



# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

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## Best Practice – Quality Area 3

### RATIONALE

As a community, it is vital that we take increased environmentally sustainable actions to reduce our impact on the planet. Educating and engaging young children in environmentally sensitive practices has the power to create lasting and meaningful change, with positive knock-on effects back to families and the wider community. Importantly, empowering young people about environmental sustainability issues positively counters the often 'powerless' feelings that older children and adults can have when reflecting on a future in which they feel they have no control or active role to play.

### PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to assist Renown Kindergarten to take an active role in caring for the environment, and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.

### 1. VALUES

Renown Kindergarten 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 interconnectedness and indeed 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 day to day operation of the service.
- the incorporation of sustainable practice and messages as a day to day way of operating in the kinder environment rather than a separate education 'module' or element of the curriculum although clearly there are many opportunities to include specific environmental teaching within the play-based approach adopted at Renown Kinder.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Renown Kindergarten.

### 2. 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

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

### 3. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

**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.

### 4. 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](http://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](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx#key documents)
- Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC): [www.eeec.org.au](http://www.eeec.org.au)
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, ACECQA: [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://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](http://www.gosford.nsw.gov.au) and [www.wyong.nsw.gov.au](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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 Approved Provider is responsible for:**

- collaborating with the Nominated Supervisor, 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 Nominated Supervisor 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 Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:**

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, 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 Approved Provider 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).

**Certified Supervisors, educators and other staff are responsible for:**

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, 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
- incorporating red cycling into the program, discussing this with children and maintaining a roster for staff to drop these materials off at a supermarket.
- 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).
- Using Newsletter and notice boards to communicate initiatives. Exploring potential hosting of specific information nights for the Renown community, as well as the greater community which could be held at Renown. These workshops would encourage sustainable practices in both our centre and at home for eg compost workshops, worm farm workshops, starting a vegetable garden workshops. This presents potential fund raising opportunities for kinder as well as environmental education to the Renown and greater Stonnington
- Linking in with local sustainability groups to broaden the scope on improved environmental awareness and practice within the Renown community. Tapping into existing environmental programs that might offer incursions for eg Ceres staff might be happy to attend kinder for planting days/setting up vegetable garden

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, 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: Strategies for environmental sustainability

## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Renown Kindergarten on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**REVIEW DATE: 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019**



## ATTACHMENT 1

### Strategies for Environmental Sustainability

This checklist can be used to promote discussion and formulate an environmental sustainability policy for the service. Many of these strategies were drawn from Mia Hughes' *Climbing the little green steps: How to promote sustainability within early childhood services in your local area* (refer to *Sources*). Other strategies can be added to the checklist as required – refer to *Sources* as a starting point for further information. Ensure that responsibility for implementation is allocated to each strategy adopted e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents/guardians, children etc. Agreed strategies should form the basis of the service's *Environmental Sustainability Policy*.

Strategy	Adopt (Yes/No)	Responsible for implementation (e.g. Nominated Supervisor, educators, etc.)
<b>Data Collection</b>		
Collect baseline data from energy and water bills, and monitor waste collection. Use information gathered to set reduction targets and evaluate whether they have been achieved.		
<b>Green purchasing</b>		
Purchase local products		
Purchase recycled products		
Purchase energy and water efficient products		
Purchase organic produce		
Purchase items with minimal packaging		
Purchase chemical-free, green cleaning products		
Purchase formaldehyde-free paint		
<b>Waste - reduce wastage and costs of waste/waste disposal</b>		
<i>Minimise waste from one-use, throwaway products (e.g. paper towels, disposable nappies, wet wipes) by changing behaviours and procedures, and using alternative products. Closing waste loop by producing less disposable material.</i>		
Continued use of individual cloth towels on a peg located in the bathroom or at each child's locker, washed by parents on roster.		
Explore the potential for kinder to buy a small electric shredder/mulcher so that all the leaf waste and some of the lighter vegetation accumulated can be chipped immediately at the working bees in a (cordoned off area for safety) and added directly back to the garden areas as mulch rather than them leaving the site at both an environmental and monetary cost.		

Use recycled toilet paper and paper towels in bathrooms and kitchens		
Set printers to print on both sides of paper as a default.		
Replace wet wipes with washable cloths where practicable.		
Encourage children to bring a rubbish-free lunch/snacks in a reusable container. Use posters and Newsletter to promote concept of 'litterless' lunches.		
Adopt green cleaning practices by using safe and sustainable cleaning products and methods.		
Recycle plastic waste (codes #1–#7), glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal. Involve children in 'sorting' process of recyclables.		
Continue worm farm/composting of food scraps.		
Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse within the educational program i.e. reduce, reuse, repair and recycle.		
Careful, limited use of food items for children's play experiences (e.g. rice, pasta, jelly etc.) as this is wasteful of both the food items, and the water and energy used in production.		
Promote recycling and reusing items e.g. through SWAP markets for children's clothing, toys and books.		
<b>Energy - reduce energy use and associated costs</b>		
Turn off computers and/or screens when not in use. Consider installation of ECO switches to turn off all standby equipment when not in use.		
Ensure only energy saving globes are used to replace old globes.		
Promote use of ceiling fans instead of air conditioning, when appropriate. Set thermostats to maintain 'comfortable' levels, not unnecessarily warm or cold.		
Close doors and windows when heating or air conditioning the building where possible, while maintaining adequate ventilation. Strategies must be developed for indoor-outdoor programs to enable this to occur.		
Turn off fridges that are not in use during extended holiday periods (ensure no food remains and the fridge is cleaned well beforehand).		
Turn lights off when not required. Install light sensors where possible.		
Upgrade old appliances with energy efficient appliances.		

Seek grants for subsidised installation of solar panels to reduce centres reliance of coal-generated electricity and sell power back to grid during holiday periods.		
<b>Water - reduce consumption and associated costs</b>		
Consider increasing water tanks and consider connecting these to toilets.		
Set limits for water use during play, while acknowledging that water play is important and that children need to use water in order to learn how to conserve it. Ensure that water from play troughs and bowls is reused to water the garden.		
Seek information and strategies from other sources such as council or save-water schemes. Apply for programs such as retrofitting of water saving devices at reduced cost/free. Specifically seek out grants for water saving initiatives.		
Explore use of grey water (containing low salt/phosphate detergents) to gardens when children are not in attendance at the service.		
Reduce mains tap pressure to children's bathroom trough taps to reduce water use.		
Install dual flush toilets.		
Place buckets or watering cans next to drink stations to collect excess water (within water safety guidelines.)		
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
Grow food crops in vegetable/herb gardens. Create specific Vegetable gardens to compliment herb and strawberry patch.		
Plant another selection of fruit trees - consider espaliering fruit trees on fence to increase screening.		
Grow a diverse range of plants, and develop children's understanding of how plant diversity encourages animal diversity.		
Continue to plant and grow indigenous (native) and water-wise plants.		
Water plants in the play space using recycled water where possible. Plants are a precious resource for the planet and provide significant habitat as well as play opportunities and should be protected and nurtured.		
<b>Transport</b>		
Encourage staff to walk, cycle or catch public transport to work and on excursions, where possible.		
Create prominent, effective spaces for the storage of bikes and prams to promote riding and walking to staff and families. Consider putting up a 'bike store' sign on our area to encourage more use.		
<b>Curriculum</b>		



Role-model sustainable practices and behaviours. Actions such as reusing water from a sink, play troughs etc... and switching off lights when not in use can have a large impact on young children, who are at a formative stage with respect to skills and attitudes.		
Aim to counteract the 'throwaway' mentality that children experience everyday in relation to waste.		
Take every opportunity to talk with young children about sustainable practices, and encourage older children to take part in these practices.		
Ask children to make up their own signs about resource conservation and then place above sinks, near light switches, on water tanks etc....		
The curriculum offers many opportunities to explore sustainable issues and practices. The following are some suggestions.		
Create an 'earth hour' each day where no lights/minimal lighting is used e.g. during rest, relaxation or sleep times.		
Use a range of pictures, books and stories that address environmental sustainability issues.		
Have waste-free days.		
Continued and expanded use of improvised, recycled and natural materials for program activities.		
Germinate seeds on the windowsill as an experience and then plant out into a food garden		
Play a recycling game to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled.		
Investigate alternatives to texta pens and liquid paint, such as powder paint and refillable markers or pencils.		
Join Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) for more ideas.		
<b>Family and community involvement</b>		
Inform families about this policy and the service's approach to environmental sustainability through information sessions, photo displays and newsletters etc.		
Design a poster outlining the key principles of environmental sustainability, for display in the foyer of the service. This may include a charter of principles and key targets to be achieved.		
Become involved in community events such as Earth Hour, World Environment Day, Planet Ark Tree Day, and Clean Up Australia Day.		