



**WINTON SHIRE COUNCIL
LITTLE SWAGGIES CHILD CARE CENTRE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY
POLICY & PROCEDURE**

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DRAFT

POLICY STATEMENT

Winton Shire Council (WSC) Little Swaggies Child Care Centre endeavours to ensure the environment is clean, safe and well maintained at all times. We will strive to educate children, families and educators on environmental sustainability and responsibility through daily conversations, interactions and the provision of resources.

We aim to develop community connections to support our journey to create an environmentally sustainable service where children are engaged in identifying and implementing sustainable steps not just at our service but in the wider community. We are committed to promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the natural environment and minimising our impact on the planet.

SCOPE

Winton Shire Council endeavours to look at sustainability holistically across the service and aims to:

- Make sustainability a key component of the service's philosophy and quality improvement planning process, and seek commitment from children, educators and families.
- Give children a sense of ownership. Ask them for ideas and get their participation.
- Commit to actions that are realistic and that people are motivated about. Consider experience, knowledge, budget and resource constraints.
- Involve other people, groups and organisations in the building of the program. Consider ways to show them the results of their contributions and acknowledge their support."¹

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 honoring life and wonders that the world holds.

Examples of practices services use include engaging children in:

- *observing and caring for various animals, such as fish, reptiles and insects*
- *implementing water conservation mechanisms such as timers, stickers visible on taps, putting out buckets to collect rainwater*
- *taking responsibility for turning off lights and fans before going outdoors*
- *caring for worm farms and using the jars of "worm juice" collected by children as fertiliser to use at home*
- *sorting and recycling waste after meals and encouraging the use of reusable containers to store snacks and meals*
- *creating garden patches, allowing children to participate in growing fruit, flowers or vegetables.*

For infant and toddler groups, implementing sustainable practices could involve making considered decisions about the nappies to use and looking at options that are environmentally friendly or have minimal environmental impact. Consideration could also be given to choosing environmentally friendly cleaning products and procedures. ACECQA recently spoke with educators who undertake gardening with their infants and toddlers, watering plants, picking strawberries, with educators and children modelling sustainable practice for younger children.

¹ "A 'green' thumbs up to sustainable programs" ACECQA We Hear You (accessed on-line Feb 2021) <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2013/02/25/a-green-thumbs-up-to-sustainable-programs/>

In order to be empowering, sustainability programs should be positively focused and affirmative. They should emphasise the child's ability to make a difference. These programs enable children to learn and appreciate their environment in an engaging, fun and exciting manner.”²

The National Quality Standards (NQS) 2018, cover Environmental Responsibility in element 3.2.3 – “The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

“Education and care settings are places where children learn about self, others and the world, including environmental responsibility. Services play a role in helping children develop an understanding and respect for the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 13; Framework for School Age Care, p. 15). Children develop positive attitudes and values by engaging in sustainable practices, watching adults around them model sustainable practices, and working together with educators to show care and appreciation for the natural environment (Hughes, 2007).

Element (3.2.3) aligns sustainable operations within the service and children's learning about environmental responsibility. Environments and resources can emphasise accountability and advocacy for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment on a day to day and long-term basis (Framework for School Age Care, p. 15). This is particularly relevant for school age care environments as children's depth of understanding of these concepts develops.

“Learning about sustainability starts with everyday practice. Babies and toddlers can begin by watching adults model these behaviours. They may learn through song or rhyme as adults verbalise what they are doing. Children over three can begin to reason why practices are needed and to understand the impact that their actions have on the planet.

PROCEDURE

Responsibilities of Leadership, Management, Nominated Supervisors and Responsible Persons:

- Positively and clearly communicate all aspects of the policy and encourage educators, families and children to participate across the service.
- Understand and comply with all aspects of this policy and related legislation and support team members to do the same.
- Lead a culture of reflection and regular review of policies, seeking feedback from educators, families, children and other community agencies and professionals as appropriate.
- Where possible, ensure fixtures and fittings contribute to energy and water saving.
- Purchase water and energy efficient appliances and resources where practical.
- Communicate the services commitment and strategies with families and other key stakeholders.
- Lead the team in conducting sustainability audits to identify areas for improvement and work collaboratively to set goals and targets for the service, involving families, children and community.
- Ensuring purchasing and resources are as environmentally sustainable as is practicable
- Ensure plants are well maintained and take steps to ensure poisonous or dangerous plants are not introduced.
- Connect with council and other agencies to support the work of educators and invite others to contribute to both learning programs and environments.
- Role model sustainable practices and encourage others to take initiative.
- Provide ongoing professional development and resources to support educators.

² “We Hear You Blog – Taking an active role in the environment and promoting a sustainable future” ACECQA <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2014/06/12/taking-an-active-role-in-the-environment-and-promoting-a-sustainable-future/> (accessed on-line Feb 2021)

- Use electronic storage where possible to reduce paper.

Responsibilities of Educators and Other Team Members:

- Be proactive in fulfilling the requirements of this service policy and related legislative requirements.
- Seek further guidance where required to fulfil your requirements.
- Report any concerns or non-compliance immediately to the Nominated Supervisor or WSC Management.
- Participate in the review of documents and provide constructive feedback to the Nominated Supervisor or WSC Management.
- Support families, children and each other to be sustainable both at the service and at home.
- Where practicable collect and re-use food scraps.
- Be actively involved in identifying current sustainable practices and promoting these with children and families.
- Make sustainable practices a part of the daily routine and embedded in educational programs.
- Encourage other educators, families and children to engage in innovative practices and appreciate the wonder of the natural world while protecting the planet for future generations.
- Provide information to families on sustainable practices that are implemented at the service and encourage families to apply these practices within their own home environment.
- Discuss sustainable practices with the children and families at the service.
- Share ideas between educators, children and families about sustainable ideas, implementation and resources.
- *Support children to care for the environment and be involved in watering and weeding of gardens.*
- Role model and encourage energy conservation practices through turning lights, appliances, fans and air conditioners off when these are not needed.
- Role model and encourage water conservation practices such as; emptying water play activities onto the garden areas, where possible harvesting water and reducing water wastage in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Create and support environments which allow children to safely explore insects and animals in their habitats.
- Use different ways to incorporate animals and plants into the program to support children's understanding of ecology and the environment.
- Create spaces that promote the development of life skills such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling.
- Support and encourage children to recycle food scraps and minimise their wastage of food and water.
- Critically reflect on and participate in discussions to improve practices.
- Provide access to natural items and experiences within both indoor and outdoor environments.

Responsibilities of Families:

- Fulfil responsibilities under this policy and related legislative requirements.
- Understand that the service must take steps as required under legislative requirements and follow advise from recognised authorities.
- Participate in the review of documents and provide constructive feedback to the Nominated Supervisor or WSC Management.
- Discuss any questions with the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person in charge.
- Support the services sustainable practices by contributing items, time or skills.
- Encourage a continuation of sustainable learning in the home and share with educators.

COMMUNICATION

- Educators and families will have access to this policy at all times.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY – POLICY & PROCEDURE

- Educators and families will be provided with opportunities to be involved in the review of this policy.
- Professional development opportunities and resources will be provided to educators where possible to assist them to meet the goal of this policy.

ENFORCEMENT

The Failure of any person to comply with this policy in its entirety may lead to:

- Termination or modification of child enrolment
- Restriction of access to the service
- Performance management of an employee which may lead to termination

RELATED POLICIES AND FORMS

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Sustainability Audit
- Sustainability Plan Template

LEGISLATION, RECOGNISED AUTHORITIES AND SOURCES

The following documents were considered in the development of the Policy:

- “*Guide to the National Quality Framework*” Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority September 2020
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (version February 2021)*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations (version Oct 2020)*
- *National Quality Standards*
 - 3.2.3 *Environmentally Responsible*
- “Little Green Steps - Sustainability Education for Childcare Centres” NSW Government Environmental Trust
- “A ‘green’ thumbs up to sustainable programs” ACECQA We Hear You (accessed on-line Feb 2021) <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2013/02/25/a-green-thumbs-up-to-sustainable-programs/>
- “We Hear You Blog – Taking an active role in the environment and promoting a sustainable future” ACECQA <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2014/06/12/taking-an-active-role-in-the-environment-and-promoting-a-sustainable-future/> (accessed on-line Feb 2021)

CEO DISCRETION

Where applicable, the CEO can apply his discretion as to the enforcement of the procedures outlined in this policy.

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy remains in force until amended or repealed by resolution of Council. This document will be review biannually or as required.

RECORD OF AMENDMENTS and ADOPTIONS			
DATE	REVISION NO	REASON FOR AMENDMENT	ADOPTED BY COUNCIL
October 2021	V1.0	Preparation for Council Adoption	Month YYYY