# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**QUALITY AREA 3**

## Purpose

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

## POLICY STATEMENT

### VALUES

Bonbeach Preschool 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 Bonbeach Preschool.

| R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted | | | | | |
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| 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 *(refer to Attachment 1)* | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 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 *(refer to Attachment 1)* | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 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 | √ | √ | | √ |



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| 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 *Refer to Attachment 2* | √ | √ | | | |
| 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 | | | | √ | |

## 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".



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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

## 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.



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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.

## 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
- Educational Program
- Excursions and Service Events
- Sun Protection
- Supervision of Children
- Water Safety

## 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))*.

## ATTACHMENTS

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

## AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Bonbeach Preschool on 7.5.2025.

**REVIEW DATE: 7th May 2025**



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