

ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Medowie Gumnut Preschool 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.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
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.
3.2.2	Resource' 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.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

PURPOSE

At Medowie Gumnut Preschool we believe in educating children about being environmentally responsible which is promoted and supported through daily practices, resource and interactions. Sustainable practice is encouraged within the Service and community, assisting children and families to become advocates for a sustainable future.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of Medowie Gumnut Preschool.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching and learning about being environmentally responsible starts with everyday practice. We believe being environmentally responsible should be embedded into the operations of Medowie Gumnut Preschool, rather than being a tokenistic 'theme' that is investigated every now and then. Medowie Gumnut Preschool is 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.

Management will:

- Network with the local community to keep up to date with current practices and ideas for being environmentally responsible. This may include installing water tanks, grey water system, converting toilet cisterns to dual flush, and converting to water saving taps.
- Encourage Educators, families and children to engage in sustainable practices and appreciate the natural environment.
- Ensure Medowie Gumnut Preschool joins a preferred provider e.g. the *NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network* 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 room 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.
- 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, Paper recycling, Mixed recyclables.

These may include:

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE	IDEAS
RECYCLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bins and signage for waste and recycled materials • Recycle paper and all other recyclable rubbish • Use recycled water (e.g. for watering gardens)
GARDENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant vegetables, herbs, and fruit trees • Establish a worm farm • Give food scraps to worms or Service pets, or to a staff member to take home for their pet/s • Provide education to children about activities such as ‘garden to plate’ activities. • Provide opportunities for children to participate in experiences such as seed sprouting, vegetable gardening, cooking with what is grown, and provide education about weeds
ENERGY CONSERVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install LED lighting where possible • Turn off non-LED lights when not in use • Turn off electrical appliances at the outlet when not in use • Use natural ventilation and insulated blinds/drapes rather than air conditioning when temperatures are not extreme
WATER CONSERVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using half flush on the toilet • Turn off the taps and ensure leaking taps are fixed immediately • Encourage shorter showers • Teach children to turn off tap when brushing teeth • Collect rainwater and use in the garden and for water/sand play • Use water play water on the garden rather than tipping out at the end of the day
NATURE AND WILDLIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use natural materials – trees, blocks, boxes etc. in arts and crafts and play • Educate children about the natural decomposition cycle through exposure and participation in worm farms and composting food scraps • Educate children in how to care for pets, letting them actively participate in caring for the Service pets. • Plant ‘bird attracting’ plants and install a birdbath • Plant ‘butterfly attracting’ plants • Create a lizard lounge • Collaborate with wildlife educators to assist in educating children

COMMUNICATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display the Service’s sustainability journey for families and visitors to view, provide feedback and offer suggestions • Provide families with hints and tips in newsletters about how they can become sustainable at home • Use scrap paper for art and craft • Use both sides of paper for drawing
-------------	---

Educators will:

- Incorporate recycling as part of everyday practice at the Service. Recyclable containers will be provided throughout mealtimes and experiences.
- 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.
- Use a worm farm/composting bin/ to reduce food waste in Medowie Gumnut Preschool. 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.

Source

Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE): www.aeee.org.au

Department of Environment and Energy: www.environment.gov.au

Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).

Kearns, K. (2017). *The Business of Childcare* (4th Ed.).

NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (ECEEN): www.eceen.org.au

Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network (QECSN): www.qecsn.org.au

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	February 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE	February 2021
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional information added to points. • small wording edits • additional links added for information 		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional information added to points. • Points added (Highlighted). • Sources checked for currency. • Department names corrected in Sources (due to departmental name changes). • Sources/references corrected, updated, and alphabetised. 		
February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added 'related policies' list • Changed title from: Environmental Sustainability Policy to Environmentally Responsible Policy • Integrated new terminology through the document - environmentally responsible 	February 2019	
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated the references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard 	February 2018	
February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor adjustments made with further suggestions on how to embed sustainability into everyday practice 	February 2018	