

Environmental Sustainability Policy

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to assist Perry St Child Care Centre (PSCCC) to take an active role in caring for the environment, and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

PSCCC is committed to:

- promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the natural environment among all at the service
- fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment, and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
- supporting the development of positive attitudes and values in line with sustainable practices
- ensuring that educators and other staff engage in sustainable practices during the operation of the service.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Committee of Management, director, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of PSCCC.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

“One of the most significant responsibilities that [early childhood] professionals have is to support children to retain the sense of awe and wonder that they are born with, to add to that a desire to nurture and protect what is beautiful, and to encourage them to appreciate that there are many possibilities for honouring life and wonders that the world holds” (Stonehouse, A. (2006) *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services* – refer to *Sources*).

Current research confirms that experiences in the early years help establish lifelong behaviour and values, and this reinforces the need for sustainability education to be included in early childhood programs. It is important for children to understand their place in the world and the role that they can play in protecting the environment. Children should learn to be environmentally responsible and be empowered to make a difference, and this learning should not wait until the 'formal education' of primary school. Elliot and Davis (refer to *Sources*) state that “early childhood educators have an active and significant role to play ensuring children experience connections with the natural environment in meaningful ways... which will ultimately promote action for sustainability”.

Environmental education can be defined as learning *about* the environment and how natural systems function; the interconnectedness of plants, animals, humans and the planet we inhabit. Environmental education promotes the growth of knowledge, skills and values about the environment, often with a focus on science and nature. In an early childhood setting, environmental education is integrated into everyday decisions made as part of the curriculum.

Sustainability can be defined in a broader and more holistic context of education *for* the environment. The complexities of social, environmental and economic systems are acknowledged, and their implications for sustaining life are considered. The aim of sustainability education is to promote a sense of responsibility, respect, empowerment, active participation, enquiry and a desire for social change (adapted from ECA Environmental Sustainability Policy 2005). The goal of sustainability education is to empower children and adults to think and act in ways that meet their immediate needs without jeopardising the potential of future generations to meet *their* own needs. Sustainable practice in early childhood settings requires a holistic approach that integrates all aspects of sustainability into service operations.

The *National Quality Standard* (Quality Area 3: Physical Environment) includes a discussion on the service taking an active role in caring for its environment and contributing to a sustainable future (Standard 3.3). As service providers to the community, education and care services have an opportunity not only to make reductions to waste, water and energy consumption through their operations, but to role-model sustainable living to young children in a world facing climate change, increasing levels of air, land and water pollution, and depleted natural resources.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment*

Standard 3.3: The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future

Element 3.3.1: Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations

Element 3.3.2: Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment

DEFINITIONS

Environmental sustainability: The responsible use and management of the planet's resources to ensure that they remain available and uncompromised for future generations to use and enjoy.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx#key_documents
- Davis, J. M. and Elliott, S. (2004) Mud pies and daisy chains: Connecting young children and nature. In *Every Child*, 10(4) p4
- Early Childhood Australia (unpublished final draft), *ECA Environmental Sustainability Policy*. Early Childhood Australia: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~eeec/policy.pdf>
- *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx#key_documents
- Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC): www.eeec.org.au
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au and <http://acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/>
- Hughes, M. (2007) *Climbing the little green steps: How to promote sustainability within early childhood services in your local area*, Gosford and Wyong Council: www.gosford.nsw.gov.au and www.wyong.nsw.gov.au
- *My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia:* www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Pages/FrameSchAgeCare.aspx
- Stonehouse, A. (2006) *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services:* www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/assets/main/documents/childcare_framework.pdf
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework – Resources for Professionals:* www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm

Service policies

Child Safe Environment Policy

Curriculum Development Policy

Excursions and Service Events Policy

Sun Protection Policy

Supervision of Children Policy

Water Safety Policy

PROCEDURES

The Committee of Management is responsible for:

- collaborating with the director, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- allocating the necessary resources to implement the identified environmental sustainability strategies at the service
- ensuring the director and all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- ensuring the identified strategies (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability) are implemented at the service
- ensuring parents/guardians are aware of, and have access to, the *Environmental Sustainability Policy*.

The director is responsible for:

- collaborating with the committee of management, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- ensuring environmental education and practices are incorporated into the curriculum (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- providing families with information about environmentally sustainable practices e.g. through displays, fact sheets and local community resources, and by ensuring that they have access to the *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- making recommendations to the committee of management about green and sustainable options for the service, that reflect the guidelines within this policy
- seeking and applying for grants, where appropriate, to support the implementation of strategies within this policy
- keeping up to date with current research, resources and best practice through newsletters, journals and support agencies such as Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC).

Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- collaborating with the committee of management, director, fellow educators/staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- engaging in activities that support the service to become more environmentally sustainable (e.g. recycling)
- incorporating environmental education and sustainable practices within the curriculum
- planning opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world at the service, including on excursions and at other service events
- incorporating celebrations of environmental awareness into the program e.g. National Tree Day, National Recycling Week, Clean Up Australia Day and Walk to Work Day
- keeping up to date with current research, resources and best practice through newsletters, journals and support agencies such as Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC).

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- collaborating with the committee of management, director, educators, staff, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – * Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- following the strategies identified and outlined in this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- encouraging their children to adopt environmentally sustainable practices at both the service and at home.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Sustainability strategy

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the committee of management on January 2014.

- Reviewed
- January 2016 – no changes made
 - February 2016 – no changes made
 - October 2019 – New Sustainability Strategy added
 - November 2021 – Reviewed and Attachment 1: Sustainability strategy updated.

REVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 2022

Attachment 1:

Sustainability Strategy

Reduce and Reuse

- We have recycling bins throughout the centre & we display posters of what can and can't be recycled in these bins.
- We talk about reusing and recycling within our programs and we contribute to recycling programs that create beneficial / functional products from waste, e.g. Envision hands make prosthetic hands out of recycled bottle tops for children. And bread tag recycling to fund the making of wheelchairs in South Africa. – We also encourage families to participate to these causes by providing a collecting station in the foyer.
- We recycle used Texta pens, printer cartridges and batteries - Officeworks
- We visit reverse art truck regularly to collect reusable resources and encourage educators to shop at second hand shops also for resources.

From Clouds to Clover

- We have water tanks in each room that provide water for the gardens.
- We use water from activities in the garden once we have finished with it.
- We discuss water usage and benefits of water within our programs.

Garbage to Garden

- We have two working worm farms within our centre that were donated by a couple of families. We also have one big compost bin in the big yard.
- Our council has started collecting kitchen scraps as part of our green waste collection, to send to farms over Victoria to compost Commenced September 2019.
- We talk to the children about how worm farms and composting works, and how they produce fertilisers for us to add to our gardens to help them grow.

Patch to Plate (biodiversity)

- We grow vegetables and herbs in all of the yards along with fruit trees. We use these herbs and vegetables in daily cooking and in cooking and creating experiences with children.
- We have a new chicken pen and will continue to have chickens as part of our program in the Banksia room.

Environment in our hands

- We teach all children the importance of taking care of the environment and our resources, including looking after the plants by watering them and preserving their flowers and leaves by not picking them all.
- We ask parents to help repair damaged resources when required.
- We hold an annual working bee for families to help with the up keep of the centre indoors and outdoors – this allows us to maintain our environment and resources and not have to always buy new things.
- We use reusable shopping bags and we recycle our soft plastics at the local Coles rather than putting them into landfill.
- We have solar panels to reduce the use of electricity (installed 2016).
- We shop locally and seasonally where we can.
- We purchase recycled toilet paper and photocopy paper.
- We send all children's learning documentation via email rather than printing.
- We are currently researching greener cleaning products.

Community contributions

- We encourage families to donate any recycled materials or second-hand goods from home for us to use in our programs.
- We have a book swap in the front of the centre for families to use.
- We have a fresh produce /plan/ seed swap in the carpark – where families and staff can share any home-grown herbs, fruit or vegetables and plants with the community
- We update families when we require particular donations, via our fortnightly admin email newsletter.
- We continue to seek out any resources we can from local sources.
- We encourage families to become members of the local toy library and library via posters displayed in the foyer or via the newsletter.
- We email all invoices to families rather than printing them.

Reducing our footprint using our footprints

- We encourage riding bikes to Perry Street by providing a multiple bike parking racks at the front of the centre.
- We promote ride 2 work day via, posters and email and invite all to a ride 2 work day breakfast. (Oct)

