



## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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### Quality Area 3

At Parkdale Preschool, we take an active role in caring for the environment, and promoting and contributing to a sustainable future. We believe in 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.

Parkdale Preschool is committed to:

- promoting respect for, and an appreciation of, the natural environment among all at the service
- fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment, and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
- supporting the development of positive attitudes and values in line with sustainable practices
- ensuring that educators and other staff engage in sustainable practices during the operation of the service.

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.

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.

Environmental education can be defined as learning *about* the environment and how natural systems 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.

## **Current Strategies for Sustainability and Environmental Education**

### **Waste**

- Use of individual cloth towels on named pegs located in the bathrooms and washed each week (both for staff and children) instead of paper towels.
- Encourage children to bring a rubbish-free lunch/snack in a reusable container.
- Recycle plastic waste, glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal.
- Compost food scraps and add to worm farm
- Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse within the educational program i.e. reduce, reuse, repair and recycle.
- Recycle paper (pulped, sieved and dried) with the children to be used again in the program

### **Energy**

- Turn lights off when not required. Install light sensors where possible.
- Close doors and windows when heating or air conditioning the building where possible, while maintaining adequate ventilation. Strategies must be developed for indoor-outdoor programs to enable this to occur.
- Turn off computers and electrical equipment before leaving the building.

### **Water**

- Set limits for water use during play, while acknowledging that water play is important and that children need to use water in order to learn how to conserve it.
- Water tank to capture rainwater for use in play and watering the garden.
- Ensure that water from troughs and bowls is reused to water the garden.
- Dual flush toilets.

### **Transport**

- Encourage children and families to walk, cycle or catch public transport to kinder, where possible.
- Create prominent, effective spaces for the storage of bikes and scooters to promote riding and walking to families.

### **Curriculum**

- Role-model sustainable practices and behaviours. Actions such as reusing water from a sink and switching off lights when not in use can have a large impact on young children, who are at a formative stage with respect to skills and attitudes.
- Aim to counteract the 'throwaway' mentality that children experience every day in relation to waste.
- Take every opportunity to talk with young children about sustainable practices, and encourage all children to take part in these practices.
- Use a range of pictures, books and stories that address environmental sustainability issues.
- Use improvised, recycled and natural materials for program activities.
- Label bins with pictures and colour-code to promote understanding in pre-literate children.
- Play recycling games to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled.

### **Family and community involvement**

- Inform families about the service's approach to environmental sustainability through information sessions, photo displays and newsletters etc.