

Policy and Procedure Environment and sustainability

PURPOSE

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

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Acacia 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.

C- Compassion:

- Educators will model respect, care and show appreciation and compassion towards the physical environment and when embedding sustainable practices

H- Honor:

- We have a responsibility to honor the first people of the land. Care for the animals, plants and earth. Honor our communities need for sustainable practices for current and future generations

I - Integrity:

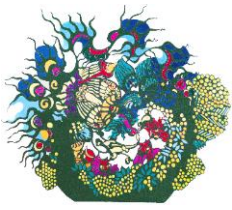
- We are inclusive and model practices that promote shared decision-making. We model practices and behaviour that is sustainable and promotes habits in children and our community that support sustainability.

L- Learning:

- We will be reflective in our actions, decisions and continue to learn collectively. We will create opportunities where children can actively engage in nature to play, explore and learn.

D- Diversity:

- We will support families/children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity in our curriculum decision-making processes. Children's experiences are recognised and valued. The aim is ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.



2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day to Day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Acacia.

3. 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 way 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.

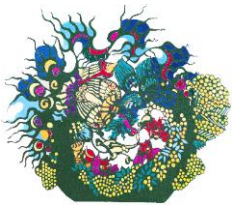
Sustainability can be defined in a broader and more holistic context of education *for* the environment. The complexities of social, environmental and economic systems are acknowledged, and their implications for sustaining life are considered. The aim of sustainability education is to promote a sense of responsibility, respect, empowerment, active participation, enquiry and a desire for social change (adapted from ECA Environmental Sustainability Policy). 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. 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*



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/>

4. 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.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework#key%20documents>
- Department of Education, Australian Government (2011) '*Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <http://docs.education.gov.au/documents/educators-guide-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC): <http://www.eeec.org.au/index.php>
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA:* www.acecqa.gov.au
- Department of Education, Australian Government, *My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia:* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-05/my_time_our_place_framework_for_school_age_care_in_australia_0.pdf
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx>

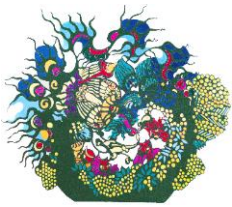
Service policies

- *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 and Persons with Management and Control 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 and Person in Day to Day Charge 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).

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
- 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 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.

Procedure

The centre recognises the importance of developing in children and their families an awareness, appreciation and concern for their environment. We do this within our education program and our everyday practices. Resources are made available and shared with all families so they can continue environmental awareness within their own homes and daily practices.

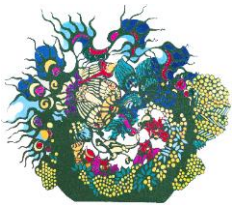
- Minimise the use of plastic bags. Families will provide their child an environmentally reusable bag for soiled clothing
- Cardboard boxes.
- Educators are encouraged to be resourceful in obtaining recyclable goods.
- Educators encourage and model recycling in an environmentally sustainable way.
- Children of all age groups learn about environmental issues
- All appropriate measures are taken to minimise the use of non-recyclable materials
- Use of non-recyclable materials is managed, but not excluded from the classroom, as it is felt that children need to use materials such as glue, tape and paint for the development of skills that are of practical use in our modern education system and in the broader society. The use of such materials is monitored and can be altered as required to suit changes in the Centre's environmental policies.

Office Practices

Wherever possible staff will reduce the amount of paper used by

- Using paper on both sides,
- Communicating with families, staff and community and management via email,
- Sharing information via School Stream
- Think sustainably by using digital photos, whiteboards or noticeboards and using small notices to parents rather than full page notices.

Please note that due to the restraints of Privacy Legislation, paper cannot always be recycled for use on the reverse side.



Energy

At Acacia we are always researching current best practices to reduce our carbon footprint within our building.

The following strategies are implemented to reduce our energy consumption;

- Energy audits are conducted by local energy consultants.
- The use of energy efficient light globes and LED tubes
- Temperature settings of Heating and Cooling units are kept within recommended guidelines
- lighting, and electrical appliances are turned off when not in use
- The use of natural light is preferred for light and heating.
- Electrical appliances and white goods are maintained to ensure they are running efficiently
- Products with batteries are generally avoided
- the use of the clothes drier is kept to a minimum
- Strategies are installed in all new buildings and renovations to reduce carbon footprint, such as sensor lights, double glazed windows etc.

Bio Diversity

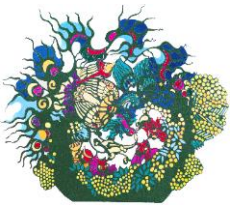
At Acacia we believe a holistic approach in caring for our environment by implementing sustainable practices throughout our organisation and everyday program.

We achieve this by;

- Incorporating produce grown in our vegetable & herb gardens and fruit trees within children's meals.
- Environmentally friendly materials are referred when purchasing goods for our centre and for use in children's play
- utilising garden mulch and compost in our gardens
- hosting annual Working bees with families to foster an environmental awareness with development families and their children and maintaining our outdoor environment
- planting plants that are conducive to the environment
- Planting Native local plants Educating children to care for their natural environment both plants and animals
- Utilise products, where feasible, which are environmentally friendly in the cleaning of the centre.
- Children are encouraged to utilise a range of natural materials such as leaves, twigs, pebbles, sand and earth in the programs.

Water

At Acacia we believe that water is a valuable resource that needs to be conserved. Management, staff and educators are committed to educating children on sustainable water practises. This is done by the following practices:



- Water audits are conducted by a local water authority and suggested modifications are implemented where possible.
- Children and adults are encouraged to use the half flush when using the toilets
- We ensure all taps and plumbing are well maintained.
- All water from water play and left over from drinking cups is to be used in our gardens.
- Educators, children and staff are involved in the planning of water conservation.
- We have a timed irrigation system throughout our gardens using water from our tanks.
- We endeavour to use plants that require minimal watering.
- Outdoor areas are being swept instead of hosed. Water conservation is taught to children and their families with aides and tools available by the local water authority.

Waste Reduction

At Acacia we endeavour to educate children about minimising waste and to implement concepts of reduce, re-use and recycle. We are mindful of the amount of waste we emit and therefore, are committed in reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill.

The following practices are undertaken:

- The use of recycled materials and reusing safe waste products where possible with in the children's program and office. Families are encouraged to donate appropriate materials to re-use at our centre.
- Recycle bins are available in each room
- Where possible recycle waste in local council or commercial recycling bins
- Compost bins are used for garden and food scraps
- Leftover food scraps are also feed to chickens
- We monitor and reflect on methods to reduce the quantity of food scraps leftover after meal times.
- Second hand goods are purchased to be used in our program.
- Swap program is available for families to donate and collect second hand goods from the centre.
- Foods being delivered from suppliers are brought in large boxes that can be given back to the driver for more use

Sustainability in our modern world

Sustainability does not only cover environmental issues but also thinking sustain our selves in our modern world. Examples. Being self-sufficient, self-resourceful sustainable in futures. We get a good education so we don't rely on welfare. Self-resource for future generations. As educators it is our responsibility. As early childhood educators we acknowledge that we set the foundation to receive a quality education so they can succeed in their future endeavours. Which provides a cycle of resourceful and self-sustained skills for their future generations

- Reflect on practices
- Advocate for children's rights
- Advocate for early childhood accessibility is affordable
- Engage debating in consultations withheld by government regulatory authorities



- Engage in local community groups such as Atherton Gardens Network, Brimbank Childcare Network and Richmond Community Network
- to work in partnership in ensure our children's and families lives is bright and successful

References

City of Yarra

- *Yarra Environment Strategy: Towards Local Sustainability 2008-2020*,
- Early Childhood Australia - National Quality Standards Professional Learning Program
- *Spaces for children*, e Newsletter No 25, 2011
- www.sustainability.vic.gov.au
- <http://www.melbournwater.com.au/Pages/home.aspx>
- www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard/quality-area-3-physical-environment

BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Any educator or staff found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action

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