

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 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 believe in educating children about being environmentally responsible which is promoted and supported through daily practices, resource and interactions. Sustainable practice is encouraged within the Service and community, assisting children and families to become advocates for a sustainable future.

Environmental Sustainability and Our Curriculum

Teaching and learning about being environmentally responsible starts with everyday practice. We believe being environmentally responsible should be embedded into the operations of the Centre. Our Centre 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 as we educate children about the importance of being environmentally responsible within our everyday practice.

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.
- Conduct Environment Responsible Audits to ensure consistency and continuous improvement.
- 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycle paper and rubbish • Using recycles water (e.g. for watering gardens).
Gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant vegetables, herbs and fruits • Worm Farm • Give food scraps to worms or the animals, or to a staff member to take home for their pet/s. • Educating children and have them participate in • garden to plate’ activities. Educating children about seed sprouting, weeding, vegetable gardens, cooking etc.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have children participate in experiences such as seed sprouting, vegetable gardens, cooking with what is grown, and educate about weeds. Collaborate with the local community
Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off lights and switches when not in use • Turn off electrical appliances at the outlet when not in use. • Use natural ventilation and insulated blinds/drapes rather than air conditioning when temperatures are not extreme.
Water Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using half flush on the toilet • Turn off the taps and ensure leaking taps are fixed immediately • Shorter showers • Collect rain water and use in the garden, for water/sand • Use water play water on the garden rather than tipping out at the end of the day.
Nature and Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use natural materials – trees, blocks, boxes etc. in arts and crafts and play. • Educate children about 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. • Plant ‘bird attracting’ plants and install a birdbath. • Plant ‘butterfly attracting’ plants. • Create a lizard lounge. • Collaborate with wildlife educators to assist in educating children.
Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display in the foyer area information for families and visitors outlining the Centre’s sustainability journey • Provide families with hints and tips in newsletters about how they can become sustainable at home

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:

- Incorporate recycling as part of everyday practice at the Centre. Recycling containers will be provided throughout meal times and experiences.
- Role model environmentally responsible practices.
- Discuss environmentally responsible practices with the children and families & local community as part of the curriculum.
- Provide information to families on environmentally responsible 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 environmentally responsible ideas, implementation and resources. This will be followed through our communication strategies, including parent meetings, emails, newsletters and conversations.



- 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. Educators will provide visual guides and discuss with the children and families which scraps worms can eat, which foods can be composted, and which food scraps must go in the bin. The children will be involved in maintaining the worm farm and compost bin.
- 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 environmentally responsible 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 (AAEE) www.aaee.org.au NSW: Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (ECEEN) www.eceen.org.au

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National Quality Standard – NQS		
Quality Area 3: Physical Environment		
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive Environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resource' support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.
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	

