Child Safety
POLICY

Title: Emergent accommodation
Policy No: 631-1

Policy Statement:
The Department of Child Safety. Youth and Women (Child Safety) will deliver an effective and efficient care system aimed at meeting the daily protection and care needs of children, and achieving positive outcomes for children. Where a child requires care to meet his or her protection and care needs, this will occur in accordance with the legislated Statement of Standards (Child Protection Act 1999, section 122) and the Charter of Rights for a Child in Care (Child Protection Act 1999, Schedule 1).

The primary means of providing care placements to children will be through departmentally supported foster and kinship carers and grant-funded non-government placement services. However, Child Safety may utilise emergent accommodation as a temporary measure where no other placement options are available through departmentally supported placements, grant-funded placement services, or placement services funded through child related costs – placement funding.

Emergent accommodation includes the overnight and short-term use of commercial accommodation sites such as motels, hotels and caravan parks, with care and support provided by direct care workers.

Emergent accommodation will only be used in circumstances where there is the unforeseen need for a care placement for a child, or where an existing placement has ended unexpectedly, and no other placement option is immediately available.

Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child, throughout childhood and for the rest of the child’s life, are paramount.
- A child’s family has the primary responsibility for the child’s upbringing, protection and development and the preferred way of ensuring a child’s well-being is through the support of the child’s family.
- Child Safety will only place children in care as part of an integrated child protection response when assessment indicates that separation of the child from their family is unavoidable to ensure the child’s safety or wellbeing.
- Placement in care is a means of providing a safe and therapeutic care environment for children.
- If a child is removed from the child’s family, the child should be placed with the child’s siblings, to the extent that it is possible.
- A child should have stable living arrangements, including arrangements that provide for a
stable connection with the child’s family and community, to the extent that it is in the child’s interests; and for the child’s development, educational, emotional, health, intellectual and physical needs to be met.

Objectives:
This policy and associated procedures provide Child Safety staff with guidance in circumstances where a child’s immediate needs for protection and care can only be met by the use of emergent accommodation.

Scope:
Emergent accommodation may be utilised for children aged 12 years and older, who are subject to an assessment order, a care agreement or a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive (including interim orders), where the child’s immediate needs for protection and care can only be met by the temporary use of emergent accommodation. Emergent accommodation may be utilised for children younger than 12 years of age only in exceptional circumstances, for example, where the child is part of a sibling group to be placed together, and subject to a higher level of approval (refer to the Emergent accommodation procedure).

Emergent accommodation may be utilised for up to seven consecutive nights. Extension beyond seven nights must be approved by the regional executive director and may not exceed 20 nights in total. Extension beyond seven nights may only be approved where there is clear evidence that no suitable placement for the child is available.

In exceptional circumstances, where no grant-funded placements are available and commercial accommodation sites (such as a self-contained unit in a caravan park) are the only viable rental option, the use of emergent accommodation may be extended beyond the 20 day limit with approval from the regional executive director. In such circumstances, all efforts must be made to transition the child to another placement (either through grant-funded placement services or through child related costs – placement funding) as soon as possible.

Emergent accommodation does not include:
• overnight and short-term stays in hotels, motels and caravan parks when a child is on holiday with an approved foster or kinship carer
• planned supported independent living arrangements, in which young people aged 15 to 17 years are residing in a form of commercial accommodation (for example, a self-contained unit in a caravan park).

Please note that residential care is provided at premises owned or leased for the specific purpose of caring for children and is in no circumstances to be provided in commercial accommodation sites such as motels, hotels and caravan parks.

Roles and Responsibilities:
Roles and responsibilities related to the use of emergent accommodation are outlined in the procedure Emergent accommodation.

Roles and responsibilities related to placements are contained in the Child Safety Practice Manual.
Authority:

Child Protection Act 1999
Financial Accountability Act 2009
Child Protection Regulation 2011
Disability Services Act 2006

Delegations:

Delegations for approval of emergent accommodation are outlined in the associated procedure.
Records File No.: CHS/20150
Date of approval: 03 January 2013
Date of operation: 07 January 2013
Date to be reviewed: 07 January 2016 (minor update 18 October)

Office: Operational Support, Child and Family Operations
Help Contact: Operational Support

Links:

Legislation
Child Protection Act 1999 Family
Services Act 1987
Financial Accountability Act 2009

Policy and procedure
Case planning (263)
Child related costs – carer support (597)
Child related costs – client support and family contact (598)
Child related costs – education (599)
Child related costs – in-home support (630 and procedure)
Child related costs – medical (596)
Child related costs – outfitting (600)
Child related costs – placement funding (628 and procedure)

Michael Hogan
Director-General