

Sustainability Policy and Procedures

Policy Number	2000/43
Approved by	Heritage Management Committee –19/04/2016; Accredited by ACTSmart Business Recycling 2018-2020; Director March 2021
Last reviewed	January 2016; April 2019; March 2021
Next review due	2024
National Law	Section 168
National Regulations	National Regulation 168 (2)(l); 73(2)(b)
National Quality Standard	Quality Area 3: Physical Environment: Standard 3.3
EYLF	Learning Outcome 2

Policy Aim

The aim of the Sustainability Policy and Procedures is to:

- Ensure sustainability and respect for the environment is embedded into the daily programs and practices at Heritage Early Childhood Centre (HECC).
- Encourage sustainability to be a shared ethos among the Heritage community.
- Ensure the educational program at Heritage fosters wonder and knowledge about the natural world and children learn about their responsibility for maintaining the health and beauty of their Preschool, their local community and in turn, the planet.
- Ensure educators, children and families work together to learn about and promote the sustainable use of resources and ideas are effectively communicated and shared.

Scope

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisors, Educational Leader, educators, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and all others attending Heritage programs and activities.

Policy Statement

According to Anne Stonehouse from the NSW Curriculum Framework (2006), *“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.”*

Heritage aims to integrate connecting to the natural environment into our daily philosophy and to embed sustainable practices that children can be actively involved in as part of the daily program. Our educators actively promote and prioritise Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as part of the curriculum and this focus is reflected in our Philosophy Statement which includes: "We understand the importance of connecting children to the natural world in order to develop their respect for and sense of responsibility towards maintaining the health and beauty of the environment."

We aim to develop in children respect for the natural environment and an understanding of the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. This includes the impact that humans have on environments. We understand that in order to be empowering, sustainability



programs must be positively focused, affirmative and emphasise the child's ability to make a difference. This enables children to learn and appreciate their environment in an engaging, fun and exciting manner.

Rationale

The HECC Sustainability Policy and Procedures has been developed to comply with:

- The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (ACT).
- The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (ACT). Regulation 73: An educational program is to contribute to the following outcomes for each child—(b) the child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world.
- The *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care, 2012*: Quality Area Quality Area 3: Physical Environment.
Standard 3.3 The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.
 - Element 3.3.1 Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.
 - Element 3.3.2 Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.
- *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009*. Learning Outcome 2: *Children are connected with and contribute to their world*.
Sub-outcome 2.4 *Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment*

Legislative Background

- Standard 3.3 of the National Quality Standard reflects the fundamental importance of the environment and the influence education and care services have on teaching and promoting sustainability. It encourages children to increase their understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment, both day to day and for long-term sustainability.
- Element 3.3.1 of the National Quality Standard recognises that children develop understandings of themselves and their world through active, hands-on investigation.
- Element 3.3.2 encourages children to extend their sense of being environmentally responsible to involvement within the broader community.
- Learning Outcome 2 of the Early Years Learning Framework is an important and valuable outcome for learning and developing lifelong habits that support a sustainable future. It encourages educators and children to work together to show respect, care and appreciation for the natural environment (adapted from the Early Years Learning Framework, page 29).

At Heritage we aim to meet or exceed the requirements of the legislative framework and provide a supportive active learning environment which provides authentic, meaningful experiences embedded into everyday practice. We aim to support children to develop an appreciation for the environment through active participation in the process. There are many formal and informal opportunities during the day to involve children in caring for and respecting the natural environment and our educators engage in purposeful conversations with children. We understand that a child's curiosity in the natural environment can be sparked with a single observation about weather patterns, the plants in the garden, habitats or the use of natural materials.

Strategies and Practices

Continuous Improvement

- Heritage is committed to continuously improving its' sustainability practices and management will regularly assess itself against the elements in National Quality Standard 3.3 to identify priorities for the annual Quality Improvement Plan.
- The questions on sustainability practices provided by the *Guide to the National Quality Standard* (p.100) will be used by Heritage educators to regularly reflect on current practices. Ideas will be discussed for relevance to the Heritage community. **(Refer to: Appendix 3).**



- Educators will regularly reflect on Learning Outcome 2 in the *Early Years Learning Framework* which provides insights about helping children to be socially responsible and show respect for the environment.
- Educators will plan and document future goals and involve families and children in determining priorities and how these ideas can be implemented;
- Educators will access resources including professional development programs, respected journals and online resources in order to research additional clean, green and environmentally friendly practices which can be shared with the Heritage community. For example:
 - The National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program videos on “*Embedding Sustainable Practices*” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVBdmWI7YEK>
 - The Little Green Steps Report - a collaboration between early childhood services, councils and community organisations to embed sustainable practices and change behaviours towards the environment. The report list actions that participants have taken. (**Refer to:** References).
- Heritage will connect with environment groups such as Bush Care or The ANU Environment Centre and research possible collaborative projects, such as involving educators and children in projects to grow plants, protect the environment etc;
- The Management Committee will consider possible grant applications to government departments to put in place water and energy conservation practices at Heritage and The Australian National University. For example, solar panels, water tanks, grey water systems, converting toilet cisterns to dual flush and converting to water saving taps.

Developing a Sustainability Ethos

Heritage will include educators and families in the development of a sustainability ethos at Heritage and will:

- Discuss sustainability at staff meetings. Questions that may be asked include:
 - How do we provide a healthy environment for future generations, with good water, soil, air, climate, biodiversity etc?
 - Does society value nature and treat resources respectfully?
 - If early childhood is when core values are established, how can early childhood educators help build a healthy society and planet?
- Encourage educators, children and families to contribute ideas and suggestions.
- Involve parents and/or visitors who have expertise in environmental education to talk to the children.
- Considering how families can be actively involved in caring for the Heritage environment. For example, families may be able to donate old household objects such as baskets or wood cut-offs, or become engaged in working bees or contributing ideas.
- Encourage the application of embedded sustainable practices in the home environment. For example, by putting energy-saving tips in the newsletter, having water saving devices as prizes for raffles etc.

Curriculum Planning

Heritage educators will:

- promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the curriculum by linking EDS principles to arts-based learning and prioritise learning ‘in, about and for the environment’.
- provide the children with planned experiences that:
 - Support their engagement with and respect for the natural environment.
 - Increase their awareness of the impact of human activity on environment.
 - Build a sense of responsibility for caring for the environment.
 - Build awareness of the interdependence of between people, plants, animals and the land.
 - Develop life skills, such as growing and preparing food.
- Ensure children’s learning is meaningful and to extend what the children learn from the experience and develop how will it contribute to their knowledge and understanding.
- Extend the learning environment through visits to The ANU Environment Centre.
- Consider excursions to local gardens, nature walks, wildlife parks and/or farms.



- Celebrate national and local environmental initiatives, for example, Clean Up Australia Day, World Environment Day, National Tree Day and Earth Hour.
- Get involved with local bush and land care groups, for example, Bush Care. **Refer to:** Curriculum and Program Planning Policy.

Embedding Sustainable Practices and Respect for the Environment into Daily Practice

Heritage is committed to incorporating sustainable practices in the daily programs and practice as set out in NQS Element 3.3.1 and supporting children to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment as encouraged by NQS Element 3.3.2.

Examples include:

- Ensuring recycling is part of everyday practice and encouraging the concepts of “**reduce, re-use and recycle**” to be part of everyday language and practice for children and educators to build lifelong attitudes towards sustainability.
- Utilising natural materials such as leaves, twigs, seed pods, pinecones, gumnuts and small pebbles in combination with other materials for imaginative play and to explore a range of concepts such as classifying, counting and weighing.
- Encouraging recycling materials to be brought from home for craft and imaginative play.
- Using leaves and recycled paper and boxes for collage.
- Providing recycling containers throughout the service.
- Encouraging families to pack their own food and snacks in reusable containers instead of “pre-package food”.
- Using a worm farm or composting bins to reduce food waste and encouraging children to place food scraps into separate containers for use in the worm farm or the composting bin.
 - Educators discuss with the children and families which scraps the worms can eat and which foods can be composted. The children are involved in maintaining the worm farm and compost.
- Observing and caring for various animals, such as chickens (including hatching eggs), fish and reptiles (**refer to:** Pets and Animals Policy).
- Creating garden beds and allowing children to develop life skills such as growing fruit or vegetables for picking and eating.
- Using pots or containers to grow plants.
- Growing plants that encourage birds, butterflies and other insects.
- Having purposeful conversations with children about the weather and seasons, the plants in the garden, habitats used by animals, the use of natural materials etc.
- Including conversations about conservation and awareness of the environment during water play.
- Utilising books that encourage conversations about sustainable practices, e.g. gardening, composting, rubbish/recycling.
- Discussing sustainable practices with the children and families as part of the curriculum.
- Using group times to allow children the opportunity to discuss sustainable practices.
- Role modelling sustainable practices.
- Role modelling energy and water conservation practices. For example:
 - Turning off lights, fans and air-conditioning when a room is not in use and before going outside.
 - Emptying water play containers onto garden areas.
 - Utilising water saving mechanisms such as timers, efficient shower heads, notices on taps or putting out buckets to collect rainwater.
 - Reducing the amount of plastic and disposable equipment purchased and selecting materials that are made of natural materials and fibres.
 - Encouraging parents in the infant and toddler groups to consider nappy use strategies which are environmentally friendly or have minimal environmental impact.

Sustainable Cleaning Practices

Heritage will:

- Seek to minimise the use of chemicals in the education and care environment.
- Research and implement cleaning and maintenance procedures that are sustainable and environmentally friendly, where safe to do so.



- Utilise where possible natural or chemical-free options that are sensitive to the needs of educators and children with allergies.
- Consider sustainable practice when they are cleaning and reflect on their practices.
- Access professional development, journals and respected online sources for ideas on environmentally friendly cleaning options.
- Use soapy water for daily cleaning of tables, nappy change surfaces, mouthed toys and general spills both indoors and outside. The soapy water can be made from pH Neutral detergent (such as Useall) diluted in water and stored in a labelled spray bottle out of reach of children.
- Consider the use of:
 - Vinegar and water as an alternate to disinfectant for cleaning the bathrooms and nappy change mats throughout the day. The vinegar and water can be made in a labelled spray bottle with equal parts of white vinegar and water.
 - Bicarbonate of Soda (made into a paste) to replace Jif and Gumption.
 - Lemon juice as an alternate to bleach.
 - Borax as an alternate to bleach, disinfectant and insect sprays.
 - Bees wax as an alternate to furniture and floor polish.

Refer to: Hygiene and Infection Control Policy

Communication

Heritage co-ordinators will:

- Regularly provide information to families on sustainable practices that are implemented at Heritage.
- Ensure ideas are shared between educators, children and families about sustainability, its implementation and relevant resources at parent meetings, through emails, newsletters and conversations.

Related Policies

Name	Location
Communication and Family Involvement Policy	Policy Manuals in Main Office,
Curriculum and Program Planning Policy	Front Entrance and Staff
Food Safety Policy (Food from Home)	Programming Room.
Nutrition and Oral Hygiene Policy	Policy and Procedures on
Hygiene and Infection Control Policy	website - Members Area
Pets and Animals Policy	Heritage Handbook
	Educator Handbooks

References and Further Reading

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (2018). *Guide to the National Quality Framework.*

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-03/Guide-to-the-NQF_0.pdf

Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009)

<http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011 (ACT). *Effective: 1 January 2018.*

<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2011-42/current/pdf/2011-42.pdf>

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (ACT). *Current Version 1 Feb 2018.*

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT). **WHS ACT 2011:**

<https://legislation.act.gov.au/a/2011-35/>

City of Canterbury Council NSW. (2010). *Sustainability Education for Childcare Centres: Little Green Steps Report.* <http://www2.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/LittleGreenSteps/little-green-steps-report.pdf>

ACECQA Resources for meeting Quality Area 3.3: Sustainable Practices and Environmental Responsibility

- [Opportunities for learning in natural spaces](#)
- [Climbing the little green steps](#)
- [Quality area three – Physical Environment case studies](#)
- [Greening Services – Practical Sustainability](#)
- [Everyday learning about being green](#)
- [‘It will be a wasteland if we don’t recycle’—Sustainability and intentional teaching in early childhood](#)
- [How to series - create the perfect play space Learning Environments for Young Children](#)
- [Heuristic Play Materials: Unstructured play materials for infants and toddlers](#)
- [Environmental education for kids in care](#)
- [Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments: Visions and Values](#)
- [Climate change and its impact on young children](#)
- [Embedding Sustainable Practices video – part 1 of 3](#)
- [Embedding Sustainable Practices video – part 2 of 3](#)
- [Embedding Sustainable Practices video – part 3 of 3](#)

Links for further information:

- [Australian Association for Environmental Education \(AEE\)](#)
- [NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network \(NSW ECEEN\)](#)
- [Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network \(QECSN\)](#)
- [Environmental Education in Early Childhood \(EEEC Victoria\)](#)

Version Control and Change History

Version Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Authors and Amendments
1	19/04/2016	Heritage Management Committee	Authors: Theja Talagune and Julia Charters New Policy to meet National Quality Standard 3.3
2	April 2019	Director	No changes
2	2018, 2019, 2020	ACTSmart Business Recycling	Accreditation received from ACTSmart
3	April 2019	Director	Minor edits to wording.
4	March 2021	Director	Updated all links and references. No changes in policies and procedures

Refer over-page to:

Appendix 1: National Regulations

Appendix 2: National Quality Standards

Appendix 3: Sustainability Questions from Guide to the National Quality Standard

Appendix 1: Relevant National Regulations and Quality Standards

National Regulation 168 Policies and Procedures

- (2) Policies and procedures are required in relation to the following—
- (i) staffing, including—
 - (l) governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records;

National Regulation 73: Educational program

- (1) This Part applies in relation to the program (the educational program) that is required to be delivered under section 168 of the Law to a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service.
- (2) An educational program is to contribute to the following outcomes for each child—
- (a) the child will have a strong sense of identity;
 - (b) the child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world;**
 - (c) the child will have a strong sense of wellbeing;
 - (d) the child will be a confident and involved learner;
 - (e) the child will be an effective communicator.

National Quality Standard, Quality Area 3: Physical environment

Standard 3.3: The service takes an active role in caring for its' environment and contributes to a sustainable future. *(Nominated Supervisor, Room Leaders, Educators).*

- Element 3.3.1: Sustainable practices are embedded in the service operations.
- Element 3.3.2: Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Standard 6.1: Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained. *(Nominated Supervisor, Room Leader, Educators).*

- Element 6.1.2: Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
- Element 6.1.3: Current information about the service is available to families.

Standard 6.3: The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing. *(Nominated Supervisor, Room Leaders).*

- Element 6.3.1: Links with relevant community support agencies are established and maintained.
- Element 6.3.4: the service builds relationships and engages with their local community.

Quality Area 7: Leadership and service management

Standard 7.1: Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community. *(Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Educational Leader).*

- Element 7.1.4: a suitably qualified and experienced educator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.

Standard 7.2: There is a commitment to continuous improvement. *(Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor).*

Element 7.2.1: a statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operations.



Appendix 3: Guide to the National Quality Standard (p.100): Sustainability Questions

- How do our policies and practices promote children’s understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment (day to day and for long-term sustainability) and promote the development of life skills, such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling?
- What strategies can we implement to ensure educators foster children’s capacity to:
 - value and respect the broader environment and be world-wise?
 - understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land?
- What environmentally sustainable practices already exist in the service? How are children involved in these?
- How do we as educators model environmentally friendly and sustainable practices?
- How do we highlight our responsibilities for a sustainable future and promote children’s understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment?
- Where could we go to access more information, ideas and strategies to incorporate in our educational program that will support our children to take an active role in caring for the environment and contributing to a sustainable future?
- What messages are given to children about what is valued at the service through the environment, materials and resources and how they are maintained?