

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
 - Worm farm/Composting. QA 3.3.1
- Reuse and recycle containers are set up throughout the Service. Educators 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 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
- 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

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- When purchasing equipment and supplies, the Service chooses items that are as eco-friendly as practicable. Preferred items are:
 - made from natural materials and fibres (e.g. wood, cotton, cardboard, metals)
 - made from renewable, reused, or recycled materials
 - repairable
 - durable, and able to washed or wiped clean. QA 3.3.1
- The Service embraces green cleaning. Wherever possible, and without compromising health and safety, the Service replaces chemical cleaning agents with eco-friendly cleaning products. QA 3.3.1
- The Service has a worm farm. Containers are placed for mealtimes for uneaten food. Any of these scraps suitable for the worm farm are placed in a separate container for the worms. 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, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, website 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

Links to other policies

- Educational Program Policy
- Water Safety Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

QA	3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose
QA	3.3.1	Sustainable practices are embedded in the service's operations
	3.3.2	Children are supported to be environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment

Sources

- Early Years Learning Framework 2009.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.

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- Gosford and Wyong Council. (2007). *Easy Guides. 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 4 February 2016
- 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](http://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/80062/LGS_Case_Study_All_Councils.Doc.pdf) accessed 23 November 2013

Further reading and useful websites

- Department of Environment and Heritage Protection – www.ehp.qld.gov.au accessed 4 February 2016
- 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 4 February 2016
- 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 4 February 2016
- Sustainability Kit. (2011). *Sustainability Kit Training Teacher Resources for Education for Sustainability.* <http://www.sustainabilitykit.net.au/> accessed 4 February 2016

Policy Review

Bella Grace Early Learning Centres encourage staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Date reviewed: April 2017

Next review Date: April 2018