

Background

Like many other countries, Australia recognises that environmental sustainability is essential to social, economic, and political sustainability. Research has shown that the earlier children are given opportunities to connect with nature, learn about the environment and our impact upon it, and to develop the skills to care for it, the more likely they will be environmentally responsible as adults.

As part of this recognition, the National Quality Standard requires services to embed sustainable practices into their operations, and to include its ideas, ideals, concepts, and actions into the program.

Policy statement

This policy describes how the Service embeds sustainability into its practices, routines, and educational program so that children develop an understanding and respect for the environment and its infinite resources. In addition, it outlines how the Service encourages educators, children, and families to care and advocate for the environment throughout their lives.

Strategies and practices

- The Service seeks to provide a physical environment that includes natural features such as plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, and water, and to allow children unhurried time in that environment.
- Sustainability is embedded in the Services everyday routines and practices. These include: -
 - Recycling, and use of recycled resources
 - Energy efficiency
 - Water conservation
 - Sustainable purchasing
 - Worm farm/composting
- Recycling stations are set up throughout the Service. Educators role model using these stations and discuss the reasons for them with the children. They encourage the children to use the recycled materials and bring reusable items from home.
- The Service promotes use of recycled items for craft materials where available.
- The Service practices energy conservation through acts such as: -
 - Air conditioning, lights and other electrical equipment are turned off when a room is not in use
 - Computers, printers, and photocopiers are turned off at the end of the day
 - Air conditioning is always set to the recommended temperature of 24 degrees and only used when necessary
- Water conservation is embedded in the Service's practices by following these guidelines: -
 - Only the amount of water required to undertake programmed water play is used
 - Water used in water play is emptied onto gardens
 - Water play is discontinued during water restrictions, and the reasons explained to the children
 - Educators encourage children to turn taps off to avoid wastage
 - Water conservation posters are displayed in bathrooms

- When purchasing equipment and supplies, the Service chooses items that are as eco-friendly as practicable. Preferred items are: -
 - Made from natural materials and fibers (e.g. wood, cotton, cardboard, metals)
 - Locally or Australian made
 - Made from renewable, reused, or recycled materials
 - Repairable
 - Durable, and able to be washed or wiped clean
- The Service embraces green cleaning. Wherever possible, and without compromising health and safety, the Service replaces chemical cleaning agents with eco-friendly cleaning products.
- If practical, the Service has a worm farm. Suitable scraps are saved from mealtimes for the worm farm. These scraps are placed in a separate container for the worms. Educators discuss with the children the foods that worms can or cannot eat. The children are involved in maintaining the worm farm, and in using the worm casts in the garden.
- Educators intentionally teach children about caring for the environment e.g. energy efficiency, water saving, and involve them in planned experiences that develop life skills such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling.
- Educators remain alert to teachable moments e.g. noisily feeding birds, rainbows, sun showers, cloud patterns, to share the awe and wonder of the natural world with children.
- The Service regularly shares information and ideas about sustainable practices with families via notice boards, newsletters, information sheets, educator-parent meetings, curriculum documentation, and face- to-face conversations to ensure a consistent message between the home and Service. In addition, the Service actively seeks ideas and resources on sustainability from families.
- The Service takes every opportunity to involve families and the broader community in its sustainability practices and in educating children about the environment.
- Environmental issues are a regular item on the team meeting agenda, and resources from recognised authorities are introduced and discussed.

Additional safe practices for babies

- No additional practices required.

Responsibilities of parents

- To continue the Service's sustainability message at home.
- To contribute ideas and resources.

Procedure and forms

- Risk Assessment or Management Plan
- Staff Meeting Agenda

Links to other policies

- Animals and Pets at the Service Policy
- Child Safe Environments Policy
- Cleaning Policy
- Dangerous Products, Plants, Vermin and Objects Policy
- Educational Program Policy
- Handwashing Policy
- Water Safety Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

QA	3.1.1	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
QA	3.2.3	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

Sources

- Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 2022
- Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines 2019
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2024
- Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (2022)
- Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines (2019)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011, current as at 2024)
- Guide to the National Quality Framework (2024)
- Guide to the National Quality Standard (2024 edition)

Further reading and useful websites

- Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (Queensland Government) – <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment> accessed 23 June 2025.
- Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network – <https://www.qecsn.org.au> accessed 23 June 2025.
- The Empowered Educator. Introducing Sustainability to Children... Ideas and Inspiration! – <https://www.theempowerededucatoronline.com/2014/05/introducing-sustainability-to.html> accessed 23 June 2025.
- Little Green Steps. Sustainability Education for Childcare Centres – <https://www.centresupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Environment-Guide-Little-Green-Steps.pdf> accessed 23 June 2025.

Policy Review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.	January 2019
2	6 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and readings.	February 2020
3	29 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and readings.	January 2021
4	14 October 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	October 2021
5	29 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy	September 2022
6	6 October 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	October 2023
7	22 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed Policy Accessed sources	August 2024
8	21 June 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources and added additional sources	June 2025
9	23 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Reviewed policy. Updated all sourcing and links.	June 2026

