

Policy title	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness
Policy type	Management
Group	Family and Children

Rationale

As service providers to the community, education and care services have the opportunity to not only make reductions to waste, water and energy consumption but to role model sustainable ways of living to young children who will need to adapt to a world with a changing climate. Moonee Valley City Council endeavours to promote the values of conservation and an appreciation of the environment through the day-to-day operations of services. Through the intentional, play-based education and care programs we provide for children, we aim to support and extend children's learning of the value of the natural world.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure Council's early childhood education and care practice and programming promotes environmental awareness and educates children about environmental sustainability.

Policy statement

Moonee Valley City Council is committed to:

- supporting the development in service practice and programming of positive attitudes and values towards care for the environment
- fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
- ensuring that educators/contractors and other staff engage in sustainable practices in service operations.

'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

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children's Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Policy	August 2015	June 2017

and the wonders that the world holds'. (NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services, Stonehouse, A., 2006).

Current research confirms the importance of experiences in the formative early years in establishing lifelong behaviour and values. These strong links support the critical need for sustainability education to be specifically targeted at the early childhood sector. It is important for children to understand their place in the world and the role they can play in helping to protect the environment. It is essential to start teaching children at the earliest stages of their life how to be environmentally responsible and empower them to make a difference.

Children are competent and capable beings who are able to be leaders, active citizens in their own learning, and agents of change.

Davis and Elliot (2004, p.4) state that 'early childhood educators/contractors 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'.¹

¹ Davis, JM and Elliott, S (2004) 'Mud pies and daisy chains: Connecting young children and nature'. In *Every Child*, 10(4) pages pp. 4-5

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children's Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Policy	August 2015	June 2017

Procedures	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Procedure
Policy type	Management
Group	Family and Children

Action	Approved Provider	Responsible Person or Primary Nominee	Educator/contractor	Families	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011	Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010	Children's Services Regulations 2009 & Children's Services Act 1996
Comply with Council's city sustainability policies.	✓	✓	✓		r.170		
Engage in environmentally sustainable practices and be positive role models for children.		✓	✓	✓	r.73-76 r.77 r.105 r.113 r.115 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
Develop educational programs that enhance children's awareness of environmental issues and support them to become environmentally responsible.		✓	✓		r r.73-76 r.77 r.105 r.113 r.115 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
The curriculum embeds sustainable practices. Examples to explore may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> empowering children to take on leadership roles; eg. water, compost and animal monitors use a range of picture books and stories worm farm have waste-free days 		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.77 r.105 r.113 r.115 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27s.29A

Group Family and Children's Services	Responsible Manager Michele Leonard	Document 3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Policy	Approval Date August 2015	Review Date June 2017
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use improvised, recycled and natural materials • recycle so that children develop an understanding of items that can be recycled • join Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) for further ideas • investigate alternatives to using texta pens and liquid paint such as powder paint and refillable markers or pencils <p>connect with local environment community</p>							
<p>Incorporate community celebrations of environmental awareness events such as National Tree Planting Day, National Recycling Week, Clean Up Australia Day, Walk to Work Day, World Environment Day and Earth Hour.</p>		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.155-156 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
<p>Food is not to be used for children's play experiences such as rice, pasta and jelly. Food uses vast amounts of water and energy to create it and we send the wrong message when this is used in play.</p>		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
<p>Plan opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world. Small actions like saving water from a sink, drawing on both sides of paper or switching off lights have a</p>		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.118 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children's Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Policy	August 2015	June 2017

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large impact when young children are developing skills and attitudes.							s.27 s.29A
In collaboration with Responsible Persons, assess resource requirements necessary to meet policy commitments, and allocate appropriate funding where applicable.	✓	✓			r.73-76 r.118 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
Seek and apply for grants as appropriate to support the implementation of this Policy.	✓	✓			r.73-76	s.168	r.40-41
Incorporate 'green' cleaning practices, using safe and sustainable cleaning products and methods, in service centre's cleaning contracts.	✓	✓			r.73-76 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
<p>Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse, reuse, reduce, repair and recycle in service's practices, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recycle plastic (labelled 1–7), glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal • investigate composting for food scraps • promote recycling and reusing items through holding 'SWAP' markets for children's clothing, toys and books 		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.118 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children's Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Policy	August 2015	June 2017

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Remain up to date with current research and resources including newsletters, journals and support agencies such as Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC).		✓	✓		r.118	s.168	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
Encourage children who bring a lunch box, to bring a rubbish-free lunch box.		✓	✓	✓	r.73-76 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A
Encourage families to follow the practices as outlined in this Policy and Procedures in the family home environment where possible.		✓	✓	✓	r.73-76 r.170	s.167	r.40-41
Actively encourage involvement to support the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices in the service.	✓	✓	✓	✓	r.73-76 r.355-357 r.360-365	s.167 s.165 s.168 s.169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A

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Definitions

Environmental education: Learning about the environment and how natural systems function; the interconnectedness of plants, animals, humans and the planet we inhabit. Environmental education promotes acquisition of knowledge, skills and values about the environment, often with a science and nature focus. Environmental education in early childhood services is integrated into everyday decisions made as part of the curriculum.

Sustainability (as 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 education for sustainability is to promote a sense of responsibility, respect, empowerment, active participation, enquiry and social change (adapted from Early Childhood Australia’s Environmental Sustainability Policy 2005).

The goal of education for sustainability is to empower children and adults to think and act in ways to meet their immediate needs without jeopardising the potential of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable practice at the early childhood level is about a holistic approach that integrates all aspects of sustainability into early childhood services.

Energy

- Computer screens need to be turned off when not using the computer.
- Computers and electrical equipment should be turned off when vacating the building.
- Turn off air conditioning when rooms are not in use.
- When buildings are using heating or air conditioning, the doors in the building need to be closed. This may impact on indoor/outdoor programs and strategies need to be developed to ensure this can still occur but with partially closed doors.
- Fridges that are not used should be turned off.
- Light sensors will be installed where possible. Lights should be turned off when not needed.
- Upgrade old appliances with energy efficient appliances.

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children’s Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Procedure	August 2015	June 2017

Water

- Aim for 5,000 to 20,000 litre water tanks in each service and ascertain if tanks can be connected to toilets.
- Develop strategies to raise awareness about water usage. Water play is important and children need to use water to learn how to conserve it.
- Ensure that all water from troughs and bowls is re-used to water the garden.
- Grey water can be used to water grass and gardens, away from children, and use low salt/phosphate detergents.
- Install water-saving bathroom fixtures in the children's bathrooms to prevent taps from being left on.
- Ensure dual flush toilets are installed.

Biodiversity

- Grow food crops in vegetable gardens.
- Grow fruit trees.
- Grow a diverse range of plants and develop an understating of how plant diversity encourages animal diversity.
- Grow indigenous, native and water-wise plants and connect to land.
- Water the plants in your play space. They are a precious resource for all species.
- Encourage services to seek out inclusion of animal in programs.

Transport

- Promote sustainable transport options.
- Create prominent, effective spaces for bikes and prams ensuring that we value the staff and families who choose to ride or walk as much as those that drive.

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children's Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Procedure	August 2015	June 2017

Link to Council policies

By working towards sustainable practices, Council's Children and Family Services is adhering to Council's City Sustainability Policy; and contributing to the achievement of Council's *Community Vision*, *Council Plan 2013–17*, and *Waste and Resource Recovery Plan* goals. The *Council's Council Plan 2013–2017* Council Plan 2013-17 consists of five themes, each comprising strategic objectives, strategies for achieving these objectives, and strategic indicators. The themes of the Council Plan follow our Community Vision:

- **Friendly and safe** – a community where people feel connected and safe.
- **Green, clean and beautiful** – a sustainable environment for future generations.
- **Sustainable living** – clear direction for growth and development of the city.
- **Vibrant and diverse** – opportunities for all.
- **Excellence in governance** – dynamic, effective and accountable.

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
Family and Children's Services	Michele Leonard	3.3 Environmental Sustainability and Awareness Procedure	August 2015	June 2017

Resources and useful websites

This Policy and Procedures are aligned to the following National Quality Standard

www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-quality-standard

Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and Educators’ Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.

www.acecqa.gov.au

Early Childhood Australia (unpublished final draft), *ECA Environmental Sustainability Policy*. Early Childhood Australia.

Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au

Hughes, M, 2007, *Climbing The Little Green Steps: How To Promote Sustainability Within Early Childhood Services In Your Local Area*, Gosford and Wyong Council 2007.

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

Group	Responsible Manager	Document	Approval Date	Review Date
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