



# Sustainability: think global, act local

## Sustainability

Meerilinga's strategy is based on taking an active role in caring for our environment and contributing to a sustainable future. (National Quality Standard, element 3.2.3) This means that all Meerilinga locations will promote sustainable practices in the immediate centre environment and beyond, and foster respect and care for the environment so that Children develop positive attitudes and values by engaging in learning experiences, joining in discussions that exploring solutions to the issues that we face, and watching adults around them model sustainable practices (EYLF Learning Outcome 2, Children are connected and contribute to our world).

*We will base our decisions and our practice on the principles for sustainability (Little Green Steps), including:*

- protecting biological diversity and ecological systems
- taking a precautionary and anticipatory approach to decisions and actions
- striving for social and inter-generational equity
- encouraging and providing for community participation
- encouraging wise use of resources
- promoting participation as an active and informed citizen through lifelong learning for a sustainable world
- embracing creative and innovative approaches to environmental problems.

*Our organisation's approach to sustainability is through:*

- governance that supports sustainability policies, procedures and programs
- curriculum that is developed and delivered on the principles of environmental education for sustainability
- responsive resource management and innovation, including utilities, facilities and environments
- partnerships, alliances and networks with families, government, communities and business
- evaluation of strategies and actions to reduce our ecological footprint

We will contribute to a sustainable society by working together, respecting culture and country, customs, social and environmental values. Living sustainably and making environmentally responsible decisions will leave a positive legacy for future generations.

## How are services develop and implement our environmental policy

We began by conducting an 'environmental audit' (Cool Australia, Learning for Life) of each service to determine what environmentally sustaining practices are already occurring. This helped staff and educators to consider practical ways to incorporate environmental education into children's experiences and celebrate what we were achieving already.

Over 2010 we conducted a 'Sustainability Audit' to discover what was working well and what needed improving. A grant opportunity presented through WACOSS to access the expertise of a Climate Change Readiness for Community Services assessment and the report identified 54 recommendations across our centres.

APPENDIX 1	
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS	
Report Section	Recommendation
Energy Resources Management Plan	1. Develop and implement an Energy Resources Plan, appointing one or more staff to this 'portfolio' who can read electricity and water meters, understand standby energy use and strategies to reduce use.
	Include average daily energy (units per day), water use (litres used) and transport (air travel in kilometres and car travel in litres used) in summary financial reports and organisational reports.
Insulation	2. Ensure that the reinstatement of insulation is a contract condition of any maintenance work.
Windows	3. Sink poles along north eastern fence line and draw removable shade cloth across to the roof.
	4. Attach retractable awnings to the eaves above the eastern and front windows exposed to direct sunlight.
	5. Extend natural vegetation cover along entire east side of building. Careful consideration of the plant(s) selected will yield the best results.
	6. Reassess the cost effectiveness of fixing the centres artificial louvers.
Ventilation	7. Replace venetian blinds with a more effective type of blind or curtain.
	8. Create easy to follow window schedule that ensures that windows are closed and covered when exposed to direct summer sunlight and opened back up when cool breezes arrive.
	9. Consider fitting security grills or dead bolts to opened windows if deemed necessary.
Heat Loss and Gain	10. Ensure that all doorways can be fully closed and check window seals for air leaks.
	11. Draught seal windows where appropriate.
	12. Install exterior blinds or roller shutters to front windows to help reduce summer heat transfer from car park.
	13. Paint carpark with a lighter paint.

Figure 1: Recommendations from Audit



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## Roadmap of Priorities

Now we had this information it was important to record our priorities on our Quality Improvement Plans to map out our next steps.

We identified some recommendations could be easily achieved through integrating them into existing routines and systems to make change as easy as possible. Smaller recycling bins suitable for children's use are part of every centres décor and ensuring natural resources were available and environmental experiences were embedded into the curriculum. Learning was shared with families creating a ripple effect whereby children were 'change agents' for wider sustainability.

As with all policy development, the development of an environmental policy involved consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders, including children, families, staff, educators, the local community and, where appropriate, government and environmental advocacy organisations.

interests and ideas and the concept of 'Living Libraries' was formulated.

A significant part of our consultation included embedding cultural and community values, our social footprint. External consultants 'Natureplay' and educators engaged children and families. Our Family Support and Aboriginal Parenting Support teams engaged local culturally diverse and Aboriginal people. The CEO engaged with authorities and experts.

## Key areas identified by families and children

- Plant fruit trees, vegies and drought tolerant, native plants
- Remove fake soft-fall and plant green grass and mulch paths
- Include natural spaces for climbing, exploring and relaxing
- Create a garden of belonging that reflects local heritage of 'meeting place' and 'family'.
- Include pets.



Figure 2: Invitation to playground design consultations

We discussed with staff, children, families, local government and experts to find out their



Figure 3: Child's vision of their community play space

Children's concepts included natural and built spaces so some of their favourite built equipment needed to be retained or similar experiences incorporated into the design such as swings became hammocks. Artificial turf was replaced by fresh green lawn. Paths were recreated from being concrete to a range of natural products and textures. Some centres quickly opted for 'pets' that children could rear and care for.

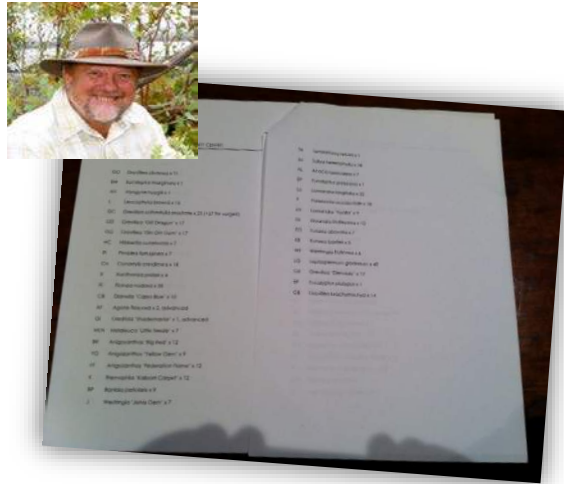


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Families identified natural play spaces and several designs were circulated before the final version was agreed.



Figure 3: Isabella thought there should be pets and grass in our centres



Staff raised costs of maintaining and watering gardens as a concern. We were very fortunate to have the expertise of Neville Passmore with over 47 years in the gardening industry, Neville is a passionate horticulturist and one of Western Australia's most recognised gardening identities today and generously assisted with developing a list of local species of drought hardy and 'child friendly' plants to create our living library concept.

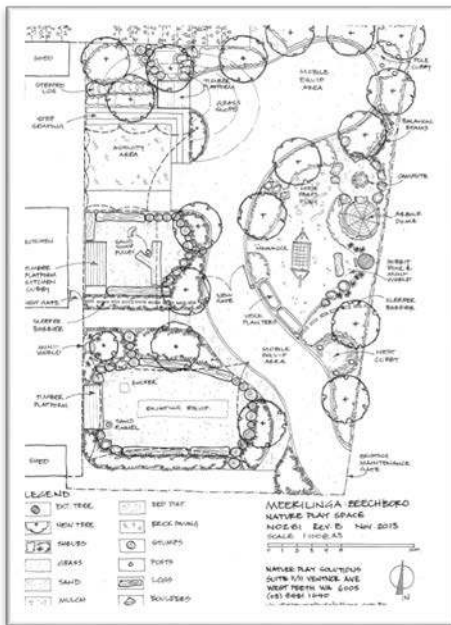


Figure 4: Final plan for Meerilinga Beechboro Nature Play Space



Figure 5: Local Aboriginal Elders identify the historical importance of family and a meeting place





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Figure 10: Local stories as told and painted by local families are proudly at the entry to our centre

## Linking Evidence to Practice

Our environmental perspective in planning for children involves translating the knowledge staff and educators possess of children's development and environmental education into challenging and appropriate learning opportunities. Some ways that children are introduced to environmentally sustainable practice include:

- Engaging children in one to one and small group discussions about sustainable practices. The discussions may be prompted by things as simple as children observing the local council recycling truck on collection day, noting how full a garbage bin is or noticing the food and scraps that are left over.
- Encouraging children to participate in any established recycling program at the service, or involving them in developing implementing new strategies for recycling materials.
- For example, using materials donated from families for art and craft or donating items to Santa's Workshop. These activities not only help children to learn about waste reduction within the service and community, they can also foster a sense of empathy and contributing and connecting to the wider community.



Figure 11: Children tend to the centre vegetables

## Supporting staff and carers to promote environmental education

Our staff and educators are able to access the necessary resources, education and support to enable them to effectively and confidently implement an environmentally focused education program. Programs such as 'Loose parts' and 'Little Green Steps' are encouraged. Staff and educators' daily interactions with children and families are an integral aspect of our successful environmental program and it is important that staff and educators are able to support these interactions with current information and knowledge about environmental issues.

When we developed our environmental program, consideration was given to the interests and needs of staff and educators. Ways to initiate and support staff and educators' interest include:

- Developing a staff and educators resource library which includes current information about environmental education and environmental issues in general.
- Approving and conducting staff and educator professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of environmental education in early education.
- Providing resources that staff and educators can use to enhance



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children's learning and experiences. For example, books, DVDs/videos, posters, puzzles, games

We adopt a collaborative approach to environmental programs in children's services and engage staff, educators and families in the development of sustainability plan.

We use a range of methods to include: meetings, discussion groups, questionnaires or surveys, appraisal programs and participation in the development and review of the service's philosophy and policies.

## Our Target

Today sustainable practices are incorporated across our organisation and in all our centre operations on a regular basis. *Sustainable practices* directly relate to our natural environment and our community.

*Centre operations* refers to how educators, children and families are continuously working together in our centre's daily routines and systems.



Figure 12: Nature play and environmental learning incorporated into daily sessions

From 2010 we have achieved many initiatives as follows:

- Installed nature play scapes in every centre
- Have recycling in children's rooms and centres
- Centralised printing
- Recycling paper stations
- Recycling ink cartridges stations

- Purchase/ received recycled materials/toys and equipment
- Replacing Fluorescent with LED lighting
- Replacing outdoor security lights with timers
- Replacing toilet cisterns with dual flush
- Replacing taps with slow flow
- Installed window tinting to north and west facing windows
- Replaced reticulation with timers and rain sensors
- Replaced gardens with water saving, drought resistant local species
- Donated unused items to other charities/services and recycling agencies
- Mulch

In 2018, we are furthering our efforts and have approached the Synergy Solar Community Fund to supply and install a SolarReturn Solar Power System. Our priorities will include:

- Commence installing solar systems
- Continue installing water flow reduction taps
- Developing our Intranet – to reduce paper

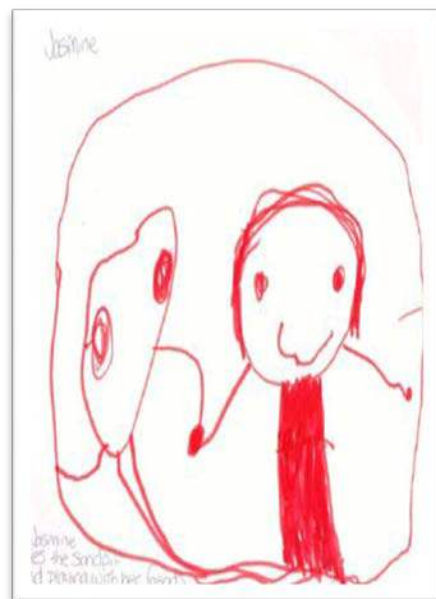


Figure 13: Jasmine can now play in a clean and safe sandpit with her friends