

# The Briars Preschool

## Environmental Sustainability Policy

Best Practice – Quality Area 3

### PURPOSE

To recognise the importance of our role as a community organisation that promotes awareness and action towards caring for the world we leave our children. This policy will provide guidelines to assist our Preschool to take an active role in caring for the environment, and promotion and contributing to a sustainable future.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### 1. VALUES | AIMS & OBJECTIVES

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At The Briars we are committed to environmental sustainability.

We understand that people are a part of nature and are not separate to it. Building such understanding into our curriculum and activities supports children as they grow and become active, responsible members of society.

We strive for a fun, enriching learning environment that promotes our view that how we live today should not make it difficult for people to live well in the future.

We aim for our Preschool program to reflect the importance of the natural environment for children's growth, development, and future.

At The Briars we are committed to the following aims and objectives:

- To promote environmentally sustainable practices
- To implement strategies for environmental sustainability
- To value and respect the role of the natural environment in children's learning and development
- To work with our Preschool community and local Council

We strive to review all processes within the Preschool to make them align with these goals.

#### 2. SCOPE

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This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parent/guardian, children and others attending the programs and activities of Preschool.

### 3. BACKGROUND & LEGISLATION

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#### 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. It is important for children to understand their place in the world and the role that they can play in protecting the environment. Children should learn to be environmentally responsible and be empowered to make a difference, and this learning should not wait until the ‘formal education’ of primary school. 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 meaningful way which will ultimately promote action for sustainability”.

Environmental education can be defined as learning about the environment and how natural system function; the interconnectedness of plants, animals, humans and the planet we inhabit. Environmental education promotes the growth of knowledge, skills and values about the environment, often with a focus 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 broader and more holistic context of education for the environment. The complexities of social, environmental and economic systems are acknowledged, and their implications for sustaining life are considered. The aim of sustainability education is to promote a sense of responsibility, respect, empowerment, active participation, enquiry and a desire for social change (adapted from ECA Environmental Sustainability Policy). The goal of sustainability education is to empower children and adults to think and act in ways that meet their immediate needs without jeopardising the potential of future generations to meet *their* own needs. 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 taking an 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*
  - Concept 3.2.3: The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

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The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the General Definitions section of this manual.

Environmental sustainability: The responsible use and management of the planet's resources to ensure that they remain available and uncompromised for future generations to use and enjoy.

## 5. SOURCES

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- Seedlings Project: <https://www.facebook.com/seedlingEYEFs>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework#key%20documents>
- Davis, J.M. and Elliott, S. (2004) Mud pies and daisy chains: Connecting young children and nature. In *Every Child*, 10(4) p4. Available at: [http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/every\\_child/ec0404\\_mudpies.pdf](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/every_child/ec0404_mudpies.pdf)
- *Early Childhood Australia*: [http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource\\_themes/](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource_themes/)
- 'Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: <http://docs.education.gov.au/documents/educators-guide-early-years-learning-framework-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](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*: [www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm)
- *Victorian Early years Learning and Development Framework – Resources for Professionals*: [www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm)

## PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- collaborating with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, parent/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation
- allocating the necessary resources to implement the identified environmental sustainability strategies at the service
- ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- seeking and applying for grants, where appropriate, to support the implementation of strategies within this policy
- ensuring parent/guardians are aware of, and have access to, the *Environmental Sustainability Policy*

Staff are responsible for:

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, parents/guardians, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service
- implementing identified strategies for which they have responsibility at the service
- engaging in activities that support the service to become more environmentally sustainable (e.g. recycling)
- role modelling sustainable practices to children and families
- incorporating environmental education and sustainable practices within the curriculum

- planning opportunities for children to connect with nature and the natural world at the service, including on excursions and at other service events
- incorporating celebrations of environmental awareness into the program e.g. National Tree Day, National Recycling Week, Clean Up Australia
- visiting other services known for their exemplary sustainability practices
- keeping up to date with current research, resources and best practice through professional development, newsletters, journals and support agencies such as Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC).
- ongoing reflection about everyday practices and their impact on the environment
- providing families with information about environmentally sustainable practices e.g. through displays, fact sheets and local community resources, and by ensuring that families have access to the Environmental Sustainability Policy

Parent/guardians are responsible for:

- collaborating with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, children and others at the service to identify environmental sustainability strategies for implementation at the service
- following the strategies identified and outlined in this *Environmental Sustainability Policy*

**Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.**

## EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider of The Briars Preschool will:

- regularly 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 service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parent/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures

## AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of The Briars Preschool on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## REVIEW DATE

August 2022