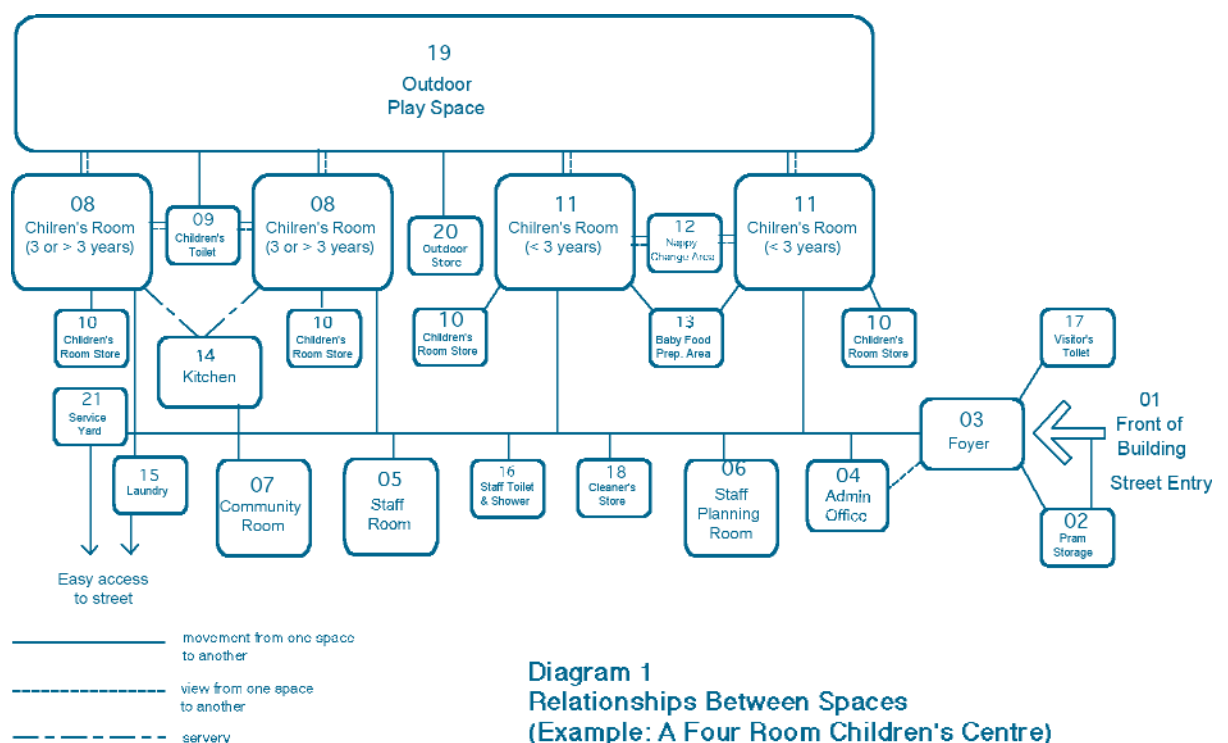
Space Data Sheets for each space (either required or nominal) follow.

01	Front of Building	12	Nappy Change Area
02	Pram Storage	13	Baby Food Preparation Area
03	Foyer	14	Kitchen
04	Administration Room	15	Laundry
05	Staff Room	16	Staff Toilet & Shower
06	Staff Planning Room	17	Visitor's Toilet (including Persons with Disabilities)
07	Community Room	18	Cleaner's Store
08	Children's Room (3 or > 3 years)	19	Outdoor Play Space
09	Children's Toilet	20	Outdoor Store
10	Children's Room Store	21	Service Yard
11	Children's Room (< 3 years)		

## Optimum Spatial Relationships

The proximity and relationship from one space to another is important to understand in order to design a building layout that will function well.

The following relationship diagram (diagram 1) illustrates how the spaces for a four-room centre might optimally be laid out. It is important to appreciate that it is merely a diagram and not a floor plan. It is not site specific and if the site that has been selected is, for example L shaped, the optimum relationship of the spaces still applies. Also, for many services there will be a greater number of children's rooms than illustrated – again the principles of the spatial relationships still applies.



## Plan and build

Building on the information provided throughout the design guide, this section takes a focus on the actual tasks of planning and building premises. It describes the roles of major participants and authorities, outlines the function of the Building Code of Australia and provides an overview of the typical stages for constructing premises.

### Roles of the Major Participants and Authorities

The major participants and authorities in the design, provision and procurement of children's services include many of the following:

- **Providers (generally Licensees, Proprietors, Operators)**

Providers are individuals or organisations, which provide and/or deliver children's services for parents and their children. Providers may include community organisations, private organisations, local government, institutions (such as universities, hospitals) and employers.

- **Users**

Parents and their children are the users of a children's service. It is a fundamental purpose of this Design Guide to provide considered information in a format that allows providers to make clear decisions for the users, where possible incorporating users input, about each specific centre.

- **Staff**

Staff – both qualified and unqualified, are also users of the building and facilities and where possible, should be involved in the early decision-making regarding the design and construction / renovation of children's services.

- **Building Commission**

The Building Commission oversee building legislation, regulate building practice, advise Government and provide services for industry and consumers.

- **Department of Human Services**

The department is the agency that regulates children's service in Victoria. In addition to the approval-in-principle and licensing tasks as outlined in the following section, departmental staff monitor service provision. The department provides advice and guidelines relevant to a range of early childhood services.

- **Local Government**

Local government carries an important role in the provision of planning permits and approval of plans, and in many regions is key provider of a range of children's services. Many councils can provide local demographic data, service usage patterns and needs analysis on request (refer Needs Analysis in the following Section).

Councils have an interest in social planning and local economic development and can facilitate integrated planning and service delivery. Some local government authorities have staff who are able to support development of new services through the various stages of approval.

- **Architects**

Before the design phase commences architects can advise on functional requirements, feasibility of development, selection of site, planning and project time scheduling.

The architect provides a service in response to a functional brief of requirements, relative to a specific site, for design, contract documentation and contract administration of the selected builder's construction works.

Architects generally are the first starting point and are able to coordinate the services of all other consultants (acting as project managers) and deal with relevant authorities.

Once the site has been selected the architect can provide a continuing service from site development to final completion.

- **Project Managers**

A project manager with experience in the delivery of children's centres projects may be engaged to 'project manage' the provision of requirements established by the providers and users for a preferred or yet to be selected site.

The project manager will manage the whole project from beginning to end, utilising the services of professional consultants as required.

- **Town Planners**

Permits for sites with straight forward planning requirements, can normally be dealt with by the architect. However, sites with planning constraints may require the expert services of a town planner.

It is important to determine, in the early stages that a planning permit is achievable.

- **Quantity Surveyors**

In the very early stages, based on the functional requirements (areas & type of facility), a quantity surveyor can prepare cost estimates for the proposed development.

The quantity surveyor provides a service whereby subsequent stages through the evolution of the design and documentation stage, as described above, can be costed, reviewed through cost management exercises, acted upon and monitored.

- **Building Surveyors**

Building surveyors act as the interface between the consultant team and the Building Code of Australia. For a particular project, they are able to advise on the main issues of compliance, the best means of complying and, for difficult issues, whether it is more practical to incur the expense of compliance or to seek a modification to building regulations.

The building surveyor also certifies the tender documentation (ie equivalent to obtaining a building permit), inspects the works during construction to ensure compliance is being met and issues an occupancy certificate at successful completion of the works (at both practical and final completion stages).

It is recommended to obtain the services of a building surveyor when considering 'change of use' of site to a children's service.

- **Environmental Consultants**

Environmental Consultants are key consultants in site selection. Among other roles they provide expertise in soil testing, identifying any contaminants present and assessing whether such contaminants constitute a human health risk. Such consultants are required for soil assessment, a step to be undertaken at the Approval in Principle (AIP) phase for a new service. The AIP is a requirement of the Department of Human Services.

- **Geotechnical Engineers**

Geotechnical engineers assess the bearing capacity of the site to support proposed structures. They normally work closely with environmental consultants and it is often prudent to undertake a geotechnical survey in the same assessment exercise as soil testing.

There may be cost savings if the two assessments are undertaken together.

- **Land Surveyors**

Land surveyors are essential for establishing the real boundaries of the site relative to the land title and adjoining properties, existing easements or constraints, existing site features (for example, buildings, vegetation, obstructions) together with existing site levels to Australian Datum (ie to the adjacent neighbourhood and flood plains).

- **Civil & Structural Engineers**

Civil and structural engineers assess aspects of the site relating to soil assessment and geotechnical analyses and put forward practical solutions to the architect.

Civil and structural engineers work very closely with the architect in resolving the design issues and preparing tender documentation.

- **Building Services Engineers**

Building services such as mechanical heating & cooling, electrical services, fire and smoke detection, security, communications (including telephones and information technology) come under these engineers' responsibility for working to the providers and architect's requirements and preparing tender documentation.

- **Security Consultants**

Security consultants are specialists in matters of assessing security risk and advising the designers of the most appropriate methods and systems for achieving the level of security required for a specific project.

They can be separately engaged or included in the building services engineers' scope of works.

- **Landscape Architects**

Before the design phase commences landscape architects can advise on functional requirements for outdoor play spaces and the selection of an appropriate site.

Landscape architects, with a proven track record in the design of children's services can make a huge contribution to the overall performance of the centre. They can provide site layout solutions for best practice for outdoor play and learning experiences, specification of planting and ground treatment which meet sustainable design standards and local council requirements.

- **Playground Consultants**

Playground consultants are experts in creating innovative outdoor learning environments. They can provide advice on appropriate play equipment for specific programs, cost estimates, documentation and specifications for tenders or quotes from competent suppliers / manufacturers. Many can provide safety audits on existing outdoor play spaces.

They can be separately engaged or included in the landscape architects' scope of works.

- **Interior Designers and Colour Consultants**

Interior designers are experts in areas of colour application, choice of appropriate and safe materials for floors, walls and ceilings relative to functional use and best practice. They are expert in the design of fittings and selection of furnishings and equipment. These important decisions contribute to the performance and delivery of a functional and safe centre. A further speciality includes colour consultants. Such consultants are expert in the choice of colour and colour finish and the colour coordination of floor, joinery, wall and ceiling surfaces, which contributes to creating harmonious environments.

They can be separately engaged or included in the interior architects' scope of works. Often the architect will undertake this role in a normal commission. For smaller projects not utilising architects, such consultants bring valuable expertise.

## Building Code of Australia

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) is the over riding document that defines the performance standards for all buildings. This includes the development of new buildings and the alteration and / or extension of existing buildings or where a change of use is proposed.

The BCA is a uniform set of technical provisions for the design and construction of buildings and other structures throughout Australia. The BCA arises from the *Building Act 1993* and the *Building Regulations 1994*. It is maintained by the Australian Building Codes Board on behalf of the Australian Government and each State and Territory Government. The Building Commission [<http://www.buildingcommission.com.au/>] is the statutory authority that oversees the building control system in Victoria.

The building code categorises all buildings into ten general classifications and covers matters of structural integrity, fire safety, fire resistance, access and egress, and basic health and amenity. Children's services are deemed as Class 9b buildings. The BCA is amended every six months and clause numbering generally remains unchanged.

Each State and Territory's legislation adopts the BCA subject to the variation or deletion of some of its provisions, or the addition of extra provisions. These variations, deletions and additions are contained in Appendices to the BCA. The Victorian Appendix contains extra provisions to the BCA directed to Children's Services. In 2004, these include:

- Vic A1.1 Definitions
- Vic F2.3 Facilities in (children's services)
- Vic F2.5 Construction of sanitary compartments
- Vic F3.1001 Children's services – size of rooms.

- Vic F4.1 Provision of natural light
- Vic Part H104 Class 9b children's services.

All Children's Services licensed after 1 June 1998 must fully comply with the provisions of the BCA.

## Alterations / Extensions

An often-misunderstood feature of compliance has to do with proposed alterations and / or extensions of existing centres. Whilst a **planning permit** may not be required, if a 'change of use' has not occurred, it may still be necessary to obtain a **building permit** (which means compliance with the BCA) if:

- the proposed alterations / extensions (together with any other alterations completed or permitted within the previous three years), represent more than 50% of the original volume of the existing building.

This means that the **entire** building must be brought into conformity with the BCA regulations. It is important to realise that it is the cumulative impact of the alterations over three years, which triggers compliance with the Code, rather than the size of each individual alteration.

The BCA also references particular Australian Standards (AS) that are regarded as minimal acceptable standards or guidelines which must be met. Specific AS codes have been included in the Design Guide wherever possible. It must be noted that this inclusion is not necessarily exhaustive.

Building Surveyors have expertise in the area of compliance with the BCA and should be consulted for detailed information about the application of the Code to a particular building.

## Steps and Approvals

### Typical stages to plan and build

The process of establishing the premises for a new children's service or altering or extending an existing one, can generally be described via the following stages. Not all stages will be relevant to all projects.

It is not uncommon for organisations to undertake a feasibility study. Where such a study occurs, it would normally include many of the tasks described the early stages below.

The 'Approval In Principle' process, administered by the Department of Human Services forms stage 11 of the following list. It is placed at this stage, as the application will require copies of documentation that comprise the earlier stages.

### 1. Needs Analysis

Is a children's service required in this vicinity? What is the demand for children's services in this catchment area? What are the age groups and the numbers projected for current requirements to future requirements over the next five to ten years and beyond? What service types are required?

As a first step, an answer must be provided for each of these fundamental questions.

Local agencies and authorities may be able to assist with demographic data or information about the catchment area or the provision of the proposed service.

It is important to ascertain whether other organisations are also proposing similar children's services within the same catchment area.

### 2. Decision-making / planning group

Not all ownership or management models may choose to form a planning group, however where practical, a group such as a User Committee or Project Control Group may be very useful. Such a group should not be too large, however if possible, a range of stakeholders including representatives of the property owner, service operator / coordinator, future staff and where possible parents could be involved. Decision-making methods within this group will need to be clarified.

The makeup of such a group may vary depending on whether the project at hand is to alter or extend existing premises or complete a new design and construction. It is recommended that this group meet regularly throughout the project to monitor progress, report back as required and make any policy recommendations for the service provider.

If the project consists of a number of service partners, for example in a multi-use facility, it is encouraged that time be spent early in the process to make agreements for ongoing operational arrangements, which may in turn impact on the design of the building or shared premises.

### 3. Information Gathering

Every new building, alteration or extension project is unique. Before committing to a design, a phase of information gathering should be conducted.

- **Familiarisation with regulatory requirements and operation of children's services.**

It is important to obtain a copy of the *Children's Services Act 1996* and *Children's Services Regulation 1998* and review the licensing and operational matters as set out in the Children's Services Licensee's Handbook and Children's Services Licensing Operational Guide. (note change) The documents describe space and facilities requirements and other matters that will impact the design of a children's service. Familiarisation could also include contacting Children's Services Advisers (CSAs) in the local regional office of the Department of Human Services, to discuss ideas and make links with the staff that will be working closely on the proposed project through the approval in principle stage and licensing stage. CSAs have extensive knowledge and experience in early childhood services and are a valuable source of advice and information.

- **Familiarisation with planning and building requirements.**

It is important to investigate the relevant local authorities that are likely to be involved in any project to ensure the project is dealing with the correct parties. Enquire about planning and building permits, zoning, local bylaws or requirements, such as neighbourhood analysis and inspections. For example investigate whether building permits are authorised through the local government authority or via a private building surveyor.

- **View and inspect similar children's services.**

New and practical ideas can be obtained by visiting other children's services. When doing so, it can be helpful to question the functionality and performance of areas within a service that relate to the types of activities and spaces proposed for the project. An information gathering stage is an opportune time to build a pool of ideas and collection of photographs to discuss with the planning group, and later with the architect.

### 4. Defining the requirements

Based on information gathered through a needs assessment, the intended use and type of service, for example kindergarten, occasional childcare or long-day care must be identified. It is important to clarify whether a multi-use or multi-purpose facility is intended. The intended size of the service, the number and age range of children the service will cater for, and the number of staff that will be engaged at the service need to be specified.

Defining the requirements for the service also includes building a vision for the service – ideally a shared vision across the planning group. Plans, ideas and decisions such as the placement of the children's rooms to accommodate a preference for open spaces, for example, could be outlined, as too the inclusion of a dining area or special art space. There may be a preference to incorporate the natural environment through use of building materials and access to outdoor play spaces.

This step is often described as creating a design brief. A design brief is a set of instructions or outline for a designer and is written once the planning ideas and information have been consolidated. The design brief articulates the intentions and desired qualities and functions of the service. It informs the extent of the project and confirms particular ideals and elements that are important to the project and need emphasis so the architect or designer can interpret the project aims into a practical design.

This Design Guide may assist in the description and selection of spaces that are required to be included in the proposed new/altered/extended service together with preferred or optional spaces. This information will inform the area requirements for the site, buildings and outdoor play spaces. It is important to note that the *Children's Services Regulations 1998* state only minimum space requirements. Consideration should be given to providing more space per child as much as is practical and affordable.



## 5. Defining the project budget

Based on the building and site area requirements, a preliminary **estimate** of all capital costs should be prepared. This may include for example:

- site purchase
- construction costs (including escalation over the construction period)
- borrowing costs
- fittings / furniture / equipment
- car parking
- landscaping
- professional consultants fees including environment site assessment
- necessary permit and authority application fees

It should be noted that some furniture may be part of the construction contract, such as built-in furniture and joinery, whilst free-standing furniture and equipment will be the responsibility of the provider / owner and must be factored in separately.

To ensure the overall project budget is as comprehensive as possible, an indicative list of equipment and free-standing furniture for children's rooms and large equipment, storage, shade or landscaping for outdoor play spaces should also be prepared and costed.

Using a professional cost consultant (quantity surveyor) with recent experience in children's services is an advantage.

Estimates of capital and recurrent costs such as lighting, heating and cooling, is recommended to also be undertaken at this time. This is normally done by a building services engineer.

## 6. Selection of professional consultants

The timing of the engagement of consultants will vary depending on the experience of the user group. However, knowledgeable consultants can provide good advice early in the process regarding site selection and cost estimates before the actual design commences.

Many organisations will use a tender or quotation process for engaging consultants and it is suggested that past experience with the design / construction of early childhood facilities should be seen as an important criterion in the selection of competent consultants. The relevant professional associations can advise on who has expertise in these areas and who to contact. The actual range of consultants selected, will depend on the complexity of the anticipated project.

## 7. Selection of a site

For new services site selection is a critical step. This Design Guide provides information on selecting a site which can be found in the section: Site Planning Considerations under the headings site selection and optimum site zoning, which includes information about soil assessment. Other relevant information is available in the section outlining the various roles and major participants, which includes Environmental Consultants and Geotechnical Engineers.

If a proposed new service will utilise an existing building, a thorough building inspection is recommended to confirm the building condition and its suitability for renovation for use as a children's service.

## 8. Developing concept plans and site plans

This stage is generally done with the expertise of an architect. Given the project brief and details of the site, a building concept and site plan can be prepared. This exercise should be undertaken with full knowledge of any planning requirements, heritage overlays, car parking requirements and the like, that may apply to the locality of the site. Contact should be made with the local government planning authority to ensure any such requirements are known in advance of the concept planning stage.

Concept planning usually goes through stages of refinement, selecting the preferred spaces, working out the layout, arranging interior spaces and their adjacencies and considering the functional requirements of each space or room. Preliminary floor plans and perspective sketches will assist the owner or planning group to select the design that best meets the design brief.

The project budget should be reviewed at this stage, and any adjustments to the concept plans made to fit within the budget.

This stage is typically completed with a preliminary floor plan, building elevations and site plan. It must be noted that once the above plan has been prepared, some consultants may prefer to proceed directly to the detailed schematic design to be used for the planning permit.

### 9. Review of preliminary floor plan and site plan by Children's Services Advisers

Whilst not a requirement at this stage, it is advisable to arrange to meet with the Children's Services Adviser (CSA) in the local regional office of the Department of Human Services to discuss the preliminary floor plan and site plan for compliance with the Children's Services Act and Regulations. CSAs have extensive knowledge and experience in early childhood services and are a valuable source of advice and information. Early discussion can prevent the need for changes further along in the planning process.

### 10. Documentation for planning and building permits

The local government authority is responsible for issuing a planning permit. The local government authority may also issue building permits directly through their in-house building surveyor; alternatively, an independent building surveyor may certify the working drawings and specifications. It is important to be aware of the order for the issue of such permits and the documentation required, so that design completion and full working drawings will be available when necessary. For example, a planning permit often requires substantial schematic design and may also require a neighbourhood character analysis.

Depending on the location of a particular site, it is often prudent to undertake a community consultation process prior to proceeding with a planning permit application. This consultation exercise will help to assess the service need, and also involve the local community in the project, working through many issues, such as noise and traffic impact, and ideally minimising objections to the proposed development. If objections are received, a community mediation process to accommodate concerns may save time and money to alleviate the need for a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) judgement.

Planning permit approval may take some time (from 1 to 3 months) depending on the number of objections received over the initial 30 day period of public advertisement and notification to the affected neighbours.

It is recommended that care be taken to avoid the need to put a case before VCAT, as this will increase the time required, incur further consultant costs and also add uncertainty to the final design outcome.

It may be necessary for the architect or responsible building designer to modify the planning permit application drawings, in accordance with planning permit requirements, in order to obtain the final planning permit.

Once a planning permit has been obtained a project timetable is often prepared so that the timing of all subsequent stages is clearly understood by all major participants involved.

### 11. Apply for an Approval in Principle to operate a new Children's Service

Any individual, partnership, corporation or body corporate (company, cooperative or incorporated association) who proposes to operate a children's service in Victoria must first be granted an Approval in Principle (AIP) by the Department of Human Services, followed at a later time by an application for a licence to operate a children's service. In respect of an AIP an applicant may apply for:

- the use of particular land or premises for operating a new or relocated children's service
- premises proposed to be constructed for use in operating a new or relocated children's service

The application must be made on the appropriate application form; be accompanied by the prescribed fee and contain all documents and information as requested on the application form. Details are provided in the Children's Services Licensee's Handbook. Contact Children's Services Advisers in the local regional office of the Department of Human Services for further information.

Required building documentation includes:

- two copies of the site plan
- two copies of the detailed floor plan
- two copies of elevation plans of the premises
- a planning permit
- relevant building documentation (where building works are to take place this will include a building permit)
- a soil assessment carried out by an environmental consultant.

## 12. Design Completion

Once the necessary permits are obtained, design completion follows. This may comprise the confirmation of structural systems, mechanical, electrical and plumbing services, civil and landscaping requirements, and other critical dimensions leading to final construction documentation.

## 13. Selection of building contractor

There are a variety of ways to progress a project. The method adopted will determine the packaging and formatting of documentation for the project. Methods include:

- Public tender: where documentation is made available via public advertisement
- Selected tender: where a range of potential builders are invited to submit quotes against prescribed criteria
- Nominated builder: where a builder is contracted and sub contractors tender or quote for specific works
- Construction management: similar to the role of nominated builder, however with emphasis on management
- Project management: where the owner of the project selects a project manager to procure the project in any method which appears appropriate.

Whichever method is employed, fixed price submissions in the form of tenders or quotations based on the final construction documentation and specifications should be required.

Submitted tenders or quotations are analysed on a value for money and ability to deliver basis. Neither the lowest nor any tender or quotation may necessarily be accepted.

Once the construction sum or project budget has been confirmed a building contract or trade contract is signed and awarded to the successful contractor for delivery of the construction item or project. In this context 'delivery' is taken to mean: as documented, by a set time period and usually at a fixed price. Alternative construction contracts include those where work is carried out at set rates and margins.

## 14. Construction

Under a normal construction contract, the building contractor is responsible for the works and the architect or nominated representative is responsible for administering the contract, attending site meetings and coordinating other members of the consultant team to inspect the works during construction and provide advice and written reports from time to time.

In the case of an alteration or extension to an existing childrens service, planning will be necessary to ensure the least disruption to programs and the safety of children during the construction stage. Where the construction will disrupt use of any facilities of a childrens service, for example the usual access to a service, childrens rooms or outdoor space, strategies to ensure safe provision of care and education services should be discussed with the Children's Services Adviser at the time of notifying the Children's Services Adviser of proposed changes to the licensed premises or at the application for an Approval in Principal.

## 15. Occupation

Inspections should be carried out during construction and prior to practical completion by a building surveyor, to ensure that the building complies with all Building Code of Australia (BCA) requirements. Practical completion being the end date when the building can be occupied by the owner.

(Note: the building cannot be utilised as a children's services until a licence to operate has been issued by the Department of Human Services).

It is important to avoid having to remedy items after they have been completed, as this will add to the construction cost and delay practical completion.

Upon completion a complete set of as-built building, services and site plans and operational instruction manuals, warranties and guarantees for any equipment should be handed over to the owner, and in turn to the operator of the proposed children's services. Useful operational instructions about the building and outdoor play space, and aspects which may have to do with sustainable design features should also be included.

A defects liability period then usually commences, normally for between 6 or 12 months. During this period, whilst the building is occupied and operating, all defects should be noted and rectified as required by the builder or contractor.

At the successful completion of the Defects Liability Period, Final Completion is deemed to have been reached and the building and its operations are now the full responsibility of the owner.

## 16. Licence To Operate A Children's Service

In order for the new premises to be used to operate a children's service, the potential licensee must apply to the Department of Human Services for a licence. Detailed information is available in the Children's Services Licensee's Handbook.

An application for a licence assesses:

- any changes to the management or operation of the children's service since the approval in principle was granted.
- any changes to the design or location of the premises since the approval in principle was granted.
- Any person nominated by the applicant to manage or control the children's service in the absence of the licensee. Persons nominated to the licence will be required to undergo an interview at the regional office of the Department of Human Services.

Information to be submitted, at the licence application stage includes:

- Plans and permits. The number and type of plans and permits to be submitted at the licence application stage is dependent upon whether there are no changes, minor changes or major changes to the design of the premises approved at AIP.
- Certification of area measurements [<http://www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/>] for each of the children's rooms and the outdoor space by a registered building practitioner (under the *Building Act 1993*).
- Information and documents about the applicant, primary nominees, nominees and responsible persons.
- Detailed information about the recreational and educational program offered to the children.

Before a licence can be granted, the Children's Services Adviser will need to conduct a final inspection of the premises. The service must now be completely ready and have all equipment, record books, policies and all operating information displayed, as described in the Regulations so that the licence can be granted.

## References

- Australian Council of Building Design Professions 2000, *BDP Environment Design Guide*, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Melbourne
- *Children's Services Act 1996*, Government Printer for the State of Victoria, Melbourne
- *Children's Services Regulations 1998*, Government Printer for the State of Victoria, Melbourne
- Olds, A. R. 2001, *Child Care Design Guide*, McGraw-Hill, New York.

## Contacts

### Department of Human Services, Regional Offices

Ask for a Children's Services Adviser

#### Regional Contacts – Main switchboard numbers.

<b>Barwon-South Western Region</b>	Phone: 5226 4540	(Geelong)
<b>Gippsland Region</b>	Phone: 5177 2500	(Traralgon)
<b>Hume Region</b>	Phone: 5832 1501	(Shepparton)
<b>Loddon Mallee Region</b>	Phone: 5430 2333	(Bendigo)
<b>Grampians Region</b>	Phone: 5333 6530	(Ballarat)
<b>Southern Metropolitan Region</b>	Phone 9213 2111	(Dandenong)
<b>Eastern Metropolitan Region</b>	Phone: 9843 6000	(Box Hill)
<b>North and West Metropolitan Region</b>	Phone: 9412 5333 Phone: 9275 7000	(Fitzroy) (Footscray)

OR

Direct general email enquiries or comments about the Design Guide for Victorian Children's Services to:  
OfficeForChildren@dhs.vic.gov.au

