

Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Acacia Kindergarten is located on the North Hill of Mount Gambier, with views across the city and crater landscape. The kindergarten has embraced a culture of nature play, environmental education and supporting children's connection with the wider community landscape.

The purpose of this strategy is to support educators, children and their families to embed sustainable practices as an integral part of our daily program and lifestyle.



“Today’s young children represent the first of those future generations and this makes it important to us, as educators, to help them realise the significance of caring for and protecting their environment.” (NQS e-Newsletter No. 67)



Government of South Australia
Department for Education and
Child Development

Belonging, Being and Becoming

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Quality Standards (NQS) are integral to our learning and improvement at Acacia.

Learning Outcome 2: 'Children are connected with and contribute to their world,' encourages educators to support children to become socially responsible and show respect for the environment (EYLF Outcome 2d).

Our continual focus on improvement is guided by the National Quality Standards (NQS) as we endeavour for sustainable practices to be embedded in service operations and consistently promoted in the everyday operations (NQS 3.3.1) and for children to be actively involved in being environmentally responsible and supported to continue this involvement within the program and in the broader community (NQS 3.3.2)

Sustainability in our curriculum

Our Values: Relationships, Respect, Responsibility

With and for ourselves, others and our place

Learning Environment

Our park like setting is designed to provide children with a natural, flexible and challenging learning space. Recycled and loose parts are used where possible.

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for the garden and have the freedom to be outside for long periods of time everyday, regardless of the weather.

Indoors, learning spaces are designed to provide children with a provocation to extend their thinking. Natural, open-ended and recycled materials are freely available. Flexible learning spaces are designed to support collaborative learning to enable children to explore their world.

Curriculum

Through inquiry based learning and our small group projects, aim to challenge and develop children's learning processes. We document the learning journey with children as they explore ideas and investigate the natural environment and community.

The Child Protection Curriculum and Social Skills program is used to explicitly support children's awareness of the rights and needs of others, ourselves and our kindergarten. In essence, our values are at the core of this program as children explore ways to become socially responsible and respectful.



Collaborative partnerships with families and community

We will connect with the Mount Gambier community by:

- Working with local council to gain support and information around sustainability within our community.
- Participate in events and initiatives promoted by local council and the community.
- Purchase goods from local companies where possible to reduce our ecological footprint.
- Participate in regular community walks to encourage active lifestyles and foster a sense of belonging to our community.
- Plan for regular excursions to local natural areas to enable children to develop a deep respect, curiosity and love of the natural environment and to explore our local community and heritage.
- Sustainable practices and projects to be promoted through local media.
- Families are supported with ideas to become sustainable at home by providing ideas and information in the kindergarten newsletter.
- The kindergarten participates in events such as Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, Harmony Day and International Mud Day.
- The kindergarten hosts regular family evenings and special person mornings to foster links with families and community.



Sustainable Practices: Reduce

- Families are encouraged to pack 'nude food' lunchboxes, using reusable containers.
- Our garden has fruit trees, herb and vegetable garden beds, chickens, a worm farm, tumbler compost system, and large shade trees.
- The garden is always mulched to reduce the amount of watering required during warmer months.
- Sun smart practices– large shade trees, shade sails, umbrellas, hats and sun smart clothing enable outdoor play during the summer months.
- Smart lights have been installed indoors.
- 'Earth Hour' every afternoon where the lights are turned off.
- Indoor plants and opening windows have been installed to improve the indoor air quality.
- Regular cooking experiences of whole foods during playful learning time to encourage children to have a healthier lifestyle, many of which are sourced from our garden.
- To reduce our water usage, 3 rainwater tanks have been installed.
- Children are supported to understand the use of full and half flush toilet systems.
- Drought tolerant native plants are used in dry and sunny spaces in the garden.
- Glass and china are used in the kitchen instead of plastic and polystyrene

Sustainable Practices: Reuse

- Rain water is used for water play outside. Children are encouraged to conserve water use to ensure we have sufficient amounts for the summer months.
- Families provide reusable materials for creative projects and loose parts play, such as, boxes, material, pipes, rope, pots and pans.
- Children are supported to and have access to 'reusable paper' for their mark making.
- Left over water is used to water pot plants indoors.
- Food scraps are given to the kindergarten chooks and worms.



Sustainable Practices: Recycle

- Recyclable materials are collected in recycling bins.
- Recycled paper for children's projects is donated by a local business.



Our future possibilities

- Water saving taps for the bathroom.
- Bokashi composting system.
- Solar pump for our creek.
- Investigate possibility of installing solar panels.
- Review of the cleaning products used and source natural products.
- Connect with community organisations to participate in local native plantings and other conservation projects.
- Double glazed windows.
- Create a space where more fruit trees can be planted.
- Review communication and documentation methods which have a high usage of paper.
- Educators to reflect critically on their own practice at work and develop ways they can reduce, reuse, recycle.

Developed in collaboration with children, families, educators and the Mount Gambier City Council. 2014.

Reviewed in 2016 by staff and Governing Council.