

Environmental Sustainability Policy

Children develop positive attitudes and values about sustainable practices by engaging in learning experiences, joining in discussions that explore solutions to environmental issues, and watching adult's model sustainable practices. Children learn to live interdependently with the environment.

We encourage and increase awareness of environmental responsibilities and implement practices that contribute to a sustainable future. Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment. Sustainability is often thought about in terms of environmental sustainability—reducing waste, minimising consumption and protecting and conserving wildlife and natural habitats.

We aim to ensure the environment is safe, clean and sustainable. We believe in educating children about the environment which is promoted through daily practices, resource and interactions. Sustainable practice will be encouraged within the centre assisting children and families to become advocates for a sustainable future.

Environmental Sustainability and Our Curriculum

Learning about sustainability starts with everyday practice. We believe environmentally sustainable practices should be embedded into the operations of the Service. Our service is committed to protecting our environment to ensure a sustainable future for our children. This involves educators, children and families working together to protect our environment to ensure a sustainable future for our children through continuous improvement we strive to improve every day.

Management will:

- Network with the local community to keep up to date with current practices and ideas for sustainability. This may include water tanks, grey water system, converting toilet cisterns to dual flush and converting water saving taps
- Encourage educators, families and children to engage in innovative practices and appreciate the natural environment
- Ensure the Centre joins a preferred provider E.G: the NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (or State equivalent) to liaise with other education and care centres and keep up to date on practices and ideas for sustainability.
- Where relevant, review policies and procedures within the Centre to find more sustainable outcomes. (For example; Using hand dryers or washers instead of paper towel to dry hands)
- Where possible, electronic communication for newsletters, billing and etc. will be used to reduce paper use within the office and in each room.
- Source resources and materials from reverse garbage or second hand stores to use within the Centre
- Ensure sustainable practices are incorporated into the daily routine. This will include:

Sustainable Practice	Ideas
Recycling	Recycle paper and rubbish Using recycles water
Gardening	Plant vegetables, herbs and fruits Worm Farm Give food scraps to worms or the animals Educating children and have them participate in garden to plate' activities. Educating children about seed sprouting, weeding, vegetable gardens, cooking etc.
Energy Conservation	Turn off lights and switches when not in use
Water Conservation	Using half flush on the toilet Turn off the water when not in use Shorter showers Turn off tap when brushing teeth



Natural Resources & Equipment

Caring for pets
Reusing natural materials – trees, blocks, boxes etc
Educating children in the natural decomposition cycle through exposure and participation in worm farms and composting food scraps
Educating children in how to care for pets, letting them actively participate in caring for the service pets.

Educators will:

Promote a holistic, open ended curriculum which explores ideas and practices for environmental sustainability and helps children understand the interdependence between people and the environment by:

- Role model sustainable practices.
- Connecting children to nature through art and play and allowing children to experience the natural environment through natural materials like wood, stone sand and recycled materials, plants including native vegetation, trickle streams or ponds, nesting boxes, a potting bench with gardening tools and watering cans.
- Developing education programs for water conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction.
- Involving children in education about plants and gardening and grower plants and flowers from seeds.
- Engaging children in learning about the food cycle by growing, harvesting and cooking food.
- Using resource kits and information on environmental issues from the Better Business Partnership or resources targeted at early childhood centres such as "The Little Green Steps" Resource Kits on Water, Waste and Wildlife.
- Using natural materials to set up play areas. For example: using items such as pebbles, logs and large rocks rather than manufactured barriers to delineate play spaces or using bark, twigs or sticks to display children's creative work.
- Incorporate recycling as part of everyday practice at the Centre.
- Using recycled and homemade equipment as well as manufactured resources. For example; using recycled plastic bottles, old pots and pans in dramatic play. Using everyday equipment in innovative ways can assist children to develop their resourcefulness and creativity in play.
- Introducing activities such as; the implementation of a worm farm, vegetable patch, compost bin and rain water tank to stimulate children's curiosity and encourage them to connect with and contribute to their world.
- Use a worm farm/composting bin/ to reduce food waste in the Centre. Children will be encouraged to place food scraps into separate containers for use in the worm farm or composting bin. Educators will discuss with the children and families, which scraps worms can eat, which foods can be composted. The children will be involved in maintaining the worm farm and compost bin.
- Using natural materials within other aspects of the program. For example using natural items such as seed pods, pebbles, leaves and sticks for collage or for sorting, matching and counting games, painting with natural implements such as sticks, leaves, pebbles or adding bark and twigs to sand play areas.
- Role model energy and water conservation practices of turning off lights and air-conditioning when a room is not in use, emptying water play containers onto garden areas,
- Seek to purchase equipment that is environmentally friendly where possible. Educators will reduce the amount of plastic and disposable equipment they purchase and select materials that are made of natural materials.
- Use the concept of "reduce, re-use and recycle" which will become part of everyday practice for both children and educators to build lifelong attitudes towards sustainable practices.

These types of activities provide children with opportunities to explore elements of the environment and can foster the development of positive feelings and attitudes towards nature. As children explore the environment and natural materials, it is important to help broaden their understanding of how nature and people are connected.



Adopting an environmental perspective in planning for children involves translating the knowledge educators possess of children's development and environmental education into challenging and appropriate learning opportunities. Some ways that children may be introduced to environmentally sustainable practice include:

- Engaging them in one to one and small group discussions about sustainable practices. The discussions may be prompted by things as simple as children observing the local council recycling truck on collection day.
- Encouraging them to participate in any established recycling program at the centre, or involving them in developing and implementing new strategies for recycling materials. For example, using materials donated from families for art and craft or donating items to a local council collection scheme. These activities can not only help children to learn about waste reduction within the centre and community, they can also foster a sense of contributing and connecting to the wider community.

Children's interests may be stimulated about current environmental issues that are reported in the media, for example, issues such as draught. Educators may be able to extend upon children's interest in these areas through activities such as:

- Discussing the issues with children and seeking their ideas and opinions
- Involving children in research about environmental issues through the radio, television and newspaper reports, as well as through the internet and other media
- Engaging children in developing strategies to address particular environmental issues identified in the centre. For example, reducing water consumption, food waste.

The Role of Educators

Our educators will model sustainable practices by embedding sustainability into all aspects of the daily running of our centre operations including:

- Recycling materials for curriculum and learning activities
- Minimising waste and effectively using centre resources
- Turning off equipment and lights when not in use
- Using the least hazardous cleaning substance appropriate for the situation, for example, ordinary detergent for cleaning dirt from tables and other surfaces.
- Composting
- Maintaining a worm farm
- Maintaining a no dig vegetable/herb garden
- Incorporating water wise strategies ensuring taps are turned off and leaks fixed.
- Using food that we have grown in meals on our weekly menu

Partnerships with Families and the Community

The key to encouraging environmental awareness and sustainable practice in children's centre is consistent environmental programs that promote positive learning experiences for children and enables them to observe adults engaging in environmentally sustainable practice. It is also important that centres communicate with families about the environmental program at the centre and the importance of sustainable practice.

Open communication in which families' views are sought and families are informed about the program and how it is implemented daily in the centre can encourage families to adopt sustainable practices at home. Meaningful communication between centres and families not only supports family involvement; it can also help to provide greater consistency between children's experiences at home and in the child care setting.

Our educators will facilitate collaborative partnerships with local community groups, government agencies and private companies to enhance and support children's learning about sustainable practices. We will share their brochures and fact sheets on sustainable practices like recycling, saving water and power and green cleaning with our children and their families. Families will be encouraged to participate in decision making



and information sharing about environmental sustainability through our newsletters, parent input, wall displays and Meetings.

Families can become involved in many ways, by:

- Involving families in the development or review of the centre philosophy which includes a focus on environmental sustainability
- Displaying information that outlines centre policies, practices and its philosophy with regard to environmental sustainability
- Discuss sustainable practices with the children and families & local community as part of the curriculum.
- Provide information to families on sustainable practices that are implemented at the Centre and encourage the application of these practices in the home environment.
- Share ideas between educators, children and families about sustainable ideas, implementation and resources. This will be followed through our communication strategies, including parent meetings, emails, newsletters and conversations.
- Requesting and recognizing families' donations of recycled materials and other items for use in the centre
- Developing a Code of Practice in consultation with families that reinforces environmentally responsible practices and displaying this in the centre
- Inviting families to participate in tree planting projects at the centre

The NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network has resources which may assist Early Childhood Centres to identify and work towards an Environmentally Sustainable Service. The Network's website also has links to many organisations and Government agencies that provide information on sustainable practices at <http://www.eceen.org.au/links.htm>

Supporting Educators to Promote Environmental Education

It is important that educators are able to access the necessary resources, education and support to enable them to effectively and confidently implement an environmentally focused education program. Educators daily interactions with children and parents are an integral aspect of a successful environmental program and it is important that educators are able to support these interactions with current information and knowledge about environmental issues.

When developing an environmental program, consideration should be given to the interests and needs of educators. Ways to initiate and support educators' interest may include:

- Developing an educator resource library which includes current information about environmental education and environment issues in general
- Seeking or conducting educator professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of environmental education in child care
- Providing resources that educators can use to enhance children's learning and experiences. For example, books, DVDs/videos, posters, puzzles, games
- It is essential to engage educators in the development of environmentally sustainable practices in the centre. Consultation with educators can occur through: meeting, discussion groups, questionnaires' or surveys, educators appraisal programs and participation in the development and review of the centre's philosophy and policies.

Children's centres intending to introduce or extend the environmental program and/or environmental sustainable practice will benefit significantly from genuine consultation with all stakeholders. Adopting a collaborative approach to environmental programs in children's centres can help to create a climate of joint responsibility and environmental improvement which may benefit children now and in the future.

Source: Early Years Learning Framework, National Quality Standard, Climbing the Little Green Steps 2007: Gosford and Wyong Councils, Environment Education in Early Childhood (Victoria) Inc, NSW Early Childhood



Environment Education Network Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities – www.environment.gov.au, Early Childhood Environmental Education Network www.eceen.org.au, Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) www.eeec.org.au, Australian Association for Environmental Education (AEE) www.aee.org.au NSW: Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (ECEEN) www.eceen.org.au

Date Implemented: 16/04/2012

Review Completed: 21/02/2017

Schedule for Review: 21/02/2018

National Quality Standard – NQS

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

3.1	The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a Service
3.2	The environment is inclusive, promote competence, independent exploration and learning through play
3.3.	The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.
3.3.1	Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations
3.3.2	Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and to contribute to service decisions.
6.3	The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children’s learning and wellbeing.
6.3.1	Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained
6.3.4	The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.

Early Years Learning Framework

Learning Outcome 2 - Children are connected with and contribute to their world

2.4	Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment
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