



## ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY:

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

## PURPOSE

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This policy outlines Essential Early Learning's commitment to embedding environmental sustainability into all aspects of our service. We believe that caring for the environment is fundamental to the education and wellbeing of young children. By modelling and promoting sustainable practices, we aim to nurture children who are environmentally aware, responsible, and connected to the natural world.

Our service will:

- Embed sustainable practices into daily operations and the learning program
  - Provide children with meaningful opportunities to connect with, explore, and care for natural environments
  - Reduce our ecological footprint through conscious resource management
  - Involve families and the community in our sustainability journey
  - Continuously review and improve our environmental practices
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## SCOPE

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This policy applies to:

- All children enrolled at the service
  - The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and staff
  - Students on placement, volunteers and visitors
  - Families of enrolled children
  - All areas of the service premises, indoor and outdoor environments, and excursion activities
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## LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

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This policy is based on the following legislation and standards:

### **Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010**

- Section 167: Protection from harm and hazards

### **Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011**

- Regulation 103: Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
- Regulation 105: Furniture, materials and equipment
- Regulation 110: Outdoor space — natural environment
- Regulation 113: Outdoor space — shade
- Regulation 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures

### **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
- 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

### **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF v2.0)**

- Outcome 2: Children are connected to and contribute to their world
- Outcome 2.4: Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment

### **Other Relevant Legislation:**

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (NSW)
- Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001 (NSW)

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## **KEY DEFINITIONS**

**Sustainability:** Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Natural Environment:** Outdoor areas that incorporate natural elements such as gardens, soil, plants, water features, sand, rocks and other natural materials.

**Ecological Footprint:** The measure of human demand on the earth's ecosystems and natural resources.

**Resource Conservation:** The ethical use and protection of valuable resources, including energy, water, and materials, to prevent waste and depletion.

**Waste Minimisation:** The process of reducing the amount of waste produced by a person or service at source, prioritising reuse and recycling.

**Biophilic Design:** Design that incorporates natural elements and environments into spaces to strengthen the connection between children and nature.

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **1. Commitment to Environmental Sustainability**

Essential Early Learning is committed to operating in an environmentally responsible manner. We recognise that early childhood is a critical time for forming values, attitudes, and behaviours towards the natural world. Our service actively promotes environmental sustainability through our curriculum, daily routines, physical environment, and community partnerships.

### **2. Sustainable Service Operations**

#### **Energy Conservation:**

- Switch off lights, fans, heaters, and air conditioning when rooms are not in use
- Use natural light and ventilation wherever possible
- Select energy-efficient appliances and equipment when replacing or purchasing
- Involve children in monitoring and discussing energy use as a learning opportunity

#### **Water Conservation:**

- Install water-saving devices on taps and hoses where practicable

- Collect and reuse rainwater for watering gardens where possible
- Teach children water-saving habits during handwashing and outdoor play
- Promptly report and repair dripping taps or leaking fixtures

**Waste Minimisation:**

- Implement a three-bin system: general waste, recycling, and organic/compost
- Reduce single-use plastics and disposable items across the service
- Repurpose and reuse materials for arts, crafts, and loose parts play
- Use both sides of paper and opt for digital communication where appropriate
- Maintain a compost bin or worm farm to manage food and organic waste

**3. Natural and Sustainable Physical Environment**

**Indoor Environment:**

- Use non-toxic, environmentally friendly cleaning and hygiene products
- Source furniture, equipment, and resources made from sustainable or recycled materials where possible
- Incorporate natural materials (wood, stone, shells, fabric) into the learning environment
- Display nature-inspired artwork and living plants indoors

**Outdoor Environment:**

- Maintain a garden area where children participate in planting, growing, and harvesting
- Incorporate a range of natural elements: grass, sand, soil, water, rocks, logs, and plants
- Provide shade through natural planting as well as built shade structures
- Avoid the use of toxic chemicals, pesticides, or herbicides in outdoor spaces
- Support biodiversity by planting native species where possible

**4. Environmental Sustainability in the Curriculum**

Educators will embed environmental sustainability throughout the curriculum by:

- Planning intentional learning experiences that connect children with nature (e.g. gardening, nature walks, weather observation)
- Embedding sustainability concepts into everyday routines such as meal times, outdoor play, and transitions
- Documenting children's growing environmental awareness in learning portfolios and displays
- Using the outdoor environment as a dynamic, integrated learning space
- Encouraging children's own ideas and initiatives in environmental projects
- Reading books and viewing resources that promote environmental values
- Celebrating environmental events such as Clean Up Australia Day, Earth Hour, and National Tree Day

**5. Sourcing and Procurement**

When purchasing resources, consumables, and equipment, the service will:

- Prioritise products with environmental certifications or eco-credentials
- Choose locally produced items where possible to reduce transport emissions
- Source second-hand, donated, or repurposed materials where suitable

- Avoid products with excessive packaging
- Evaluate the lifecycle and disposal impact of new purchases

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Approved Provider / Nominated Supervisor:**

- Maintain and review this policy at least every two years
- Allocate resources and support for sustainable practices
- Ensure the physical environment meets NQS Quality Area 3 requirements
- Model environmental leadership and embed sustainability in service culture

### **Educators and Staff:**

- Implement sustainable practices in daily routines and the curriculum
- Role-model environmentally responsible behaviour for children
- Attend relevant professional development on environmental sustainability
- Share sustainability documentation in portfolios and displays

### **Children:**

- Are active participants in sustainable practices appropriate to their age and development
- Are supported to develop a sense of agency and responsibility for the environment

### **Families and Community:**

- Are informed of the service's sustainability practices and invited to contribute
- Are encouraged to reinforce learning and sustainable practices at home
- May be involved in community garden projects, donation drives, or environmental events

## **7. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

Our service will:

- Conduct an annual environmental review of energy, water, and waste practices
- Set measurable sustainability goals and track progress over time
- Include environmental sustainability as a standing item in team meetings
- Seek feedback from families, educators, and children on sustainability initiatives
- Document improvements in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) under Quality Area 3

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## **RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy
- Sun Safety Policy

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## **REFERENCES AND RESOURCES**

- ACECQA: Guide to the National Quality Framework

- Early Years Learning Framework v2.0 (EYLF) — Outcome 2
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- ACECQA website: [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- NSW Department of Education: [www.education.nsw.gov.au](http://www.education.nsw.gov.au)
- NSW Environment Protection Authority: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)
- Planet Ark / Clean Up Australia: [www.planetark.org](http://www.planetark.org)
- Earth Hour Australia: [www.earthhour.org.au](http://www.earthhour.org.au)

## POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently if required due to:

- Legislative changes
- Changes in best practice
- Changes to the service's physical environment or resources
- Incidents or concerns related to environmental practices
- Feedback from families, educators or regulatory authority
- Following a regulatory assessment and rating visit

<b>Date policy was last reviewed:</b>	23/03/2026
<b>Date for next review:</b>	23/03/2028
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Director and Staff