SUSTAINABILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

In a world that’s changing quickly, our children need to develop knowledge, skills, and values that will help them address whatever the future brings. There can be few more pressing issues that the current state of the environment and the consequences for humankind, especially children. The choices that we make today will decide if living species (including humans) will thrive now and in the future. If we want children to have the best possible start in life, sustainability needs to be embedded in early childhood learning programs and practices.

⇒ Cool Australia Presents… Sustainability – https://vimeo.com/170282042/67d8e96dce

ABOUT STANDARD 3.3

National Quality Standard 3.3 requires a service to, “Take an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future”. This means that services promote sustainable practices in the immediate service environment and beyond, and “foster respect and care for the environment”. This aim of this standard is, “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”.

• Element 3.3.1 – Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.
• Element 3.3.2 – Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.


ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

In order to meet or exceed Standard 3.3, your service needs to be implementing an ‘environmental strategy’, which outlines your service’s plan for achieving its sustainability goals. It also needs to mention how staff, children and families will be involved. The environmental strategy needs to be listed in your service’s Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

An environmental strategy may also be listed in your service’s:
• Snapshot – this summary document shows how your service is tracking against the NQS
• Environment or Sustainability Policy
• Environment or Sustainability Plan – your service might already be working on a plan, which is saved in a separate document to your QIP.

ELEMENT 3.3.1
To meet Element 3.3.1, your service needs to show how it is incorporating sustainable practices in its service operations on a regular basis. Sustainable practices directly relate to our natural environment and our community. Service operations refers to how educators, children and families work together in your service’s routines and systems.

⇒ C&K Tewantin Community Childcare Centre – https://youtu.be/rnuVH-0nxa0

ELEMENT 3.3.2
When assessors come to evaluate your service for Element 3.3.2 of the NQS, they will want to find out whether your service is regularly supporting children, “to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment”.

⇒ Bonkers Beat Music Kinder and Childcare - https://vimeo.com/98419522

GETTING SUPPORT
You can support children to become responsible and respectful of the environment by involving them in the sustainable practices that are embedded in your service’s operations. This helps your service meet all requirements of National Quality Standard 3.3.
Here are some suggested steps:
• Conduct an audit – What is already working and what needs improving?
• Start a conversation – What would staff, children and families like your service to include in its sustainability program?
• Do some research – What support or case studies are already out there?
• Update your environmental strategy in your QIP – Where are the ‘easy wins’ and what be more challenging?
• Get started with routines and systems – How can you make it as easy as possible to embed sustainability into your routines?
• Celebrate achievements – How will people know what your sustainability program is achieving?

⇒ Sustainability Audit Tool – Community Childcare Association – http://bit.ly/2a7XeU0
⇒ Enviroweek – www.enviroweek.org

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