



EDUCATION AND CARE

Portable / Folding Cots utilised in services operating under the Centre Based Child Care Class 5 Standards and licensed under the Child Care Act 2001

Information sheet

What is a portable/folding cot?

Portable cots (or porta cots) are designed and suitable for domestic use while travelling or away from home when a regular cot is not available.



Portable cots are not suitable to use as a permanent sleep option.

A standard/fixed cot compliant with Australian Standards is suitable and recommended for everyday use. Standard or fixed cots are more durable than portable cots and can accommodate larger babies.

What do I need to consider when determining if portable cots should be used in my service?

Considerations should include:

- Portable cots in Australian stores are required to meet the mandatory Australian Standard AS/NZS 2195 (either the 1999 or 2010 version for portable cots (porta cot)). The later version, 2010, includes tests for adequate breathable zones.

- Equipment including portable cots can be recalled, therefore the holder of the licence, responsible person, person-in-charge should sight and/or retain documents that confirm any portable cots meet Australian Standards and check to ensure the product has not been recalled.
- Information on safety recalls can be found on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) [product safety website](#).
- The intended use for the portable cot, including:
 - age, weight and height of the child
 - intended duration and frequency of use
 - services policies and procedures in relation to the use of portable cots.

What do I need to consider relating to Section 29, Safe and Suitable Child Care

Section 29 of the *Child Care Act 2001* (Child Care Act) outlines the holder of a licence, responsible person, person-in-charge and person employed by the holder of a licence to care for a child (including educators), are required to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from a hazard likely to cause injury including during sleep and rest time.

The ACCC and Red Nose have compiled information about the use of portable cots. Consideration for use must address the following requirements:

- Only use the firm, thin, well-fitting mattress that is supplied with the portable cot. Never add a second mattress or additional padding under or over the mattress as baby may become trapped face down in gaps between the mattress and the sides.

- If you are accepting a second-hand portable cot, look for a label or sticker that says that complies with the mandatory standard; never place baby in a cot or portable cot that does not meet the current Australian safety standard.
- Wear and tear can expose baby to hazards. Only use a portable cot that has the mesh intact and that has no broken parts. Ensure that the base is flat and regularly check the portable cot for signs of damage.
- Do not use bedding that has exposed elastic as this presents a strangulation hazard for baby.
- Do not use a portable cot if the child weighs more than 15kg (or check instructions of your particular model).
- Use only on an occasional basis, and not for regular use.
- Regularly check the mechanics and locking mechanisms of the portable cot, to ensure the risk of the cot folding in while in use.

Whilst a definition of 'regular check' is not provided in manufacturers guidelines or best practice guidelines. The holder of the licence, responsible person, person-in-charge and educators are required to implement adequate precautions, communication and monitoring to protect children during sleep and rest in portable cots while in the care of the service.

The upkeep of portable cots can impact directly on the safety of children, and it is the responsibility of the holder of a licence, responsible person and person-in-charge ensure effective maintenance, cleaning, and appropriate safety precautions to protect children if portable cots are used.

What other legislative requirements relate to safe sleep practices?

Standard 7, Furniture, equipment and bedding outlines the requirement for age-appropriate furniture, equipment and bedding must be provided and maintained in good order. This includes a

mandate to use cots that meet Australian Standard 2172:1995 (Household Cots), have them safety positioned, free of strings, ribbons, ties or beading and free from all types of cot bumpers.

For services that operate for less than 4 hours during a session they must have.

- For children up to the age of 12 months, there must be one cot/age-appropriate bed for each child present at any one time.
- For children aged 1 and 2 years there must be a minimum of one age-appropriate bed/mattress for every two children present at any one time.

For services that operate continuously for more than 4 hours per day they must have;

- For children up to the age of 12 months, there must be one cot or age-appropriate bed for each child present at any one time.
- For children aged 1 and 2 years there must be one cot or age-appropriate bed for each child present at any one time.

Standard 15, Administration and records requires the service to keep evidence that cots meet the relevant Australian Standard.

Standard 16, Philosophy, policies and procedures requires the service to have, and implement written policies and procedures relating to matters including supervision. The service's supervision policy should address factors such as adequate sleep checks and monitoring of children while sleeping in cots as per Red Nose recommendations.

Why is portable cot use an important issue?

One of the objectives of the Child Care Act for education and care to be safe, nurturing and education experience for children. Section 6 of the Child Care Act outlines that the interests of children are paramount in the application and enforcement of the Child Care Act.

Historical incidents relating to portable cots identified wear and tear as a contributing factor to child safety, with injuries sustained due to a

mechanism failure of locking mechanisms not locking in or failing causing choking or suffocation.

It is important to recognise that portable cots may suffer undue wear and tear when being folded and unfolded frequently. If portable cots are used the service is encouraged to ensure that educators are aware of the risks associated with the wear and tear and have systems and procedures to monitor and maintain the portable cots, including any locking mechanisms.

Portable cots are not designed for regular use. Services are encouraged to conduct risk assessments regarding the use of portable cots, including whether second-hand equipment is safe for use.

Useful Links

- [Keeping Baby Safe Brochure.pdf \(rednose.org.au\)](#)
- [Portable or Folding Cots | Red Nose Australia](#)
- [Is your port-a-cot safe? | Red Nose Australia](#)
- [FDC Safety Guidelines \(kidsafe.com.au\) \(PDF, 2988KB\)](#)
- [Second Hand Nursery Furniture | Red Nose Australia](#)
- [Safe Sleeping Practices for Newborns | Red Nose Australia](#)

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