

1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy provides guidelines to assist Annie Dennis Children's Centre to take an active role in caring for the environment, and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.

2. VALUES

Annie Dennis Children's Centre 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.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to Annie Dennis, the Nominated Supervisor, Persons with Management or Control, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the educational programs and activities of Annie Dennis.

4. BACKGROUND

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.

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.

5. 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 the Annie Dennis Policy Manual.

Annie Dennis: Annie Dennis Children's Centre, being the Approved Provider.

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.

6. PROCEDURES

Annie Dennis and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- collaborating with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others to identify environmental sustainability strategies based on the service's action plan for implementation
- ensuring the service's action plan is available for educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others upon request
- allocating the necessary resources identified on the service's action plan to implement the environmental sustainability strategies at the service
- ensuring the strategies identified on the service's action plan are aligned with the financial budget, if applicable
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor and all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- ensuring the service's action plan is 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 Annie Dennis, educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others to identify environmental sustainability strategies based on the service's action plan for implementation
- ensuring the service's action plan is available for educators, staff, parents/guardians, children and others upon request
- implementing strategies identified on the service's action plan for which they have responsibility at the service
- ensuring the strategies identified on the service's action plan are aligned with the financial budget, if applicable
- 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 Annie Dennis 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 identified on the service's action plan
- 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).

All educators and other staff are responsible for:

- collaborating with Annie Dennis, the Nominated Supervisor, fellow educators/staff, parents/guardians, children and others to identify environmental sustainability strategies based on the service's action plan for implementation
- implementing strategies identified on the service's action plan for which they have responsibility at the service
- 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 educational program 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/guardians are responsible for:

- collaborating with Annie Dennis, the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies based on the service's action plan for implementation
- following the strategies identified on the service's action plan 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.

7. EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Annie Dennis 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.

8. RELATED POLICIES

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

9. LEGISLATION

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*

10. LINK TO NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS

- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
 - Standard 3.2: The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play based learning
 - Element 3.2.3: The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

11. SOURCES

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework#key%20documents>
- Early Childhood Australia, Early Childhood Environmental Sustainability Policy Position (2005): <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au>
- '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
- *My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia*: <http://education.gov.au/my-time-our-place-framework-school-age-care-australia>
- *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

12. APPROVAL AND REVIEW

This policy was adopted by Annie Dennis on 15 October 2018. Date for review October 2020.