

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

QUALITY AREA 3 | ELAA version 1.0



PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to assist Denzil Don Kindergarten in actively caring for the environment and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Denzil Don Kindergarten is committed to:

- promoting respect for and an appreciation of the natural environment.
- fostering children’s capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals, and land.
- supporting the development of positive values in line with sustainable practices.
- ensuring all staff engage in sustainable practices during the service operation.

SCOPE

This policy applies to staff, students, volunteers, visitors, parents/carers, children, and others attending programs and activities at Denzil Don Kindergarten, including offsite excursions.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	All staff, including teaching and non-teaching	Parents/carers	Contractors, volunteers, and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted.					
Collaborating with all staff, parents/carers, children, and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation <i>(refer to Attachment 1)</i>	√	√	√	√	√
Allocating the required resources to implement the identified environmental sustainability strategies at the service	√	√			
Ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this <i>Environmental Sustainability Policy</i>	√	√			
Implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service <i>(refer to Attachment 1)</i>	√	√	√		√
Ensuring parents/carers are aware of and have access to the <i>Environmental Sustainability Policy</i>	√	√			

Ensuring environmental education and practices are included in the curriculum (<i>refer to Curriculum Development Policy</i>)		√	√		√
Ensuring the 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 <i>Regulation 113</i>	R	√	√		√
Ensuring the service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible	√	√	√		√
Planning opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world at the service, including on excursions		√	√		√
Engaging with the local community, elders, or families to ensure practices are culturally safe, relevant, and respectful	√	√	√		√
Fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals, and the land	√	√	√		√
Incorporating celebrations of environmental awareness into the program where appropriate		√	√		√
Keeping up to date with current research, resources, and best practices	√	√	√		√
Providing families with information about sustainable practices and ensuring they have access to this policy	√	√	√		√
Making recommendations to the service 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	√	√	√		
Encouraging their children to adopt environmentally sustainable practices at both the service and at home				√	



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

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. Children need to understand their place in the world and the role they can play in protecting the environment. Children should learn to be environmentally responsible and be empowered to make a difference. 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 a meaningful way which will ultimately promote action for sustainability.”

The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics (2016) requires early childhood professionals in relation to children to “collaborate with children as global citizens in learning about our shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.”

Learning Outcome 2 in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (2016) guides a collaborative approach between professionals, parents, and children where children “are connected with and contribute to their world” and “broaden their understanding of the world in which they live.”

In collaboration with families, early childhood professionals are responsible for scaffolding children’s learning to develop an environmental identity and consciousness. Maximising children’s engagement with the outdoor environment and providing opportunities to spend time outdoors enables them to engage with and explore nature and diversify their play experiences. Intentional and planned learning spaces that promote the development of life skills, such as growing and preparing food, reducing waste, minimising consumption, and recycling, and using recycled, reclaimed, and natural materials, encourage deeper thinking and leverage learning to promote sustainable environmental habits.

Early Learning is also responsible for aligning service practice with the service's environmental sustainability policy. The alignment will include practices and behaviours that support activities that contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing waste, pollution, and greenhouse gases, the ethical purchasing of products, and assisting in minimizing the impact of climate change. This includes the commitment to use the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rethink philosophy as a guide to review current practices and implement changes.

Environmental education can be defined as learning about the environment and how natural systems function, the interconnectedness of plants, animals, humans, and the planet. Environmental education promotes the growth of knowledge, skills, and values about the environment, often focusing 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 broad and holistic context of education about the environment. The complexities of social, environmental, and economic systems are acknowledged, and their implications for sustaining life are considered. Sustainability education promotes a sense of responsibility, respect, empowerment, active participation, inquiry, and a desire for change. Sustainability education aims to empower children and adults to think and act in ways that meet their needs without jeopardising the potential of future generations to meet their own. 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's active role in caring for its environment and contributing to a sustainable future 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

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. Refer to the definitions file on the kindergarten website for regularly used terms.

NIL





SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>
- Department of Education, Australian Government (2010) *‘Educators’ Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/educators-guide-to-the-early-years-learning-framework-for-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
- Department of Education, Australian Government, *My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia*: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>
- Sustainability Victoria: <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/schools>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>

RELATED POLICIES

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

EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the service will:

- 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 policy review cycle or as required.
- notify all affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to it or its procedures unless a shorter period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).



ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Strategies for Environmental Sustainability

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Denzil Don Kindergarten on 26/12/2023.

REVIEW DATE: 26 / DECEMBER / 2025



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.

Strategy	Adopt (Yes/No)
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.	
Purchase local products	Yes
Purchase recycled products	Yes
Purchase energy and water-efficient products.	Yes
Purchase organic produce	
Purchase items with minimal packaging	
Purchase chemical-free, green cleaning products.	Yes
<i>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:</i>	
○ 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 wet wipes with washable cloths	Yes
○ Encourage children to bring a rubbish-free lunch/snack in a reusable container	Yes
○ Recycle plastic waste (codes #1–#7), glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal	Yes
○ Composting of food scraps	Yes
○ Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse in the educational program, i.e., reduce, reuse, repair, and recycle	Yes
○ Refrain from using food items for children's play experiences (e.g., rice, pasta, jelly, etc.)	Yes
○ Promote recycling and reusing items	Yes
○ Turn off computers and/or screens when not in use	Yes
○ Turn off computers and electrical equipment before leaving the building	Yes
○ Install and use ceiling fans instead of air conditioning when appropriate	Yes
○ Close doors and windows when heating or air conditioning the building where possible while maintaining adequate ventilation.	Yes
○ Turn off fridges that are not in use during extended holiday periods	
○ Turn lights off when not required. Install light sensors where possible	Yes
○ Upgrade old appliances with energy-efficient appliances	Yes

○ Install 5,000–20,000 litre water tanks and consider connecting these to toilets	Yes
○ Set limits for water use during play while acknowledging that water play is important and that children need to use water to learn how to conserve it	Yes
○ Ensure that water from troughs and bowls is reused to water the garden	Yes
○ Use grey water to water grass and gardens when children are not in attendance at the service	
○ Install water-saving taps in children’s bathrooms	Yes
○ Install dual flush toilets	Yes
○ Grow food crops in vegetable gardens	Yes
○ Plant fruit trees	Yes
○ Grow a diverse range of plants and develop children’s understanding of how plant diversity encourages animal diversity	Yes
○ Grow indigenous (native) and water-wise plants	Yes
○ Water plants in the play space using recycled water where possible	Yes
○ Encourage staff to walk, cycle, or catch public transport to work and on excursions	
○ Have bike and pram storage area to promote riding and walking for staff and families	Yes
○ Role-model sustainable practices and behaviours	Yes
○ Aim to counteract the ‘throwaway’ mentality that children experience every day	Yes
○ Take every opportunity to talk with young children about sustainable practices and encourage participation in these practices	Yes
○ Assign roles such as water, waste, and energy monitors to children within the service.	Yes
<i>The curriculum offers many opportunities to explore sustainable practices, such as the following suggestions:</i>	
● Create an ‘earth hour’ each day where no lights/minimal lighting is used, e.g., during rest, relaxation, or sleep.	
● Use a range of pictures, books, and stories that address environmental sustainability issues	Yes
● Promote waste-free lunch boxes	Yes
● Use improvised, recycled, and natural materials for program activities	Yes
● Examine damaged household appliances and explore whether they can be repaired	Yes
● Play a recycling game to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled	
Become involved in community events such as <i>Plastic Free July</i> .	