East Preston Islamic College

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Updated August 2021

Purpose

This policy will provide guidelines to assist the East Preston Islamic College Early Learning Centre (EPIC ELC) to take an active role in caring for the environment, and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.

Policy Statement

Values

EPIC ELC 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 the 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, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of EPIC ELC.

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".

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 2005). 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 (Standard 3.3). 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
  - Standard 3.3: The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future
    - Element 3.3.1: Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations
    - Element 3.3.2: Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: http://www.comlaw.gov.au/

Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

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

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework#key%20documents

- Davis, J. M. and Elliott, S. (2004) Mud pies and daisy chains: Connecting young children and nature. In *Every Child*, 10(4) p4. Available at: http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/every_child/ec0404_mudpies.pdf
- Early Childhood Australia: http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource_themes/
- *'Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: http://docs.education.gov.au/documents/educators-guide-early-years-learning-framework-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
- Hughes, M. (2007) *Climbing the little green steps: How to promote sustainability within early childhood services in your local area*, Gosford and Wyong Council: http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care/useful-links-and-resources/sustainability-resources
- *My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia*: http://education.gov.au/my-time-our-place-framework-school-age-care-australia
- Stonehouse, A. (2006) *NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services*: http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/childcare_framework.pdf
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*: www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* – Resources for Professionals: www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm

Related Policies

- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*

Procedures

The Approved Provider is Responsible for:

- collaborating with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- 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*

- ensuring the identified strategies (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability) are implemented at the service
- ensuring parents/guardians are aware of, and have access to, the *Environmental Sustainability Policy*.

The Nominated Supervisor is Responsible for:

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- ensuring environmental education and practices are incorporated into the curriculum (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- 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
- 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).

Certified Supervisors, educators and other staff are Responsible for:

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, fellow educators/staff, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- engaging in activities that support the service to become more environmentally sustainable (e.g. recycling)
- incorporating environmental education and sustainable practices within the curriculum
- planning opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world at the service, including on excursions and at other service events
- 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).

Parents and Guardians are Responsible for:

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service (refer to Attachment 1 – Strategies for environmental sustainability)
- following the strategies identified and outlined in this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- encouraging their children to adopt environmentally sustainable practices at both the service and at home.

Volunteers and Students while at the service are Responsible for:

Following this Policy and its Procedures

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
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the EPIC ELC on 09/04/2019

Review Date

This policy needs to be reviewed on the 26th of August 2022

Attachment

ATTACHMENT 1
Strategies for Environmental Sustainability

This checklist can be used to promote discussion and formulate an environmental sustainability policy for the service. Many of these strategies were drawn from Mia Hughes' *Climbing the little green steps: How to promote sustainability within early childhood services in your local area* (refer to *Sources*). Other strategies can be added to the checklist as required – refer to *Sources* as a starting point for further information. Ensure that responsibility for implementation is allocated to each strategy adopted e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents/guardians, children etc. Agreed strategies should form the basis of the service's *Environmental Sustainability Policy*.

Strategy	**Adopt** (Yes/No)	**Responsible for implementation** (e.g. Nominated Supervisor, educators, etc.)
Data Collection		
Collect baseline data from energy and water bills, and monitor waste collection. Use information gathered to set reduction targets and evaluate whether they have been achieved.		
Green purchasing		
Purchase local products.		
Purchase recycled products.		
Purchase energy and water efficient products.		
Purchase organic produce.		
Purchase items with minimal packaging.		
Purchase chemical-free, green cleaning products.		
Purchase formaldehyde-free paint.		
Waste		
Minimise waste from one-use, throwaway products (e.g. paper towels, disposable nappies, wet wipes) by changing behaviours and procedures, and using alternative products. The following are some suggestions:		
• Replace paper towels with individual cloth towels on a peg located in the bathroom or at each child's locker, and washed each week.		
• Install a low energy electric hand dryer.		

• Cut paper towels in half to reduce waste while working towards using cloth towels or installing a low energy electric hand dryer.		
• Replace disposable nappies with a nappy wash service.		
• Replace wet wipes with washable cloths.		
Encourage children to bring a rubbish-free lunch/snack in a reusable container.		
Adopt green cleaning practices by using safe and sustainable cleaning products and methods.		
Recycle plastic waste (codes #1–#7), glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal.		
Investigate composting of food scraps.		
Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse within the educational program i.e. reduce, reuse, repair and recycle.		
Refrain from using food items for children's play experiences (e.g. rice, pasta, jelly etc.) as this is wasteful of both the food items, and the water and energy used in production.		
Promote recycling and reusing items e.g. through SWAP markets for children's clothing, toys and books.		
Energy		
Turn off computers and/or screens when not in use.		
Turn off computers and electrical equipment before leaving the building.		
Install and use ceiling fans instead of air conditioning, when appropriate.		
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.		
Turn off fridges that are not in use during extended holiday periods (ensure no food remains and the fridge is cleaned well beforehand).		
Turn lights off when not required. Install light sensors where possible.		
Upgrade old appliances with energy efficient appliances.		

Water		
Install 5,000–20,000 litre water tanks and consider connecting these to toilets.		
Set limits for water use during play, while acknowledging that water play is important and that children need to use water in order to learn how to conserve it.		
Ensure that water from troughs and bowls is reused to water the garden.		
Use grey water (containing low salt/phosphate detergents) to water grass and gardens when children are not in attendance at the service.		
Install water saving taps in children's bathrooms.		
Install dual flush toilets.		
Place buckets or watering cans next to drink stations to collect excess water.		
Biodiversity		
Grow food crops in vegetable gardens.		
Plant fruit trees.		
Grow a diverse range of plants, and develop children's understanding of how plant diversity encourages animal diversity.		
Grow indigenous (native) and water-wise plants.		
Water plants in the play space using recycled water where possible. Plants are a precious resource for the planet and should be protected and nurtured.		
Transport		
Encourage staff to walk, cycle or catch public transport to work and on excursions, where possible.		
Create prominent, effective spaces for the storage of bikes and prams to promote riding and walking to staff and families.		
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 experience every day in relation to waste.		
Take every opportunity to talk with young children about sustainable practices, and encourage older children to take part in these practices.		
Assign roles such as water, waste and energy monitors to children within the service (consider providing them with badges and charts appropriate to their role). Children are often vigilant at monitoring the behaviour of their peers.		
The curriculum offers many opportunities to explore sustainable issues and practices. The following are some suggestions:		
• Create an 'earth hour' each day where no lights/minimal lighting is used e.g. during rest, relaxation or sleep times.		
• Use a range of pictures, books and stories that address environmental sustainability issues.		
• Have waste-free days.		
• Use improvised, recycled and natural materials for program activities.		
• Examine damaged household appliances and explore whether they can be repaired.		
• Play a recycling game to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled.		
• Investigate alternatives to texta pens and liquid paint, such as powder paint and refillable markers or pencils.		
• Join Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) for more ideas.		
Family and community involvement		
Inform families about this policy and the service's approach to environmental sustainability through information sessions, photo displays and newsletters etc.		
Design a poster outlining the key principles of environmental sustainability, for display in the foyer of the service. This may include a charter of principles and key targets to be achieved.		
Become involved in community events such as Earth Hour, World Environment Day and Clean Up Australia Day.		