



#PlayToday

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promoting the value of play

USE OF WATER IN SUPERVISED EARLY YEARS SERVICES

Extract from Play Australia policy. Thanks to Kerry Rogers.

Water

Water is a valuable medium for creative play and useful for soothing, intriguing, or stimulating children, depending upon how it is used. It can be used as a vital ingredient in sand play and digging patches and can be made available on it's own in many different ways: hoses, either from mains supply, rainwater tank or bores; containers with taps; or dipped from a large bucket.

Whichever method is used, serious thought must be given to the environmental issue of water use and to developing the children's awareness of this through recycling of water onto gardens and lawns. Playground design needs to take into account any features that will require water maintenance.

Planning and siting taps

Plan a suitable number of water outlets. Make sure there is provision for drainage under taps, and that they are not sited where they will be a trip hazard or a nuisance for other activities by hoses lying over traffic areas.

Other water features for children's play range from reticulated 'trickle' streams and waterfalls, pools and ponds, to taps, hoses and sprinklers, trays, dishes, baths and other small containers. Children will also need access to water to water gardens, fill bird baths or water painting.

Safety is always an issue with water in children's environments and policies need to be put in place in each service regarding the use of water including the emptying of containers. As well, consideration should be given to the environmental impact of water usage.

Ponds for play which allow children to enter should be shallow, around **50 mm.** to **75 mm.**, easy to drain, and easily accessible, without steep sides and preferably with a non-slip surface. Ponds are not suitable for areas used by babies and toddlers.

A permanent pond to develop a wildlife habitat in the outdoor play space requires a metal grid, permanently held in place to prevent access by young children.

Cost

Many of the 'permanent' features for water play (ponds and streams) are expensive to build, have less use in cool climates, and require more serious attention to details such as drainage, connection into waste water systems and filters. The importance of these issues will vary from service to service, depending upon the space and other resources available.