

Strategies for Environmental Sustainability

This checklist can be used to promote discussion and formulate an environmental sustainability policy for the service. Many of these strategies were drawn from Mia Hughes' *Climbing the little green steps: How to promote sustainability within early childhood services in your local area* (refer to *Sources*). Other strategies can be added to the checklist as required – refer to *Sources* as a starting point for further information. Ensure that responsibility for implementation is allocated to each strategy adopted e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents/guardians, children etc. Agreed strategies should form the basis of the service's *Environmental Sustainability Policy*.

Strategy	Adopt (Yes/No)	Responsible for implementation (e.g. Nominated Supervisor, educators, etc.)
Data Collection		
Collect baseline data from energy and water bills, and monitor waste collection. Use information gathered to set reduction targets and evaluate whether they have been achieved.		
Green purchasing		
Purchase local products		
Purchase recycled products		
Purchase energy and water efficient products		
Purchase organic produce		
Purchase items with minimal packaging		
Purchase chemical-free, green cleaning products		
Purchase formaldehyde-free paint		
Waste		
Minimise waste from one-use, throwaway products (e.g. paper towels, wet wipes) by changing behaviours and procedures, and using alternative products. The following are some suggestions.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace paper towels with individual cloth towels on a peg located in the bathroom or at each child's locker, and washed each week. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install a low energy electric hand dryer. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut paper towels in half to reduce waste while working towards using cloth towels or installing a low energy electric hand dryer. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace wet wipes with washable cloths. 		
Encourage children to bring a rubbish-free lunch/snack in a reusable container.		

Adopt green cleaning practices by using safe and sustainable cleaning products and methods.		
Recycle plastic waste (codes #1–#7), glass, paper, cardboard, foil and metal.		
Investigate composting of food scraps.		
Explore the waste hierarchy of refuse within the educational program i.e. reduce, reuse, repair and recycle.		
Refrain from using food items for children's play experiences (e.g. rice, pasta, jelly etc.) as this is wasteful of both the food items, and the water and energy used in production.		
Promote recycling and reusing items e.g. through SWAP markets for children's clothing, toys and books.		
Energy		
Turn off computers and/or screens when not in use.		
Turn off computers and electrical equipment before leaving the building.		
Install and use ceiling fans instead of air conditioning, when appropriate.		
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 fridges that are not in use during extended holiday periods (ensure no food remains and the fridge is cleaned well beforehand).		
Turn lights off when not required. Install light sensors where possible.		
Upgrade old appliances with energy efficient appliances.		
Water		
Install 5,000–20,000 litre water tanks and consider connecting these to toilets.		
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.		
Ensure that water from troughs and bowls is reused to water the garden.		
Use grey water (containing low salt/phosphate detergents) to water grass and gardens when children are not in attendance at the service.		

Install water saving taps in children's bathrooms.		
Install dual flush toilets.		
Place buckets or watering cans next to drink stations to collect excess water.		
Biodiversity		
Grow food crops in vegetable gardens.		
Plant fruit trees.		
Grow a diverse range of plants, and develop children's understanding of how plant diversity encourages animal diversity.		
Grow indigenous (native) and water-wise plants.		
Water plants in the play space using recycled water where possible. Plants are a precious resource for the planet and should be protected and nurtured.		
Transport		
Encourage staff to walk, cycle or catch public transport to work and on excursions, where possible.		
Create prominent, effective spaces for the storage of bikes and prams to promote riding and walking to staff and 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 everyday in relation to waste.		
Take every opportunity to talk with young children about sustainable practices, and encourage older children to take part in these practices.		
Assign roles such as water, waste and energy monitors to children within the service (consider providing them with badges and charts appropriate to their role). Children are often vigilant at monitoring the behaviour of their peers.		
The curriculum offers many opportunities to explore sustainable issues and practices. The following are some suggestions.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an 'earth hour' each day where no lights/minimal lighting is used e.g. during rest, relaxation or sleep times. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of pictures, books and stories that address environmental sustainability issues. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have waste-free days. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use improvised, recycled and natural materials for program activities. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine damaged household appliances and explore whether they can be repaired. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a recycling game to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate alternatives to texta pens and liquid paint, such as powder paint and refillable markers or pencils. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) for more ideas. 		
Family and community involvement		
Inform families about this policy and the service's approach to environmental sustainability through information sessions, photo displays and newsletters etc.		
Design a poster outlining the key principles of environmental sustainability, for display in the foyer of the service. This may include a charter of principles and key targets to be achieved.		
Become involved in community events such as Earth Hour, World Environment Day and Clean Up Australia Day.		