

SECTION 18 - CHILD CARE CENTRES

Child care centres in the local area are a desirable facility for the well being of children. Children and their caregivers require high quality service in centres that enhance the occupants' well being. Services must meet State Government standards and offer a safe, healthy and accessible environment. The State Government is responsible for regulating and licensing centres, and joint funding of centres with the Commonwealth.

The design of a child care centre must serve the needs of children, babies, care giving staff, clerical staff, kitchen staff, cleaning staff and parents. The design must provide adequate space for each of these groups, and take into account their needs in using and working in the centre.

Child Care Centres can have adverse impacts, especially in residential areas, such as noise, traffic and parking, and these need to be considered in any development proposal.

How this section is used

This Section applies to child care centres in both residential and commercial zones. Performance based standards can be found in State Government Regulations of the *State Government Children's Services Regulation 2004*. The Building Code of Australia (Child Care Centres are classified as 9b buildings) and Australian Standards 1428.3 should also be referred to.

This Section supplements those standards so that the childcare centres fit with the context of Muswellbrook Shire and any potential impacts are minimised. This detail is provided in the components listed below.

The construction of new child care centres must address the built form controls that apply to the relevant zoning of surrounding land. (eg. a child care centre in a residential R1 zone must comply with the built form controls in Section 6 of this DCP).

Aims

Childcare centres that:

- a) provide affordable, high quality child care, in convenient locations, that meet the needs of the resident population.
- b) operate without adverse impacts on the local area
- c) achieve a built form that is consistent with the surrounding context

18.1 ENTRY, ACCESS, SAFETY AND SECURITY

Child care centres are permitted at or above ground floor level. For children aged 2 - 6 years, a centre on the ground floor with direct access to open space is preferred, rather than above ground. Centres above ground floor are more suited to children between 0 - 2 years.

An accessible, safe and secure environment allows for easy transfer of children and equipment (for example twin strollers) in and out of child care centres. Entrances to a Child Care Centre should be designed to indicate the way into the building, be welcoming to children, and offer some weather protection.

18.1.1 Entry

Objectives

- a) Entrances are clearly marked by signage and protected from the weather.

Controls

- (i) Where the entrance to the Centre is on the exterior of the building provide weather protection such as an awning
- (ii) Materials and design of weather protection to the entrance is compatible with the building *
- (iii) Where the Centre is located within a building that accommodates other uses provide a separate and clearly marked entrance for the Child Care Centre.

18.1.2 Access and mobility

Objectives

- a) Safe and easy access within, into and out of the Childcare Centre

Controls

- (i) Design in accordance with Australian Standard 1428.1 and 1428.3 (Design for Access and Mobility. Part 3: Requirements for children and adolescents with physical disabilities) *

18.1.3 Safety and security

Objectives

- a) A safe environment for all users entering and leaving the Childcare Centre

Controls

- (i) on site parking spaces and set-down and pick-up areas are well lit
- (ii) locate the entry gate within sight of staff in the office
- (iii) install bell or alarm on the entry gate to alert staff to someone entering or leaving the Childcare Centre *

18.2 AIR QUALITY

Muswellbrook Shire's natural resources are under pressure due to the area's coal mining and industrial activity, and the major thoroughfares that dissect the area. It is exposed to air, noise and land pollutants which can have negatively effects if not managed properly.

It is particularly important to consider the health of children in the local area by providing for them an environment which, ideally, protects them from pollution, and if this is not possible, at least manages (and thereby minimises) their exposure to pollutants. This can be achieved by considering the location and design of the Centre, and aspects of its operation.

Applications where the environmental risk assessment report indicates that exposure to pollutants cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of Council, may be refused on these grounds.

Car parking provisions for Child Care Centres includes set down and pick up areas, disabled access and emergency parking.

18.2.1 Drop off and pick up of children

Objectives

- a) Safe and efficient transfer of children to and from the Child Care Centre

Controls

- (i) Provide 2 designated vehicle spaces - one for Disabled Access, and one for emergency use – on site in residential zones, and within close proximity in local centre/village zones, in accordance with the provisions of AS2890.1.
- (ii) Provide accessible parking spaces for the set down and pick up of children, no more than 50m from the Child Care Centre.
- (iii) Provide 2 set down spaces for less than 24 children, 3 spaces for more than 24 children.
- (iv) Car parking provisions do not substantially modify the streetscape.
- (v) Spaces are clearly marked to reflect that they are for the exclusive use of the child care users between the peak am and pm hours of the Centre eg 7.30-9.30 and 4.30-6.30

18.2.2 Air quality

Objectives

- a) No exposure to pollutants that could have an adverse health impact

Controls

- (i) For Child Care Centres located on –
 - on major roads (including state and regional) or within 50m of such a road
 - roads where there is an average daily traffic rate of more than 5000 per day
 - sites where the external noise level exceeds 55 dB(A) (L90 24 hours)

demonstrate reduction measures such as double glazing on windows, air conditioning systems, and play areas located away from noise and pollution sources in an environmental report
- (ii) Child care centres within 200m of a service station will not be approved unless the application is supported by a preliminary hazard analysis (PHA) under State Environmental Planning Policy No. 33 and a risk assessment (biophysical and societal) taking into account the sensitivity of the use.
- (iii) Child care centres within 100m of above ground high voltage transmission lines or mobile phone towers or the like, will not be approved unless the

application is supported by a hazard risk assessment which addresses the potential impacts on human health.

18.3 INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACE

Well designed indoor space enhances the well being of the users of the Child Care Centre. The quality of the indoor space affects the level of child involvement and the type of interaction between staff and children.

Indoor space requirements refer to areas used by children for sleeping, eating and playing, and by staff for the caring of children and undertaking duties within the Centre. Passageways, kitchens, toilets and shower areas, or other facilities such as cupboards, are not included when calculating this floor area.

Children require outdoor space so they can move freely and engage in vigorous play. Outdoor space also offers sensory stimulation, provided by different surfaces, exposure to fresh air, sunlight, wind and even rain.

Ideally outdoor space will be exposed to the sky to provide direct sunlight, breezes and fresh air, and will have access to shelter and shade. However it is recognised that in some child care centres, such as those located in local centre zones, the provision of this type of space can be difficult, and outdoor space may also be in the form of -

1. Podium levels. Particular consideration must be given to access to daylight and sunlight, the safety fencing of outdoor play areas, noise and fire exits.
2. Rooftops. Particular consideration must be given to the impact of winds, plant and machinery on nearby rooftops, safety fencing of the play area, and fire exits.
3. Indoor / outdoor areas. Particular consideration must be given to isolating the children from the effects of noise, pollution and winds, and access to natural light and air. Planting, climbing equipment and visual features must provide an interesting and stimulating experience for the children.

Any outdoor play equipment must comply with Australian Standards and include appropriate ground surfacing. The surface around and underneath play equipment must comply with Australian and NZ Standard AS/NZ54422:1996.

All fences within and bordering Child Care Centres are to meet the Australian Standards for safety. The design and height of fencing should prevent children from scaling, or crawling under, the fence.

18.3.1 Indoor space

Objectives

- a) Adequate indoor open space for children and staff

Controls

- (i) Provide at least 3.25m² of unencumbered indoor floor space for each child.
- (ii) Provide at least 10m² of unencumbered indoor floor space for each employee, for office space, staff room, sick bay area and adult toilet and shower facilities.

18.3.2 Outdoor space

Objectives

- a) Outdoor open space to allow for children to play and experience sunlight, breezes and fresh air
- b) Outdoor open space provides an environmentally safe and healthy area for play

Controls

- (i) Provide at least 7m² open space per child.
- (ii) Ensure that exposure to external noise, pollution and winds is minimised
- (iii) Ensure that 50% of all outdoor open space is shaded during the hours of 10am to 3pm. Shading may be provided by trees, awnings, or similar structures *
- (iv) Locate seating and outdoor play equipment in shaded areas *
- (v) Ensure outdoor space receives a minimum of 2 hours direct sunlight per day.
- (vi) Use plant species in landscaping that are not harmful to children or the environment. *
- (vii) Ensure outdoor space is adequately shaded in accordance with guidelines set out in the NSW Cancer Council's *Shade For Child Care Services* publication.

18.3.3 Fences

Objectives

- a) Fence design complements existing design features of the building, and adjoining buildings where appropriate, and offers maximum protection for children

Controls

- (i) Use materials and finishes for fences that complement characteristic visual elements in the surrounding physical environment and do not dominate the streetscape *
- (ii) If perimeter fences of the outdoor space are close to a major road or a hazard, make them higher than the Australian Standard of 1200mm *
- (iii) Provide a childproof self locking mechanism on any gates *

12.4 VISUAL AND ACOUSTIC PRIVACY

Good management of privacy issues ensures the Child Care Centres are well integrated within the local context.

While Child Care Centres are beneficial within a community, there can be noise issues arising from the operation of the Centre, which can be addressed by considering the location and orientation of outdoor space, driveways, parking and access. In residential areas the location of windows and doors can influence noise impacts on nearby homes.

12.4.1 Visual privacy

Objectives

- a) Visual privacy for children, staff and nearby residents

Controls

- (i) Provide screening by trees, fencing and window coverings to minimise overlooking and noise impacts *
- (ii) Locate any play structures at least 3m from any boundary with a residential property

12.4.2 Acoustic privacy

Objectives

- a) Noise levels (measured at any point on the boundary of the site between the proposed Centre and adjoining property) do not exceed 5dB(A) above the L90 background level during the hours of operation.

Controls

- (i) Locate noisy areas such as outdoor space, vehicle access and pathways away from windows of adjoining dwellings
- (ii) Appropriate noise reduction measures are utilised *
- (iii) Demonstrate compliance with operating noise levels by providing a report on noise levels prepared by a suitably qualified consultant.

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