

POLICY AIM

For Sweetpeas to develop sustainable practices within our service, and to encourage educators, staff, children and families to embed these practices as part of their daily routine, here at the Service and at home.

RATIONALE

Our Service encourages the awareness of environmental responsibility and implements practices that contribute to a sustainable future. Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment. We practice and promote sustainability through reducing waste, minimising consumption, and protecting and conserving wildlife and natural habitats.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Educators
- Staff
- Children
- Families
- Community

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Standard 3.2 (Use) - *The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.*
- Element 3.2.1 (Inclusive Environment) - *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.*
- Element 3.2.2 (Resources support play-based learning) - *Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.*
- Element 3.2.3 (Environmentally responsible) - *The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.*

RELATED POLICIES

- Development and Education Policy

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

Teaching and learning about being environmentally responsible starts with everyday practice. We believe being environmentally responsible should be embedded into the operation of the services, rather than being a tokenistic 'theme' that is investigated every now and then. Our services are committed to protecting our environment to ensure a sustainable future for our children. This involves educators, children and families working together to protect our environment as we educate children about the importance of being environmentally responsible within our everyday practice.

- Practices, policies and implementation of sustainable practices should remain flexible and dynamic, to allow for specific service needs.
- Environmentally sustainable practices will focus on the positive rather than the negative, and be child orientated and relevant to the local community and the service environment.
- Information on environmentally sustainable programs and practices used at the Service, will be made available to families, via service displays, email, conversations and newsletter, so that they can be practiced at home and within the community.
- Environmental sustainability practices will be a continual program, and part of the daily routine within the Service.

- Services will ensure that sustainability is embedded in service philosophy Children are involved decision making and actively involved in projects relating to sustainability.
- Areas of interest to look at within the Service include, but are not limited to, water usage, the use of chemicals in service operations, energy usage, recycling, sustainable equipment purchases, service surrounds, the use of plants and garden materials, worm farms and composting etc.
- The curriculum and planned programs, include, but are not limited to, looking at vegetables and herbs for use in cooking, plants and gardens and the benefit to the environment, worm farms or composting bins, the use of recycled materials, books/DVD's looking at environmental sustainability, discussions on the difference the children can make to their local environment, weather experiences, looking at the natural elements of service and surrounding environments, local plants and wildlife, discovering how the environment links together between humans, animals and plants, children's responsibilities to their immediate environment.
- The use of inquiry-based learning is the foundation of the program and the service strives to actively implement STEM based play experiences and educational in-services.

MANAGEMENT WILL:

- network with the local community to keep up to date with current practices and ideas for being environmentally responsible.
- encourage educators, families and children to engage in sustainable practices and appreciate the natural environment.
- provide professional development opportunities for educators to learn about integrating environmentally sustainable education into all areas of their program.
- review the development of a sustainable Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) development using environmentally principles.
- investigate membership to relevant authorities and training providers, such as the NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (ECEEN) to liaise with other education and care services and maintain currency on practices and ideas for being environmentally responsible
- where relevant, review policies and procedures within the Service to achieve more sustainable outcomes.
- use electronic communication where possible to reduce paper use within the office and in each service for newsletters, billing, and other communication needs.
- conduct environmentally responsible audits to ensure consistency and continuous improvement
- source resources and materials from Reverse Garbage or second-hand stores to use within the service for loose parts, dramatic play, craft and other learning opportunities.
- ensure sustainable practices are incorporated into the daily routine.
- collaborate with families and the community for involvement in potential quality practice for the Service. For example: Take 3 for the Sea, Food wise, Planet Ark.
- provide colour coded bins for Landfill only, Organic waste, and Recycling.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- incorporate recycling as part of everyday practice at the Service.
- role model environmentally responsible practices.
- discuss environmentally responsible practices with the children and families as part of the curriculum.
- provide information to families on environmentally responsible practices that are implemented at the Service and encourage the application of these practices in the home environment.
- share ideas between educators, children, and families about environmentally responsible ideas, implementation, and resources. This will be supported through our communication strategies, including parent meetings, emails, newsletters, and informal conversations.
- where practical, use a worm farm/composting bin to reduce food waste in the Service. Children will be encouraged to place food scraps into separate containers for use in the worm farm or composting bin. Educators will provide visual guides and discuss with the children and families which scraps worms can eat, which foods can be composted, and which food scraps must go in the bin. The children will be involved in maintaining the worm farm and compost bin.
- role model energy and water conservation practices: For example, turning off lights and air-conditioning when a room is not in use, emptying water play containers onto garden areas.
- seek to purchase equipment that is environmentally friendly where possible. Educators will reduce the amount of plastic and disposable equipment they purchase and select materials that are made of natural materials.

- use the concept of ‘reduce, re-use and recycle’, which will become part of everyday practice for both children and educators to build lifelong attitudes towards environmentally responsible practices.
- use ‘green cleaning’ products to replace chemicals where possible.
- use sustainability calendar to track activity.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) - www.aaee.org.au
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- Department of Environment and Energy - www.environment.gov.au
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Environmental Education in Early Childhood - <https://www.eeec.org.au/>
- Environmental Education NSW: <https://aaensw.org.au/connect/early-years/>
- Food Wise - <http://www.foodwise.com.au/>
- National Quality Standard - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>
- Planet Ark - <https://planetark.org/>
- Sweetpeas Philosophy
- Take 3 for the Sea - <https://www.take3.org/>

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy adapted from previous Sweetpeas policy 	February 2017	Janine Evans (Director)
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added garden use • No other changes 	February 2018	Janine Evans (Director)
1.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes required 	February 2019	Janine Evans (Director)
1.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed to include Penrith service 	February 2020	Janine Evans (Director)
1.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added the calendar to track sustainable actions/activities • Added correct NQS • Added STEM based enquiry learning 	February 2021	Janine Evans (Director)
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmetic changes for new formatting template and colours • Elaborated strategies • Added additional references (ECEEN, Planet Ark, Take 3, Food Wise) 	August 2022	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Managing Director)

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
2.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checked and fixed hotlinks• Fixed version numbering (Aug22 version previously 2.1)• Changed <i>References</i> heading to <i>References and Resources</i>	February 2024	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)