

INSIGHT | TRANSPORT & EXCURSIONS

Excursions That Don't Surprise You

Risk assessment, ratio adjustment, and the head-count habit that prevents most excursion incidents.

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Transport and excursions place children outside the usual room and yard. The supervision system has to be more detailed — because the consequences of a gap are harder to contain. The discipline is the same as in the centre, but applied under less controlled conditions: vehicles, public spaces, unfamiliar toilets, open boundaries.

Transport is part of the supervision system

When the service provides or arranges transport, the risk assessment must consider children, route, counting process, vehicle, restraints, equipment, and staff roles. These details need to be clear before children board — not worked out once the vehicle is already moving.

Embarking and disembarking: the highest-risk handover points

Count mismatches at these points must be treated as immediate safety events. The sequence is non-negotiable:

1. Stop everything.
2. Secure the children who are present with adequate supervision.
3. Re-check the list.
4. Check the vehicle and nearby locations.
5. Escalate immediately through the service pathway.

The routine only continues when the mismatch is resolved and all children are accounted for.

Excursion discipline: before and during

Before	During
Know your named child group.	Count at every defined head-count point.
Know your position at the venue.	Maintain line-of-sight on your group.
Know where toilets and exits are.	Position an adult at toilets and exits.
Know the head-count schedule.	Reconcile counts against the list.

Before	During
Know where first aid and medications are.	Escalate immediately if a count doesn't match.
Know who to inform if a child needs support.	Stay in position until formally relieved.

CASUAL EDUCATOR CONTEXT

Service leadership will usually have developed the risk assessment before the excursion. A casual educator is not expected to create it — but they are expected to understand it, follow it, ask questions if anything is unclear, and actively support safe supervision throughout.

The same pattern, every time

Whether it's a library visit by bus or a nature walk to the local park, the discipline is the same: named groups, named positions, defined count points, known escalation pathway. Excursions become chaotic when responsibility floats. They stay safe when every adult can name their group, their position, and their next count point.

This article is part of The Practitioner's Guide to the NQF — McArthur's editorial series for the early childhood education sector. For the full whitepaper and webinar replay, visit www.mcarthur.com.au/insights.