

Environmental Sustainability Policy – Children’s Services

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Adopted by	Executive Leadership Team (ELT)
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 policy has been adapted from PolicyWorks Catalogue by the Early Learning Association Australia

2. Application And Scope

This policy applies to services responsible for the direct education and care of children at Melton City Council programs including offsite excursions and activities. This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Person in day-to-day charge / Responsible Person’s, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending Melton City Council 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 and be empowered to make a difference, and this learning should not wait until the 'formal education' of primary school. Elliot and Davis 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".

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics (2016) requires early childhood professionals in relation to children to "collaborate with children as global citizens in learning about our shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity".

Learning Outcome 2 in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (2016) guides and supports a collaborative approach between professionals, parents and children where, children "are connected with and contribute to their world" and "broaden their understanding of the world in which they live".

Early childhood professionals in collaboration with families are responsible for scaffolding children's learning to develop an environmental identity and consciousness. Maximising children's engagement with the outdoor environment, and integrating access between the indoors and the outdoors, will enable children to actively engage and explore nature and diversify their play experiences. Intentional and planned learning spaces that promote the: development of life skills; such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction, minimising consumption and recycling, and use of recycled, reclaimed, improvised, and natural materials will encourage deeper thinking and leverage learning to promote sustainable environmental habits.

Early Learning also have a responsibility to align service practice with the organisation's environmental sustainability policy. Alignment will include practices and behaviours that support activities which contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing waste, pollution and greenhouse gases, the ethical purchasing of products and assisting to minimise the impact of climate change. This includes the commitment to use the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rethink (how our actions effect the environment) philosophy as a guide to monitor current practices and implement changes. A priority to energy efficient alternatives when considering lighting, building products and design will also be considered.

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.

4. Definitions

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

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.

5. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 • Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 • National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safe (MCC) • Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing • Education Program • Excursions, Regular Outings and Service Events • Sun Protection • Supervision of Children Policy • Water Safety

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