



Greek Orthodox Community of NSW Child Care Centre, Sydney

Since developing a sustainability policy in 2011, the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW Child Care Centre has gone on to develop a multi-faceted environmental program that has received a council award for Resource Recovery. The Centre involves the wider community in its efforts, from the families of children at the Centre to local businesses.

Recycling & Green Initiatives

Vision

Motivated by a concern for environmental sustainability and climate change, the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW Child Care Centre began addressing what it saw as a marginalised area within the education system. Centre staff believe that introducing children to environmental learning can lay the foundation for a more long-term interest in caring for the environment in adulthood.

“Children will be directly affected by climate change and therefore it is important as professional educators that these issues are tackled in early childhood settings.” – Samantha Damoulakis, Director.

Planning

In 2012, the Childcare Centre Director attended a series of support discussions on the National Quality Framework, to share and gain insights on sustainable practices and experiences that educators could use to foster social responsibility in children. The Centre adopted some sustainability initiatives of other organisations, and invited the **Marrickville Council Target Sustainability Team** to help assess and extend its practices. The council also provided some physical resources, like a compost bin. Since the end of 2011, the Centre has developed a sustainability policy to help achieve environmental outcomes, and the curriculum has been modified to link sustainable thinking with practice. All fifteen staff members were involved in crafting the policies, as well as the children, families, local council and child care committee.



Implementation

The Centre conducts regular meetings with staff and parents to discuss current and future actions. Parents are kept up to date via email, and are encouraged to help build upon the existing initiatives, which include:

- ♻️ Recycling bins that are collected weekly.
- ♻️ A compost bin and a worm farm which produce natural fertiliser from food scraps.
- ♻️ Vegetable gardens that use the compost / worm farm fertiliser.
- ♻️ A chicken coop, which also consumes leftover food.
- ♻️ Partnerships with local cafés to recycle coffee grounds in the Centre's compost bin.
- ♻️ Partnerships with local businesses to obtain re-usable printed paper for art projects.
- ♻️ Water-wise taps in bathrooms, and half-flush systems for all toilets.

Results and Benefits

The Centre has reduced the overall amount of waste generated by 33,000L (or 137.5 wheelie bins) annually, with the amount sent to landfill reduced by two thirds. Food scraps are now diverted from landfill to help feed the chickens and compost, which in turn produce eggs and help feed the vegetable gardens that provide fresh produce and educational opportunities for the children.

The practices have had ripple effects throughout the community, with the children engaging their families in eco-practices at home and local businesses getting involved.

Challenges & the Future

Many of the practices were initially new to many of the staff, making the implementation process a learning experience in itself. However, thanks to the help of other environmental organisations and the local council (which provided resources like the compost bin), the Centre is looking forward to even more new projects in the future. These include rainwater collection tanks for the garden, play and washing, and an expanded chicken coop.



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Samantha Damoulakis, Director



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