

1.12 Environmental Sustainability

Background

Like many other countries, Australia recognises that environmental sustainability is essential to social, economic and political sustainability. Research has shown that the earlier children are given opportunities to connect with nature, learn about the environment and our impact upon it, and to develop the skills to care for it, the more likely they will be environmentally responsible as adults.

As part of this recognition, the National Quality Standard 2011 requires services to embed sustainable practices into their operations, and to include its ideas, ideals, concepts and actions into the program.

Policy statement

This Policy describes how the Service embeds sustainability into its practices, routines and educational program so that children develop understanding and respect for the environment and its finite resources. In addition, it outlines how the Service encourages educators, children and families to care and advocate for the environment throughout their lives.

Strategies and practices

- The Service seeks to provide a physical environment that includes natural features such as plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud and water, and to allow children unhurried time in that environment. QA 3.1.1
- Sustainability is embedded in the Service's everyday routines and practices. These include:
 - Recycling, and use of recycled resources
 - Energy efficiency
 - Water conservation
 - Purchasing
 - Worm farm/Composting. QA 3.3.1
 - Creating a food garden
 - Liaising with Mon Repo to educate about local wide life and ocean environments
 - Monthly contributions and room education about The Nature Conservancy Australia.
 - Use of water tanks
- Reuse and recycle containers are set up throughout the Service. Educator's role model using the containers and discuss the reasons for them with the children. They encourage the children to use these recycled materials and bring reusable items from home. QA 3.3.1, 3.3.2
- The Service accesses recycled outlets for craft materials where available. QA 3.3.1
- The Service practices energy conservation
 - air conditioning, lights and other electrical equipment are turned off when a room is not in use

- Computers, printers and photocopiers are turned off at the end of the day. QA 3.3.1, 3.3.2
- Fans are used instead of air- conditioning through appropriate weather conditions.
- Water conservation is embedded in the Service’s practices
 - only the amount of water required to undertake programmed water play is used
 - water used in water play is emptied onto gardens
 - water play is discontinued during water restrictions, and the reasons explained to the children
 - educators encourage children to turn taps off to avoid wastage
 - Water conservation posters are displayed in bathrooms.
Refer to the Service’s *Water Safety Policy*. QA 3.3.2
- When purchasing equipment and supplies, the Service chooses items that are as eco-friendly as practicable. Preferred items are:
 - made from natural materials and fibers (e.g. wood, cotton, cardboard, metals)
 - locally or Australian made
 - made from renewable, reused, or recycled materials
 - repairable
 - durable, and able to washed or wiped clean. QA 3.3.1
- The Service has a worm farm. Any scraps suitable for the worm farm or compost are provided by the kitchen. Educators discuss with the children the foods that worms can or cannot eat. The children are involved in maintaining the worm farm, and in using the worm casts in the garden. QA 3.3.2
- Educators intentionally teach children about caring for the environment (e.g. energy efficiency, water saving), and involve them in planned experiences that develop life skills such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling. QA 3.3.2
- Educators remain alert to teachable moments (e.g. noisily feeding birds, rainbows, sun showers, cloud patterns) to share the awe and wonder of the natural world with children. QA 3.3.2
- The Service regularly shares information and ideas about sustainable practices with families via notice boards, educator-parent meetings, website, Facebook, Educa and face-to-face conversations to ensure a consistent message between the home and Service. In addition, the Service actively seeks ideas and resources on sustainability from families. QA 3.3.1
- Environmental issues are a regular item on the team meeting agenda, and resources from recognised authorities introduced and discussed. QA 3.3.1

Responsibilities of parents

- To continue the Service’s sustainability message at home.

- To contribute ideas and resources.

Links to other policies

- Educational Program Policy
- Water Safety Policy

Sources, Further reading and useful websites

- Early Years Learning Framework 2009.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.
- Gosford and Wyong Council. (2007). *Climbing the Little Green Steps: How to promote sustainability in early childhood services in your area*
<http://www.livingthing.net.au/rc/PP/ClimbLittleGreenSteps.pdf> accessed 23 November 2013
- New South Wales. (2009). *Little Green Steps Sustainability Education for Childcare Centres: In Your Child Care Centre*
http://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/80062/LGS_Case_Study_All_Councils.Doc.pdf accessed 23 November 2013
- Department of Environment and Heritage Protection – www.ehp.qld.gov.au
- Early Childhood Australia – *Sustainability, global warming and climate change.*
http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource_themes/sustainability_global_warming_and_climate_change.html accessed 23 November 2013
- McKay, G. (2009). *Going ‘green’ in childcare services* http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/pcf-articles/Going_green_in_child_care_Mar09.pdf accessed 23 November 2013
- Pratt, R. (2009). *Education for sustainability in the early years: Beyond recycling and veggie gardens.* http://www.ecta.org.au/_dbase_upl/09_09_EYC_Sustainability.pdf accessed 23 November 2013
- Sustainability Kit. (2011). *Sustainability Kit Training Teacher Resources for Education for Sustainability.* <http://www.sustainabilitykit.net.au/> accessed 23 November 2013

Date(s) reviewed:

13/12/2016							
05/01/2017							
05/01/2018							
28/02/2019							

Next review Date: 28/02/2020