

OLYMPIC AVENUE KINDERGARTEN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

QUALITY AREA 3 | ELAA version 1.0



PURPOSE

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



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Olympic Avenue Kindergarten is committed to:

- 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Olympic Avenue Kindergarten.

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 (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>)					
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 <i>Environmental Sustainability Policy</i>	√	√			
Implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service (<i>refer to Attachment 1</i>)	√	√	√		√
Ensuring parents/guardians are aware of, and have access to, the <i>Environmental Sustainability Policy</i>	√	√			
Ensuring environmental education and practices are incorporated into the curriculum (<i>refer to Curriculum Development Policy</i>)		√	√		√
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 <i>Regulation 113</i>	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	√	√	√		√
Developing procedures for caring for pets/animals at the service <i>Refer to Attachment 2</i>	√	√			
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 <i>Environmental Sustainability Policy</i>	√	√	√		√
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				√	
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BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

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 Curriculum 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 *(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”.

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.

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

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



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

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.



SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>
- Department of Education, Australian Government (2010) *'Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/educators-guide-to-the-early-years-learning-framework-for-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/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>
- Sustainability Victoria: <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/schools>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
 - Curriculum Development
 - Excursions and Service Events
 - Sun Protection
 - Supervision of Children
 - Water Safety
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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
 - notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk ([Regulation 172 \(2\)](#)).
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ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Strategies for Environmental Sustainability
 - Attachment 2: Caring for pets in an early years' service
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AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Olympic Avenue Kindergarten on 15/08/2023

REVIEW DATE: 15/08/2025



ATTACHMENT 1. STRATEGIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Strategy	Adopt (Yes/No)	Responsible for implementation (e.g. Nominated Supervisor, educators, etc.)
Take care to ensure plants and animals are not harmed when playing outdoors		Staff
Have native trees and shrubs in the garden?		Staff
Guide children to put food scraps into a compost heap or worm farm?		Staff
Empty water play onto garden areas?		Staff
Have a vegetable garden?		Staff & Committee
Have a clear bin system for sorting waste?		Staff
Discuss and limit water use in sand/mud play?		Staff
Use recycled or waste paper for painting, drawing, collage and office notes?		Staff & Committee
Make double sided photocopies and/or use the reverse side for notes?		Staff & Committee
Use everyday occurrences as sustainable teaching opportunities?		Staff
Use email correspondence where possible?		Staff & Committee
Have a natural outdoor playspace and highly value outdoor play and active travel to and from kindergarten?		Staff
Have an environmental policy, sub committee or representative?		Committee
Encourage parent involvement in environmentally responsible practices? E.g. collecting materials for collage		Staff
Involve children in sustainable decisions? E.g. should the lights/heater/cooling be on or off		Staff
Encourage waste free lunches –segmented lunch boxes/small reusable containers and avoid excess packaging?		Staff
Consider purchase choices carefully, buy in bulk, reusable containers and avoid excess packaging?		Committee
Avoid use of food as a play material unless out of date eg, pasta, rice?		Staff
Use unbleached and recycled toilet paper?		Committee

Use environmentally friendly soaps and cleaning products?		Staff & Committee
Have half flush toilets and flow restrictors on taps?		Staff & Committee
Belong to an environmentally concerned group or organization?		Staff & Committee
Have a water tank?		Committee
Use natural and recycled materials in the program?		Staff
Use cloth towels instead of paper		Staff

ATTACHMENT 2: CARING FOR PETS IN AN EARLY YEARS' SERVICE

Observing, interacting with and learning to care for an animal can be a 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.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PET FOR THE 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 include 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.

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*