Environmental Sustainability Procedure – Children's Services

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Adopted by	Manager Child, Families and Youth
Review due	September 2028
Responsible officer	Manager Child, Families and Youth
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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
- 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 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.

This procedure has been adapted from PolicyWorks Catalogue by the Early Learning Association Australia

2. Application And Scope

This procedure applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Melton City Council, including during offsite excursions and activities.

3. Definitions

For terms that relate specifically to this procedure refer to the *Environmental Sustainability Policy*. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *Glossary of Terms*

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4.   Responsibilities

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Collaborating with the nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers, 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 and all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*	√	√			
Implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service	√	√	√		√
Ensuring parents/guardians are aware of, and have access to, the *Environmental Sustainability Policy*	√	√			
Ensuring environmental education and practices are incorporated into the curriculum *(refer to Curriculum Development Policy)*		√	√		√
Ensuring that the outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments *Regulation 113*	**R**	√	√		√
Ensuring the service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible	√	√	√		√
Planning opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world at the service, including on excursions and at other service events		√	√		√
Engaging with the local community, elders or family members to ensure practices are culturally safe, relevant and respectful	√	√	√		√
Fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land	√	√	√		√

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	Col1	Col2	Col3	Col4	Col5
Developing procedures for caring for pets/animals at the service	√	√			
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)	√	√	√		√
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	√	√	√		
Encouraging their children to adopt environmentally sustainable practices at both the service and at home				√	

5. Procedure

5.1. Strategies for Environmental Sustainability

5.1.1. Curriculum

- Role-model sustainable practices and behaviours. Actions such as reusing water from a sink 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
- Take every opportunity to talk with young children about sustainable practices, and encourage older children to take part in these practices
- The curriculum offers many opportunities to explore sustainable issues and practices. The following are some suggestions:
  - o Create an 'earth hour' each day where no lights/minimal lighting is used e.g. during rest, relaxation or sleep times.
  - o Use a range of pictures, books and stories that address environmental sustainability issues
  - o Have waste-free days
  - o Use improvised, recycled and natural materials for program activities
  - o Play a recycling game to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled
  - o acknowledging and where practicable working with the traditional owners of the land, their connection to nature, the land, conservation and sustainability

5.1.2. Waste Management

- Reduce paper wastage at its source by changing printing set-ups and staff printing behaviours where needed
- Dispose of general rubbish at centralised waste stations to encourage people to consider if waste product could be recycled instead. This also reduces the use of bins liners and promotes staff education and support from senior management.
- Encourage children to bring a rubbish-free lunch/snack in a reusable container
- Recycle plastic waste (codes #1–#7), glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal
- Investigate composting of food scraps (Fogo)
- Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse within the educational program i.e. reduce, reuse, repair and recycle

5.1.3. Sustainable energy management

- Ensure lights are switched off in buildings at the end of the day, over weekends or when not required.
- Turn off computers and/or screens when not in use
- Turn off computers and electrical equipment before leaving the building
- 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.
- Upgrade old appliances with energy efficient appliances

5.1.4. Vehicle use

- Develop ways to coordinate staff carpooling to/from events and meetings by increasing awareness of carpooling among staff

5.2. Caring for pets in an Early Years' Service

Observing, interacting with and learning to care for an animal can be valuable part of a child's education and care, enhancing their understanding of relationships, ecology, and the natural world.

While having animals in a service has many advantages, there are a number of concerns that educators must take into account for the safety and welfare of the children as well as the animals.

Procedures should be developed in collaboration with all stakeholders and should be developed to realistically support the co-existence of pets and children.

5.2.1. Choosing the right pet for your service

If your service has never kept an animal before, it is essential that conversations are had with all families about the prospect of keeping an animal. This ensures parents can provide feedback about the decision as well as information about any allergies,

fears or phobias their child may have. This information needs to be taken into consideration before a decision is made on the right animal for the service.

Keeping animals is not suited for all services, there are other exciting ways to introduce animals to children besides keeping them as pets. Other ways animals can be introduced to children can included but not limited to:

- having an outing to a zoo
- inviting visitors and/or programs to the service such as mobile farms or reptile keepers

Questions to consider when developing guidelines and procedures:

Who will be responsible for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care and cleaning?

- How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during service closure periods?
- What physical space is available in the service? Is it adequate for that specific animal?
- Are all educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at the service?
- What time will be available throughout the day to care for the animal or will educators be asked to give up some personal time for this?
- Are there any children or educators at your service who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
- What changes to your service's policies and procedures need to be considered? For example, your hand washing policy will need to be updated to include washing hands after having contact with the animal.
- What are the health and safety risks?

Services should consider other regulations and standards relating to children's access to animals including:

- animal welfare and ethics policies, legislation and standards
- local, state or territory government licensing requirements (for example, for the keeping of reptiles or freshwater turtles, or limits on the number of chickens)
- Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders and tropical fish may not be an appropriate choice. Check with a veterinarian if unsure whether a particular animal is suitable for children

5.2.2. Assessing and managing Risks

It is acknowledged that keeping animals/pets at in education and care service and allowing children access to animals has many advantages, however there are also considerations that approved providers and educators must bear in mind for the safety and welfare of both the children and the animal/pet. A risk assessment should be completed before choosing the type of animal to have at the service and how the children interact with it. Risk assessments should be conducted yearly, when a new child commences at the service or when circumstances change at the service.

Disease

Because contact with animals can spread disease, access to animals in an education and care setting requires specific consideration to stop the transmission of infectious diseases. According to health experts, germs can be found on the skin, hair, feathers, and scales of animals as well as in their faeces, urine, and saliva. Although these microorganisms might not harm the animal, they might harm people. Consider Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy

Effective hand washing and cleaning

Both children and adults should wash their hands thoroughly after handling or feeding animals, or after cleaning their bedding, tanks, cages, or enclosures. The task of cleaning bedding, tanks, cages, or enclosures can be incorporated into the educational process. Consider the Hygiene Policy

Appropriate supervision

Children should also be appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal. Consider the Supervision of Children Policy

6.   Definitions

Term	Definition
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.

7.   Related Documents

Name	Location
Local Government Act 2020	https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020
Relevant legislations 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

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Name	Location
Sources	Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: Approved learning frameworks	ACECQA - Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC): Home - Environmental Education in Early Childhood - Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au - My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia: Approved learning frameworks	ACECQA Sustainability Victoria: ResourceSmart Schools	Sustainability Victoria Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: Approved learning frameworks	ACECQA
Related Policies	- Child Safe (MCC) - Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing - Education Program - Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events - Sun Protection - Supervision of Children Policy - Water Safety