

Sustainability

Policy Statement

Our Early Learning Program aims to help children learn about and implement sustainable practices and foster respect and care for the living and non-living environment.

We encourage awareness of environmental responsibilities and implement practices that contribute to a sustainable future. Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

Policy Purpose

We aim to ensure the environment is safe, clean and sustainable. We believe in educating children about being environmentally responsible which is promoted through daily practices, resource and interactions. Sustainable practice will be encouraged within the service assisting children and families to become advocates for a sustainable future.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the service.

Exclusions

Policy Review

Biennial or from time to time when the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations and customer service.

Policy Reviewed	2 August 2022	By	Advisor Policy & Compliance
Approved By	CEO		
Previous Review	16 July 2020		

Implementation

Meerilinga's strategy for sustainability is based on taking an active role in caring for our environment and contributing to a sustainable future. This means that all locations will promote sustainable practices in the immediate Service 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 explore solutions to the issues that we face, and watching adults around them model sustainable practices.

We will base our decisions and our practice on the principles for sustainability, 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 organisations 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 government, communities and business
- Implementation and evaluation of strategies and actions to reduce our ecological footprint

Our goal is to empower children 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. 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.

Meerilinga implements education programs for water conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction and celebrating children's' environmental knowledge and sustainable activities.

Educators promote a holistic, open ended curriculum which explores ideas and practices for environmental sustainability and helps children understand the interdependence between people and the environment by connecting children to nature. Our learning through play program provides opportunities for children to engage with the natural environment through the use of wood, stone, sand and recycled materials, plants including native vegetation, insect hotels, vegetable/herb gardens, worm farms, small animals care such as chickens or rabbits and nature walks. Our educators model sustainable practices by embedding sustainability into all aspects of the daily running of our service operations.

Educators will:

- Incorporate recycling as part of everyday practice at the service. Recycling containers will be provided throughout experiences.
- Role model environmentally responsible practices.
- Discuss environmentally responsible practices with the children and families & local community as part of the curriculum.
- Provide information to families on environmentally responsible practices that are implemented at the service and encourage the application of these practices in the home environment.
- Share ideas between Educators, children and families about environmentally responsible ideas, implementation and resources. This will be followed through our communication strategies, including parent meetings, emails, newsletters and conversations.
- Use a worm farm/composting bin/ to reduce food waste in the service. Children will be encouraged to place food scraps into separate containers for use in the worm farm or composting bin. Educators will discuss with the children and families, which scraps worms can eat, which foods can be composted. The children will be involved in maintaining the worm farm and compost bin.
- Role model energy and water conservation practices of turning off lights and air-conditioning when a room is not in use, emptying water play containers onto garden areas.
- Seek to purchase equipment that is environmentally friendly where possible. Educators will reduce the amount of plastic and disposable equipment they purchase and select materials that are made of natural materials.
- Use the concept of 'reduce, re-use and recycle', which will become part of everyday practice for both children and Educators to build lifelong attitudes towards environmentally responsible practices.
- Turning off equipment and lights when not in use.
- Opting for the least hazardous cleaning substance appropriate for the situation, for example, ordinary detergent for cleaning dirt from tables and other surfaces.
- Composting.
- Caring for a vegetable/herb garden/ animals.
- Keeping up to date with current research, resources and best practice through professional development, newsletters, journals and support agencies such as Little Green Steps ReMida.
- Ongoing reflection about everyday practices and their impact on the environment.

Sustainable Practice	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling paper and rubbish - Using recycled water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planting vegetables, herbs and fruits - Establishing a Worm Farm - Give food scraps to worms or the animals - Educating children and have them participate in 'garden to plate' activities. Educating children about seed sprouting, weeding, vegetable gardens, cooking etc. - Collaborate with the local community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turn off lights and switches when not in use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using half flush on the toilet - Turning off the water when not in use - Encouraging shorter showers - Turning off tap when brushing teeth - Collect rain water and use in the garden, for water/sand play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Resources & Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caring for pets - Reusing natural materials – trees, blocks, boxes etc - Educating children in the natural decomposition cycle through exposure and participation in worm farms and composting food scraps - Educating children in how to care for pets, letting them actively participate in caring for the Service pets. - Plant 'bird attracting' plants and install a birdbath - Create a lizard lounge - Collaborate with wildlife educators to assist in educating children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Display in the foyer area information for families and visitors outlining the Service's sustainability journey - Provide families with hints and tips in newsletters about how they can become sustainable at home