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Environmental Sustainability Policy

Purpose

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

Policy Statement

Values

Ewing Kindergarten is committed to:

- promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the natural environment among all at the kindergarten
- 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 kindergarten.

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 Ewing Kindergarten.

Background and Legislative Requirements and Guiding Documents

Background

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.

Legislative Requirements

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: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

Strategies for Policy Implementation/ 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
- allocating the necessary resources to implement the identified environmental sustainability strategies at the kindergarten
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor and all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this Environmental Sustainability Policy
- ensuring the identified strategies are implemented at the kindergarten
- 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 kindergarten to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the kindergarten
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the kindergarten 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 kindergarten, that reflect the guidelines within this policy
- support the grants officer 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

Co-Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, fellow educators/staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the kindergarten to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the kindergarten
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the kindergarten
- engaging in activities that support the kindergarten 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 kindergarten, including on excursions and at other kindergarten 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 kindergarten to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the kindergarten
- following the strategies identified and outlined in this Environmental Sustainability Policy
- encouraging their children to adopt environmentally sustainable practices at both the kindergarten and at home.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for

- following this policy and its procedures.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Curriculum Development Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Water Safety Policy

References and Further 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>

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.

Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

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.