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|  | <h2>Environmental Sustainability Policy</h2> |
| Version No. | Version 3.0 November 2021 (approved) |
| Authorisation | General Manager Community Services |
| Expiry Date | Policy to be reviewed by 1 December 2024 |
| Responsible Officer | Manager Families and Children |
| Policy Owner | Early Childhood Coordinator |

1. Purpose

Melton City Council is committed to taking an active role in caring for the environment and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.

1.1. This policy has been adapted from *PolicyWorks* Manual - National Quality Framework released by the Early Learning Association Australia.

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 Melton City Council children's services programs and activities.

3. 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 Educational Program 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, learn about the traditional owners of the land and be empowered to make a difference, and this learning should not wait until the 'formal education' of primary school.

Environmental education can be defined as learning about the environment and how natural systems function; the interconnectedness of plants, animals, humans with particular importance for the traditional owners of the land, 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 educational program.

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 Early Childhood Australia's *Environmental Sustainability Policy*).

The goal of sustainability education is to empower children and adults to think and act in ways that respects the traditional and historical contexts and 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), Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework include outcomes and examples to guide services taking on 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.

4. Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy and related procedures. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *Glossary of Terms*.

| Word/Term | Definition |
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| 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. Policy

Melton City Council children's services is committed to:

- promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the natural environment among all at the service
- promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the indigenous inhabitants, the traditional owners of the land, their connection to the natural environment and seek their collaboration and guidance where practicable in respect of programs, practices, resourcing, traditional conservation and sustainability etc. fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment, traditional owners of the land and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
- encouraging and supporting the development of positive attitudes and values in line with sustainable practices for adults and children
- ensuring that educators and other staff engage in sustainable practices during the operation of the service.

6. Responsibility/Accountability

6.1. The Approved Provider, according to Regulations is responsible for the implementation of this policy. This will be achieved through the Leadership Group and their service staff:

- collaborating with the Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day to Day Charge, Responsible persons, 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 service
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor/ Person in Day to Day Charge/ Responsible persons and all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*

- Person in Day to Day Charge/ Responsible persons are ensuring the identified strategies are implemented at the service
 - parents/guardians are aware of, and have access to, this policy.
- 6.2. The Nominated Supervisor/ Person in Day to Day Charge/ Responsible persons, is responsible for leading the:
- collaboration with the Approved Provider, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify Environmental Sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (see attachment 1 – Optional tool)
 - implementation of identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service
 - ensuring environmental education and practices are incorporated into the Educational Program (refer to *Educational Program Development Policy*)
 - offering 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 sustainable options for the service, that reflect the guidelines within this policy
 - seeking and applying for grants and/or budget allocation 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).
- 6.3. Educators and other staff are responsible for:
- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day to Day Charge, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify Environmental Sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (see attachment 1 – Optional tool)
 - implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service
 - researching, resourcing, and engaging in activities that support the service to become more environmentally sustainable (e.g. recycling)
 - incorporating environmental awareness education and sustainable practices within the Educational Program
 - planning opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world at the service, including on excursions, incursions and at other service events
 - 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).
- 6.4. Parents/guardians are responsible for:
- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Person in Day to Day Charge, Responsible Persons, educators, staff, children and others at the service to identify Environmental Sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (see attachment 1)
 - following the strategies identified and outlined in this policy
 - encouraging their children to adopt environmentally sustainable practices, both at the service and at home.
- 6.5. Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

7. References, Sources, Links to Legislation and Other Documents

Please refer to Reference and Sources page located on the Melton City Council Website.

<http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/People/Children/Childrens-Services-policies-and-procedures/Sources-and-References>

7.1. Related service policies:

- *MCC Child Safe Policy, Procedure and Code of Conduct*
- *Educational Program Development Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy.*

7.2 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*