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Custodian:	Executive Director - Services

1. Purpose

This policy outlines Meli Kindergarten Services' commitment to environmental sustainability and supports our role in nurturing children's understanding of and respect for the natural world.

It provides practical guidance for embedding sustainable practices into everyday operations and learning experiences, in line with the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, and the National Quality Standard.

Through this policy, we aim to foster a culture of environmental responsibility across our kindergartens, empowering children, educators, families, and the wider community to contribute to a sustainable future.

2. Scope

This policy applies to everyone involved in Meli Kindergarten Services, including:

- All management, staff and educators.
- Students, volunteers and contractors.
- Families

The policy supports the integration of environmentally sustainable practices across all aspects of service delivery and encourages collaboration among stakeholders to:

- Foster shared responsibility for caring for the environment
- Promote sustainable behaviours within both the learning environment and the broader community
- Ensure sustainable practices are embedded in daily operations and educational programs
- Encourage feedback and participation from all stakeholders.

3. Background

Early childhood is a vital time for shaping lifelong values and behaviours. Research shows that children's early experiences influence their understanding of the world and their role within it. Environmental education helps children develop a sense of wonder, responsibility, and respect for the natural environment, and should be embedded in early learning—not delayed until formal schooling.

Meli Kindergarten Services recognises the importance of integrating sustainability into everyday practice. Educators play a key role in fostering children's environmental identity through meaningful connections with

nature, intentional learning spaces, and sustainable habits such as growing food, reducing waste, and using natural materials. This approach aligns with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, which promote children's active participation in caring for their world.

This policy supports the principles of the National Quality Standard – Quality Area 3: Physical Environment, which encourages services to take an active role in environmental stewardship. By modelling sustainable practices and engaging children in hands-on learning, Meli Kindergartens contribute to a culture of environmental responsibility that extends beyond the classroom and into the broader community.

4. Definitions

Aboriginal perspectives – refers to engaging with local Traditional Owners in a culturally appropriate way when incorporating environmental sustainability into play-based learning. This should recognise the unique and special knowledge, rights and connection that Traditional Owners hold to Country, including deep knowledge of how to care for Country, and land-based learning.

Environmental education – refers to learning experiences that help children understand the interconnectedness of people, plants, animals, and the planet. It encourages curiosity, respect, and responsibility for the natural world and supports children to become environmentally conscious citizens.

Environmental risks - refers to potential threats to the natural environment or human health arising from service operations, such as pollution, unsafe waste disposal, or improper handling of animals.

Environmental sustainability – refers to the responsible use and management of natural resources to ensure they remain available and uncompromised for future generations. In early childhood settings, this includes practices that reduce waste, conserve energy and water, and promote biodiversity.

Ethical purchasing - refers to the selection of goods and services that are produced and distributed in ways that minimize harm to the environment and uphold social responsibility, including fair labour practices and sustainable sourcing.

Physical environment – refers to the indoor and outdoor spaces where children learn and play. These environments must be safe, inclusive, and designed to support children's engagement with both built and natural elements.

Risk assessment – refers to the process of identifying, evaluating, and mitigating potential hazards or risks associated with sustainability practices, including environmental, health, and safety considerations.

Sustainability initiatives – refers to planned actions or programs aimed at improving environmental outcomes within the service, such as reducing waste, conserving energy, or promoting biodiversity.

Sustainable practices – refers to everyday actions and decisions that minimise environmental impact, such as recycling, composting, ethical purchasing, and reducing consumption. These practices are embedded in service operations and educational programs.

5. Policy

Meli Kindergartens is committed to embedding environmental sustainability into all aspects of service delivery, empowering children, families, and staff to contribute to a sustainable future.

To achieve this, Meli Kindergarten Services is committed to:

- Promoting respect for and appreciation of the natural environment among children, educators, families, and the broader community.
- Embedding sustainable practices into daily operations and educational programs, including waste reduction, energy and water conservation, and ethical purchasing.
- Supporting children's learning and development by integrating environmental education into the curriculum, helping them understand ecological systems and their role in protecting the planet.
- Complying with relevant legislation.
- Role-modelling environmentally responsible behaviours and encouraging children to adopt sustainable habits both at the service and at home.

6. Delegations and Responsibilities

The **CEO** is responsible for:

- Ensuring Meli Kindergarten Services maintains organisational compliance with relevant legislation and standards.
- Approving the Environmental Sustainability Policy and ensuring it aligns with Meli's strategic objectives and commitment to sustainability and community wellbeing.
- Promoting a culture of environmental responsibility, accountability, and continuous improvement across all kindergarten services.

The **Executive Director – Services** is responsible for:

- Providing operational leadership to ensure environmental sustainability practices are implemented consistently across all Meli Kindergartens.
- Overseeing the development, implementation, and review of sustainability procedures, risk assessments, and staff training.
- Monitoring compliance with sustainability requirements through internal audits, incident reporting, and service-level reviews.

The **Program Directors** and **Managers** are responsible for:

- Supporting educators and staff to implement sustainable practices in daily operations and curriculum planning.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers have appropriate knowledge and training in environmental sustainability, including waste reduction, energy and water conservation, and ethical purchasing.
- Maintaining records of sustainability initiatives, risk assessments, and any incidents related to environmental practices.
- Communicating with families about the service's sustainability goals and practices, including opportunities for involvement and feedback.
- Developing risk management plans where sustainability practices intersect with cultural or community considerations.

Early Childhood Teachers, Educators, and All Other Staff are responsible for:

- Embedding sustainable practices into daily routines and learning experiences, including:
 - recycling materials for curriculum and learning activities
 - composting food scraps
 - minimising waste and effectively using service resources
 - turning off equipment and lights when not in use
 - incorporating water wise strategies such as drip irrigation and ensuring taps are turned off and leaks fixed
- Role-modelling environmentally responsible behaviours and supporting children's understanding of ecological systems.
- Ensuring indoor and outdoor environments support children's engagement with nature and sustainable living.
- Participating in training and professional development related to environmental sustainability.
- Collaborating with families to promote consistent sustainability practices between home and the service.
- Complying with Victoria's single-use plastics ban and minimising use of plastic bags, including using reusable rather than disposable options for catering events and soiled clothing.
- Promoting 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 through art and play and allowing children to experience the natural environment through natural materials like wood, stone, sand and recycled materials, plants including native vegetation, vegetable patch with gardening tools and watering cans.
 - celebrating children's environmental knowledge and sustainable activities
- Engaging in activities that support the service to become more environmentally sustainable (e.g. recycling, water conservation, minimising use of electricity, repairing equipment, recycling and reducing the use of packaging).

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- Supporting their children to adopt environmentally sustainable behaviours at home and in the service.
- Engaging with the service's sustainability initiatives and providing feedback or suggestions.
- Informing educators of any cultural or personal considerations that may influence sustainability practices.

Contractors, Volunteers, and Students are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy and following staff instructions when participating in sustainability-related activities.
- Completing basic induction or training as required.
- Reporting any environmental risks or concerns to a staff member immediately.

7. Policy Application

To ensure the values and objectives of this policy are achieved, Meli Kindergarten Services will:

- Seek regular feedback from educators, staff, families, and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of environmental sustainability practices.
- Monitor implementation and compliance, including the handling of incidents, complaints, and concerns related to sustainability.
- Review and update the policy to reflect changes in legislation, sector guidance, research, and best practice in early childhood environmental education.
- Undertake scheduled policy reviews every three years as part of the service's continuous improvement cycle, or earlier if required due to emerging risks or incidents.
- Notify all affected stakeholders of any significant changes to this policy or its procedures at least 14 days in advance, unless a shorter timeframe is necessary to manage risk.
- Feedback can be submitted via policy@meli.org.au.

8. Legislation, Acts, Standards

This policy is informed by the following legislation, regulations, and standards:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard – Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
- Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012
- Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Regulations 2012
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) Guidelines
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics (2016)

These references ensure that environmental sustainability practices at Meli Kindergarten Services are evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, and compliant with national and state requirements.

9. Related Documents

Sources

- [Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#)
- [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework \(VEYLDF\)](#)
- [Environmental Education in Early Childhood \(EEEC\)](#)
- [Guide to the National Quality Standard – ACECQA](#)
- [Sustainability Victoria – Schools](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics \(2016\)](#)

Related Policies

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy
- Curriculum Development Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy

10. Document History

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections Modified	Updated By
1.00	CEO	10/12/2025	10/12/2025	New policy	Cassandra Gallop