

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE

SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT TOOL - EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

The Environmentally Sustainable Education and Care Service

An environmentally sustainable education and care service considers its responsibility towards future generations, and acts to promote sustainable lifestyle choices.

The National Quality Framework asks education and care services to take an active role in caring for its environment and contribute to a sustainable future. This can be achieved by embedding sustainable practices into service operations, and supporting children to become environmentally responsible and to show respect for the environment.

The following principles apply when considering a service approach to sustainability:

- Children of all age groups learn about environmental issues
- Items and materials are appropriately reused or recycled in an environmentally sustainable way
- General waste and hazardous materials are disposed of in an environmentally sustainable way
- Food scraps are discarded in an environmentally sustainable way
- Energy consumption is controlled to reduce impact on the natural environment
- Water is promoted as a precious natural resource
- The environmental footprint of the production and transport of certain products is assessed against sustainable development principles
- The protection and conservation of biodiversity is promoted.

Does your service have an environmental protection policy and/or sustainability strategy?

The following audit tool considers the above principles across a range of domains in early childhood education and care service operation and delivery. It is designed to work together with your service policy. It can be used to review the effectiveness of the policy and to identify new projects or sustainability targets. If you do not yet have an environmental policy in place, completing this tool will give you a broad overview of what to include as well as a detailed assessment of the areas where your service can improve.

Definitions:

Biodiversity refers to the health of ecosystems

Conservation refers to the protection and management of biodiversity.

Energy efficiency refers to the efforts to reduce the amount of energy required to provide products and services.

Energy ratings are the measurement of a product or services energy efficiency.

Environmental footprint refers to measuring the impact we are having on the environment.

Sustainable practices refer to the practices that meet the needs of the present generation, without compromising the resources available to future generations.

Air Quality:	Y	N	S	Comments
Air conditioners? How many, used how often?				
Air vents are clear of obstacles.				
All exhaust fans are checked and maintained regularly.				
Any signs of mould anywhere? In particular check wet areas, all ceilings and external walls.				
Does the building contain asbestos?				
Excursions and routine outings utilise walking and public transport options where possible.				
Known irritants and aerosols are avoided.				
Other ventilation systems used, e.g. fans?				
Soft furnishings such as couches and cushions are maintained in a dust free manner.				
Windows can open and are used throughout the day to moderate indoor environment.				
Other:				
Other:				

Biodiversity:	Y	N	S	Comments
Centre has an active vegetable/herb garden.				
Children are taught how to care for plants.				
Children's play areas are environmentally friendly and recycled materials are used where possible.				
Educators take particular care that plants and animals are not harmed.				

Biodiversity:	Y	N	S	Comments
Garden mulch is used, and garden waste from working bees etc. is mulched and reused on gardens.				
Native plants and trees are preferred.				
Natural materials that reduce the impact on the environment are the preferred choice.				
The centre explores humane and sustainable means of controlling existing and potential threats to biodiversity from animals, weeds and vermin.				
The outdoor environment is maintained and developed by planting trees that are conducive to the environment.				
Working bees are held periodically in order to encourage community involvement in maintaining the outdoor environment.				
Other:				
Other:				

Cleaning:	Y	N	S	Comments
Cleaning products are ordered in bulk and distilled into refillable spray bottles or containers.				
Cleaning products that are environmentally friendly are the preferred choice.				
Non-toxic cleaning products are used.				
Re-usable micro-fibre cleaning cloths are used.				
Sprays and aerosols that contain chlorofluorocarbon propellant are avoided.				
Washing is dried on the clothes line or clothes horse as opposed to the dryer.				
Other:				

Other:				
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Community Engagement:	Y	N	S	Comments
Brochures, tip sheets, and visual displays on sustainable lifestyle practices such as recycling, being water wise, cleaning choices and energy consumption are regularly available.				
Do you buy Australian made goods? If so, why? If not, why not?				
Do you promote sustainable practices in the community? If so, how?				
Have you, or will you collaborate with community organisations to partner in projects to promote sustainability?				
Professional memberships or relationships with organisations that promote sustainably and assist to resource sustainable lifestyles are actively sought and maintained.				
The service has a dedicated team to focus on sustainability education, promotion and improvements, consisting of staff, children and families working together.				
Other:				
Other:				

Educational Program:	Y	N	S	Comments
A healthy and aesthetically pleasing learning environment is provided and maintained through the reduction of waste and rubbish.				

Educational Program:	Y	N	S	Comments
Children are educated about environmental protection and conservation to encourage them to adopt sustainable practices that they can carry on through life.				
Children are involved in the planning and decision making of environmentally focused improvements.				
Childrens artwork is sent home regularly, or recycled where appropriate.				
Community participation is encouraged in all projects undertaken, and families with expertise are invited to help maintain and improve the centre's environment.				
Curriculum decision making practices consider how children develop an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment and the interdependence of living things.				
Educators are encouraged and supported in environmental practices so that they become appropriate role models for children and families.				
Indoor plants are used as teaching aids with children as they learn about how to cultivate and care for plants.				
Information is provided to families on how to recycle correctly, reduce waste, and conserve energy, including ways to reduce water usage both indoors and outdoors.				
Powder paint is used in the program.				
The ecology of plastic toys and equipment is considered.				
Toys and equipment are made of natural materials.				
Other:				
Other:				

Electrical Equipment:	Y	N	S	Comments
Clothes dryer – how many, used how often?				
Deep Freeze – how many, used how often?				
Desktop computers – how many, used how often?				
Dishwasher – how many, used how often?				
Fax machine – how many, used how often?				
Is family correspondence electronic?				
Kettle or other water boiler – how many, used how often?				
Laptop computers – how many used how often?				
Microwave – how many, used how often?				
Oven – how many, used how often?				
Paper shredder – how many, used how often				
Photocopier – how many, used how often?				
Refrigerator – how many, used how often?				
Washing machine – how many, used how often?				
Other:				
Other:				

Energy Consumption:	Y	N	S	Comments
All appliances are turned off at the power points each night. Any exceptions?				
Building is adequately insulated.				
Centre chooses the most appropriate energy saving methods available taking into consideration the energy ratings on a range of equipment, such as, whitegoods, general electrical and compact fluorescent lamps.				

Energy Consumption:	Y	N	S	Comments
Centre utilises solar hot water.				
Children are encouraged to turn off lights and equipment. Any exceptions?				
Green energy is used (check with biller or bill payer).				
Lighting and heating/cooling is turned off when not in use.				
Natural light is the preferred option throughout the day, with the exception of dark winter months.				
Products with batteries are generally avoided.				
Solar panels are installed to utilise electricity from local and renewable sources.				
Other:				
Other:				

Food & Beverages:	Y	N	S	Comments
Centre adopts a 'nude food' approach to children bringing food from home.				
Centre maintains a compost system, worm farm, chicken coop, and/or other.				

Food & Beverages:	Y	N	S	Comments
Children and staff utilise crockery at meal and snack times, as opposed to plastics.				
Children are encouraged to scrape bowls and plates into a scraps bowl after meals and snacks.				
Food items such as pastas or rice are not used as play materials e.g. pasting or threading.				
Food scraps are either added to worm farms, compost facilities, or provided as food for chickens as appropriate.				
Food scraps during food preparation are collected in the kitchen.				
Fresh unprocessed food is on the menu.				
Tea towels used during food preparation, consumption, storage etc.				
Other:				
Other:				

General & Hazardous Waste:	Y	N	S	Comments
Children's rooms, bathrooms and staff areas including the staffroom, office, kitchen or other general areas have appropriately sealed rubbish bins for general waste.				
Disposable nappies or cloth?				
Hard waste and non-recyclable items are disposed of in the general waste bins.				
Paper handtowel or cloth?				
Other:				
Other:				

Industrial Ecology:	Y	N	S	Comments
Do you buy or trade in second hand goods? If so, why? If not, why not?				
Do you consider the environmental footprint of the end of use or disposal of the goods you buy?				
Do you consider the environmental footprint of the intended use for the goods you buy?				
Do you consider the environmental footprint of the manufacturing and production process for the goods you buy?				
Do you consider the environmental footprint of the material extraction for the goods you buy?				
Do you consider the environmental footprint of the packaging and transportation for the goods you buy?				
Do you consider the environmental footprint of products before you purchase goods?				
Do you encourage curiosity about how and where goods are produced?				
Do you encourage curiosity about what the working conditions are in the country of origin?				
Do you know how far goods are shipped to reach the shelves?				
Do you know, or are you learning about all of the products you buy?				
Other:				
Other:				

Policies & Procedures:	Y	N	S	Comments
Service has a sustainability strategy in place.				
Service has an environmental protection and care policy (or similar).				

Policies & Procedures:	Y	N	S	Comments
Service philosophy promotes the role of environmental care and contributing to a sustainable future.				
Service policies on health and nutrition and/or food preparation include guidelines for purchasing fresh and unprocessed foods, and include the sustainable management of kitchen waste and food scraps.				
Service policies to guide cleaning and hygiene procedures provide produces that embed sustainable practices.				
Service policies to guide interactions and relationships with children support children to become socially and environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.				
Service policies to guide partnerships with families provide the opportunity for families to become involved and contribute to service decisions for sustainable development.				
Service policy on the children's educational program includes considerations for environmental education.				
Service policy to guide water safety and use includes guidelines for being water wise, the management of water tanks, and how water is promoted as a precious natural resource in the children's program.				
Sustainable practices are embedded in procedures across the service.				
Other:				
Other:				

Recycling & Recycled Materials:	Y	N	S	Comments
Children use recycled paper for drawing/painting etc.				

Recycling & Recycled Materials:	Y	N	S	Comments
Children's rooms and staff areas including the staffroom, office, kitchen or other general areas have recycle bins for all recyclable items.				
Envelopes are reused.				
Families are encouraged to donate recycled and/or reclaimed items for use in the children's program.				
Office administration utilises recycled paper by having a designated collection point for once used paper, and staff use the other side for general paperwork.				
Recyclable products are disposed of correctly, including milk cartons, glass, aluminium and steel (cans) and paper/cardboard.				
Recycled materials are used in children's activities.				
Recycled, recyclable paper is used for photocopying, and double sided printing is used where suitable.				
Recycling centres and organisations the rescue manufacturing resources are utilised to stock the children's program with consumables.				
Other:				
Other:				

Water:	Y	N	S	Comments
All toilets have been professionally adjusted to use less water.				
All water from water play or routines is tipped onto the garden.				
Children and staff are involved in the planning of water conservation.				

Water:	Y	N	S	Comments
Children are educated on why turning off taps is important when not in use.				
Children's water play is designed to minimise water waste.				
Duel flush cisterns for children and staff.				
Gardens are only watered in early morning or late afternoon from the water tank.				
If no water tank, containers of water are set up for children to use in their play rather than have access to running tap. Includes procedures for refilling, how much/how often.				
Outdoor areas are swept instead of being hosed off.				
Taps do not drip – check bathrooms, kitchen, laundry, staff areas, outdoors.				
Trees and plants are planted that are conducive to the children's learning environment, requiring minimal watering.				
Water is collected from left over drinking water to use on garden.				
Water is collected in troughs from hand washing to use on garden.				
Water tank is in use for children to access, with procedures for use including how much/ how often.				
Other:				
Other:				

Action Plan:

Goal	Who will help?	What will you need?	Timeline

References

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2011, *Guide to the National Framework*, viewed 3 February 2015, <http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF01-Guide-to-the-NQF-130902.pdf>

Download via www.acecqa.gov.au > **NQF Library** > **Guide to the National Quality Framework**



CCC provides leadership, advocacy and support to build the capacity of the children's services sector and promote public support for community owned, not for profit services.

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