

# Sustainability Policy



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<b>Warning - Ensure you are using the latest version of this policy.</b>			
DCC Network/All Organisation Information/DCC Policies/Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment			

## 1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education has a commitment to supporting a healthy, just and vibrant future for children by understanding and implementing environmental, social and economic sustainability practices, strategically, operationally and in educational program and practice.

## 2. Rationale

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) identifies sustainability as a principle that supports children’s interest in the world, their capacity to advocate for positive change and their understanding of their citizenship, and rights and responsibilities as members of local and global communities. This policy provides guidance as to how the organisation will implement sustainable practices in operations and integrate sustainability into educational programs and routines.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers, including students and trainees.

## 4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to:

- Promote environmental, social and economic sustainability in operational planning and practice, including preference for renewable energy, energy efficient equipment, goods made from recycled content, carbon neutral products, and segregation of waste where feasible, and
- Support services to implement environmental, social and economic sustainability practices, including conserving resources, reducing consumption and waste, segregating recycling, and supporting children’s understanding.

It is the responsibility of the Business Services Manager to:

- Consider suppliers’ carbon emissions, emission reduction or carbon neutrality plans and actions, actions on climate change, and transport distance before procurement,
- Support the General Manager to identify equipment, goods and suppliers that are local, energy efficient, use recycled content, support renewable energy, and reduce the organisation’s carbon footprint,
- Support the Toy Library Coordinator to contribute to environmental and economic sustainability by promoting borrowing rather than buying toys, supporting services to borrow toys, purchasing toys that are robust and made from natural materials where possible, and repairing and recycling toys where possible, and
- Support the administration team to implement environmental and economic sustainability practices, including conserving resources, reducing consumption and waste, segregating recycling, and recycling uniforms.

It is the responsibility of Nominated Supervisors to:

## *Sustainability Policy*

- Implement environmental and economic sustainability practices in their service, including conserving resources, reducing consumption and waste, and segregating recycling,
- Support educators to understand their responsibilities with implementing environmental and economic sustainability practices,
- Support Educational Leaders to integrate environmental, social and economic sustainability in educational programs and practice, and
- Support educators to integrate environmental, social and economic sustainability in daily routines, intentional teaching, play-based learning, and program and experiences.

It is the responsibility of educators to:

- Seek an understanding of their responsibilities with implementing sustainability practices in their service,
- Encourage children to develop appreciation of the natural world, understand people's impact on the natural world, and the interdependence between people, animals, plants, lands and waters,
- Create sustainable practices with children by supporting them to take an active role in caring for the environment and to consider ways they can contribute to a sustainable future,
- Support children to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and rich sustainable practices of looking after Country,
- Support children to appreciate that sustainability embraces social and economic sustainability as well as environmental sustainability and to engage with concepts of social justice, fairness, sharing, democracy and citizenship, and
- Provide information to families on sustainable practices that are implemented at the education and care service and encourage the application of these practices in the home environment.

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- Conserve energy and water where possible, including the efficient use of heating and cooling appliances, turning off lights and power when not needed, ensuring taps and hoses are not left unattended during use, and using water from play experiences on gardens,
- Conserve resources through careful use, cleaning and storage,
- Minimise the purchase of equipment and items that contain plastics and no recycled content nor natural material and fibres or are single use unless required for children's health and safety, and the use of paper and plastic where possible, including when printing and laminating documents,
- Separate recyclables and use segregated waste systems,
- Recycle their uniform items when they are no longer needed or not wearable or return them to the organisation for reuse or recycling, and
- Reduce carbon emissions when travelling to work where possible, including walking, bike riding and carpooling.

## **5. Definitions**

**Sustainability** – defined by the EYLF 2.0 as seeking to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations and spanning three interconnected dimensions of environmental, social and economic that are necessary for a sustainable world.

## Sustainability Policy

**Environmental sustainability** - focuses on helping children to recognise they are part of ecosystems and have a role to play in preserving, protecting and improving the environment.

**Social sustainability** - addresses issues of social justice and equity, respect for diversity and inclusion, active citizenship and sense of community.

**Economic sustainability** - focuses on fair and equitable access to resources, conserving resources and reducing consumption and waste.

**Carbon footprint** – the total amount of greenhouse gases that are generated by the actions of an entity through activities, use of fossil fuels, and consumption of resources. Emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels is understood to be the largest contributor to climate change.

**Carbon neutral** – balancing the amount of greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere with the amount taken away, for example through reforestation and investment in renewable energy.

## 6. Guidelines

### a) Sustainability in educational programs and practice

Children and families are supported to understand environmental, social and economic sustainability by:

- Involving children in an annual sustainability audit (*NQS3.21A Sustainability Audit Tool*),
- Connecting children to nature through art and play and allowing them to experience the natural environment, for example through natural materials like wood, stone sand and recycled materials, plants including native vegetation, trickle streams or ponds, nesting boxes, nature walks, and gardening and growing plants and flowers from seed,
- Engaging children in learning about the food cycle, including growing, harvesting, and cooking food, and the use of food waste for compost and worm farms,
- Engaging children in learning about social justice and equity, respect for diversity and inclusion, and active citizenship and community, for example using resources that reflect diverse experiences, demonstrating inclusive behaviour, partnerships with community groups, and intentional teaching about social justice,
- Including water and energy conservation, waste reduction, and caring for resources in programs, daily routines, planned and unplanned experiences, and intentional teaching,
- Partnering with community organisations with expertise in sustainability, for example Aboriginal organisations, environmental conservation groups and community gardens,
- Celebrating events that support sustainability, for example Nature Play Week, World Environment Day, NAIDOC Week, and Walk/Ride to School Day, and
- Sharing information with families about sustainability.

### b) Sustainability in operations

The organisation supports environmental, social and economic sustainability by:

- Considering the environmental and social impact of suppliers and goods and services during procurement,
- Using renewable energy and energy efficient equipment where possible,
- Implementing waste segregation systems where available,
- Supporting employees to minimise energy and water use and reduce waste, including paper and plastic use and waste, and
- Supporting employees to minimise the use of fossil fuels for transport where possible.

## 7. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Legislation	
Education and Care Services National Regulation	
National Quality Standards	
3.2.3	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.
Child Safe Standards	
Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes	
2	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Early Years Learning Framework Principles	
	Sustainability
Early Years Learning Framework Practices	
	Holistic, integrated, and interconnected approaches
	Responsiveness to children
	Play-based learning and intentionality
	Learning environments

## 8. Related Documents

Doc #	Attachments
NQS3.21A	Sustainability Audit Tool

Doc #	Intersections with other key documents
NQS5.38	Inclusion Policy
NQS1.10	Educational Program and Practice Policy

## 9. Document Control

Doc #	Doc Title	Version	Approved	Next Review
NQS3.21	Sustainability Policy	1	August 2012	May 2016
NQS3.21	Sustainability Policy	2	May 2018	May 2020
NQS3.21	Sustainability Policy	3	March 2020	March 2023
NQS3.21	Sustainability Policy (minor changes)	3a	January 2024	March 2023
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