In a country where the outdoor lifestyle of bush and beach is iconic, it is a paradox that the next generation is increasingly cooped up indoors or playing in synthetic outdoor playspaces – places where there is not a tree to climb, a cicada nymph shell to discover or a mud pie to be moulded. Is this what we want for our children?

Elliott 2008
Inside this issue

The RESPECT Award recipients for 2013

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Sponsors of the RESPECT Award

What does embedding sustainable culture mean to you?

EEEC Professional Development – sustainable visits, workshops, conference, AGM

The Royal Botanic Gardens – professional development

Phillip Island Nature Park – resource

ResourceSmart School Awards 2014

NQS e-Learning videos

Best of Sustainability: research, theory and practice

Research in Early Childhood: Education for sustainability

Remote controlled childhood – Diane Levin

Play Australia

Nature Tales – Bush Kinders / Koorie Kids Bush Playgroup

Questioning sustainable practice, questioning sustainable ideas

EEEC opening hours for the holidays

RESPECT Award details for 2014 applications
The RESPECT Award recipients for 2013

The inaugural RESPECT Award was awarded in 2008. We felt that early childhood best practice in education for sustainability should be recognised. Winners are issued a plaque, showcased in the EEEC Green Beginnings newsletter and receive a sustainable piece of equipment / resource for their service.

**Category A- Embedding Sustainability**

This category is about celebrating the journey with children as they are involved in education for sustainability, as part of everyday practices and happenings.

**Joint winners**
Mossfiel Kindergarten
Nathalia and District Preschool

**Highly Commended**
The Farmhouse

**Encouragement award**
St. Andrews UnitingCare Kindergarten

**Category B- Cultivating Connections**

This category is about recognising how children and educators have been involved in environmental awareness with children and how this links to the broader community.

**Winner**
Moreland Community Child Care Centre

**Highly Commended**
Phoenix Street Children’s Centre

**Encouragement award**
UnitingCare Gippsland
Name of the project: Gourmet Traveller

Brief outline of the project: In Emerald Group we have 27 children, 16 children speak languages other than English. So in honour of the families that have travelled far and wide to reach Australia and now call Australia home we decided to grow a mini herb garden in a suitcase. As this is how we get our belongings from one place to another. To assist the children in understanding how far some families have travelled to Australia we placed a world map inside the lid of the suitcase and world flags beside the herbs that are used in some cultural food dishes. We grew: dill, oregano, thyme, chives, tatsoi, Vietnamese mint and parsley.

This planting activity became a wonderful addition to the yard and an extension of our vegetable patch. We introduced the children to the idea of planting vegetables and discussing foods from other cultures by reading ‘Oliver’s Vegetables’ by Vivian French and ‘Growing Food’ by Bernard Ashley. The children were all very excited and eager to participate as the suitcase became a very different kind of planter box.

The inspiration for the project: The curriculum decisions and inspiration behind this activity came from an issue we had during lunch time over a few days. Some of the children were making negative comments about each other’s food. In one case a child then didn’t want to have the lunches her mother was providing in favour of a cheese sandwich. Which in the end it turned out that she didn’t like anyway. So to assist children’s understandings of various foods eaten by different cultures we read stories about food, discussed our favourite foods, participated in sensory activities where the children were able to smell, feel herbs to experience them out of the kitchen, and we also set up a spice grinding experience indoors to show the children how herbs and spices are prepared for use in cooking. We then introduced salt dough to the spice table so the children could pretend to cook as they have seen their families do. So from the one planting experience the food project began to evolve and extend into other areas of their play. Home corner has now been changed into an Asian inspired house complete with dramatic play food to inspire young chefs.
The outcomes of the project: Throughout these experiences the children have had the opportunity to develop:

Identity: Children had the opportunity to make decisions and discover their identities when resources provided gave them the opportunity to visit other cultures and diversities within the service and to respect these differences.

Community: The children were able to explore diversity of culture, background and tradition in a way that presented new opportunities for choices and new understandings.

Wellbeing: Sharing personal experiences, recognising that food can sometimes connect us to others. Understanding that through food and celebrations, families are able to come together and have a fun and healthy lifestyle.

Learning: The children were learning to express wonder and interest in their environment, while at the same time increasing numeracy skills such as; how far apart to plant the herbs, how deep to dig the holes, how tall will the plants grow and measuring the plants a follow up activity. Literacy skills that were enhanced were learning new terminology; specifically related to gardening.

Communication: The children were able to express ideas and feelings they had towards food and understand and respect the perspectives of others.

How the project goals and outcomes link with environmental sustainability principles:

The project goals and outcomes link with sustainability principles by:

- Extending the existing vegetable gardening project, whereby children grow produce to cook and eat within the program. The children are responsible for caring for the garden ie; weeding, feeding, watering.
- We discuss ethical ways of removing pests from the garden and are about to embark on companion planting as a further extension to this project.
- We water all our plants from tank water. Imparting knowledge and additional learning about saving water and using water wisely.
- We talked about where certain food crops around the world are grown and that some climates are not suited to various food crops.
- After harvesting we prepare our food and all the food scraps are sorted. Vegetable peelings etc go into our worm farm. We then use the worm juice to help our plants grow. This in turn links with our other recycling activities that are embedded within the program such as; having separate containers to recycle plastic, paper/cardboard, food scraps and recycling materials for use in craft. The newest addition to our gardening project is a compost bin.
- Connecting children to nature by providing natural environments.
- An over-supply of produce is made available to families to take home with some recipe cards for sample ideas to make at home.
- Teaching children about sustainably role modelling. Our children now go home and are recycle gurus. Families are coming back to the centre telling us that their children are looking for recycling symbols on packaging so they know which containers to throw their rubbish into. Some are even taking home plastic zip lock bags to reuse.
The service consistently operates with sustainable practices embedded in the everyday program. Children and families are actively involved in the environmentally responsible programs offered in the centre. (National Quality Standard Assessment Report) Nathalia & District Preschool

Our sustainable journey...
In 2012 we had a look at our own sustainable practices within the preschool environment - our waste: paper, food, food wrappers, water and where we purchased our materials from. This was the beginning of our sustainable journey.

Reflection:
Paper: lots of paper in the bins
Food scraps: collected and taken home by an educator for her chooks.
Food wrappers: there were so many wrappers in lunch boxes
Water usage: where does it come from, where does it go?
Purchasing resources: do we need to buy new all the time?

What happened next...
We participated in the Smiles 4 Miles Program. This led to discussions about our food – where it comes from, wrappings verses containers, our leftovers and what else could we do with them?

Recycling
What is recycling and why do we do it?
To reuse items – craft (boxes, paper, containers)
To lower our rubbish collection
To feed the worms and rabbits
To make compost for the gardens
Our resources

We use everyday items in our program: - tyres, rocks, tanbark from outside play area, cardboard boxes from deliveries, dress ups from a visit to the Op Shop, cardboard boxes from the local high school and seaweed from the sea.

Plants grown from seed

A vegetable garden was established in the yard and the children had also been growing plants from seeds. Two pumpkins were displayed in the ‘sow and grow’ area. (Quality Area 3)
Our fruit and vegetables:

Our vegetables feed the rabbits.
Pumpkin seedlings the children took home are coming back as pumpkins that feed the worms.
New pumpkin plants growing in worm farm are sent home with families to begin the growing process again for more food for the worms.
This allows the children to see how the food cycle works and how they are a large part of it.

Recycle Rescue:

Our resources are purchased from Recycle Rescue.
Our aim is to up cycle where and when possible from all resources at the preschool centre.
We encourage families and local businesses to donate items of use to us.
We ask that they are clean for safety reasons.

Families were encouraged to save recycled materials to bring to the centre to be used in the art and craft area. Recycled dress up items were utilised in the dramatic play area. (Quality Area 3)

Respect for the environment
We have a large fish tank inside set up with a turtle and fish.
We discuss how our natural water system support fish, turtles, yabbies and plants. Children participate by feeding the animals, although educators do the cleaning. Where possible, the waste is put in the compost bin.
Discuss water saving techniques and role model by placing our inside plants out in the rain.

How we achieve sustainability

The natural investigation area that provides ongoing investigation of the children’s environment

Nathalia & District Preschool support the children’s awareness and education of nature and sustainability of the environment through daily ongoing experiences. Embedded in the program is our natural and sustainable environment. The children gain practical hands on learning through caring for the preschool pets. They have been learning about creeks and dams with the inclusion of our turtle and fish. The importance of maintaining a healthy tank supports the children’s awareness of a healthy creek that runs through our town. The worm farm is flourishing as the children feed their meal scraps to the worms. This supports their awareness of how worms are an important part of the eco system by breaking down their food scraps to fertilise the soil.
The pet rabbits offer children a quiet experience of brushing their fur and they also provide great cuddles for the children. Inside our playroom we have many natural experiences that are ongoing throughout the year. The investigation table provides the opportunity for open ended play, the children choose the direction of their learning through their investigations of the natural resources.

**Bush kinder**

We venture out into the Barmah Forest to investigate the bush. The aim of the day is not to take items with us but to explore and respect the bush for what it is.

Most importantly, to leave the bush as we found it but with an appreciation for the natural wonders of our bush.

Before Bush Kinder, we had a reptile incursion. This provided a safe message and a ‘hands on’ experience for the children before visiting the Barmah Forest.

**What we are learning:**

- Respect for the environment and the resources we use.
- To think about what we do and why we do it.
- Is there another resource we could use?
- Why the environment is so important.
- Life cycles (plants, animals, the environment) and the needs of the cycle.
- To allow every child the opportunity to investigate, explore, question and learn about where we live and how to support the environment.

![Image of children in a group]

**Where to from here**

- Our large rain water tank is being fitted with a pump and pipe with a tap out to the play yard. This will enable the children to use collected rain water for their play and to water the gardens.
- New vegetable/flower gardens are being developed for more plantings.
- Making paper out of recycled paper; what they can do with their own paper they have made.
- Continue with our Bush Kinder experiences.
Our sustainable journey and current practices
Set on 12 ½ acres of green pastures, The Farmhouse is a nurturing atmosphere which embodies our philosophy of “Inspire. Foster. Grow.” The Farmhouse philosophy reflects a commitment to providing an environment in which children can be absorbed and continually inspired by nature.
Outdoor play and exploration are a strong focus of The Farmhouse’s program, with our 1 kilometre-long Native Corridor providing children of all ages with the opportunity to learn about native flora and fauna, while the kindergarten children’s regular visits to the Victorian High Country provide a unique Australian “bush” experience.
Daily routines and practices at The Farmhouse are embedded with a range of sustainable practices, with all children and educators taking an active role in caring for our environment and contributing to a sustainable future. These include recycling, use of rainwater tanks and water conservation, composting, vegetable gardens, a worm farm, feeding food scraps to animals, growing our own vegetables, and the use of recycled resources.

Rainwater tanks are in use on the property, and children have a strong awareness of where the water they use for drinking, cleaning and play is coming from. Over Summer, water has had to be purchased, and as children saw the truck coming in a number of times it was reinforced to them the importance of saving water.

Our on-site vegetable gardens demonstrate a thorough appreciation for health and nutrition. Since opening, we have remodelled our vegetable gardens, removing the smaller original beds and replacing them with an extensive vegetable garden, all of which the children were a part of creating.
Older children research with educators what to plant each season, with all children taking ownership of the vegetables – many “pick and eat” while playing, while others will collect vegetables and chook eggs to include in their own cooking or take to our kitchen to be incorporated into provided meals.
Recycling is included as part of everyday practice for educators and children, with labelled bins enabling children to play an independent role in recycling.

Food waste is reduced at The Farmhouse through a worm farm, composting, and feeding food scraps to rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens and pigs. All children take responsibility for feeding and tending to all of the various animals here – sheep, cattle, goats, alpacas, chooks, ducks, rabbits, pigs and guinea pigs.
At The Farmhouse we aim to purchase resources and equipment that is eco-friendly, reducing the amount of plastic and disposable equipment incorporated into the children’s programs.

In 2012, the Bush Kinder (4-year-old) children took part in the Eco-Cubby project which involved designing a sustainable and eco-friendly cubby. We took this one step further, and actually built our Eco-Cubby! We incorporated specially ordered eco-wood, accredited as both sustainable and recycled, along with “Green Pipe” slides, made from 100% recycled plastic.

Eco-Cubby design and completed Eco-Cubby.
What were your inspirations and intention in commencing this project?

Since starting this journey, it has been our dream to create a distinctive children’s environment – extensive outdoor, natural spaces for children to play and explore. The heart of The Farmhouse lies in the ‘Children’s Gardens’. It is here children engage with nature, be absorbed by it’s texture, discover the world around them, and have time to smell Mother Earth and understand her ways.

By incorporating sustainable practices into the “everyday” at The Farmhouse and with educators including gardening and environmental education as a regular part of their programs, children of all ages are learning through direct involvement.

In 2013, The Farmhouse have begun hosting professional development for educators in rural Victoria. Our Autumn and Spring sessions have both focused strongly on the outdoor environment and the unique opportunities in provides to children’s learning and development. These sessions are aimed at providing attendees with renewed inspiration and ideas to implement in their own services in regard to sustainable practices and how natural materials readily available in their environment can be incorporated into a high quality children’s program.

What outcomes and benefits have been observed?

The Farmhouse’s sustainable practices are our everyday. Whether it’s walking our Native Corridor to observe environmental changes, observing baby animals being born, feeding food scraps to the pigs or chooks, picking vegetables to include in our lunch – all are regular occurrences at The Farmhouse.

An emphasis on the change of seasons in all children’s programs at The Farmhouse, provides children with a greater awareness of the seasons and cycles of nature. They’re learning about different ways we need to look after our environment depending on the season – in Summer children are involved in watering our trees, which is done with dam water so as not to waste our precious rainwater; while in Winter we’re using our greenhouse to grow seedlings that are susceptible to the frost.
Not only are we caring for our current environment, but educators, children and families are sharing skills, knowledge and lifelong values ensuring a sustainable future is available.

All educators at The Farmhouse role model sustainable practices, and discuss these with children and families on a regular basis. Through the harvesting of our own vegetables and including these in meals provided for the children, the importance of healthy eating and sustainable food choices is reinforced to children and their families.

By including children of all ages in the continuing development of our sustainable practices, such as the redevelopment of our vegetable gardens, they are provided with a real feeling of ownership and display a strong sense of pride in the environment they have been a part of developing.
**Our Journey**

It was all very exciting. Moving in to our brand new building. High ceilings and beautifully lit rooms. We could already picture the following years’ children growing and learning with us in the enormous new centre. One problem. These massive ceilings and huge rooms flooded with light looked spectacular, but were not environmentally friendly. Just over 7 years ago we would enter each morning and turn on all the lights ready for the parents and children to arrive, and leave them on all day to light up our new rooms, not thinking much about the cost to our environment. Over the past 7 years, I have made it my mission to transform the kinder, its staff and the students into an environmentally friendly kinder, where the students learn about the environment, positive and negative effects that we have on it, and constantly think of new and wonderful ways to grow our kinder to have a positive impact on the environment. After all, it is OUR environment, and the environment of the children to come.

Our first policy became the “Lights Off Policy”, whereby all foyer lights are turned off as soon as all the children have arrived. Session room lights are turned off when we are outside making use of our amazing new yard, and even bathroom lights are off unless someone needs it. This kick started our gradual move to the kinder we are today.

We now have 2 water tanks, one of which was donated by a parent, which provide us with the only water children may use for play. One of these tanks has been set up on our cubby house, so that the children can see the rain water being collected from the cubby roof, into the tank, and how we gather the water which they can use for play. We try to find numerous ways to engage the children in our environmentally friendly learning policies, so that they feel involved and can make an impact themselves.

Our new centre has now been fitted with solar panels on the roof, to save on energy, and many new programmes and policies have been created and introduced.

We have multiple food policies in place, including our ‘Nude Food’ Policy which reduces waste left over from lunch boxes and reduces rubbish. We teach our students about making healthy eating choices, and encourage them to become more involved with their own food preparation at home. We even provide them with recipes to take home for their families.

The children enjoy maintaining our 2 worm farms, and food scraps are collected to feed the worms. The children are involved in growing a variety of fruits and vegetables, and even learn to make healthy jam and chutney from scratch.
We are very proud of our well known recycling programme, where we use natural and recycled products/materials wherever possible. We find our parents every year love to get involved with this policy, and all throughout the year we receive various weird and wonderful donated items from them for us to make use of in the kinder. At the beginning of each year, we also provide each child with a paper bag, and ask them to take it home, and with the help of their parents, fill it with ‘junk’ that we then use for craft activities. This teaches children to not use something once and throw it away, but to look at everything from a different view, and think of all the amazing things that they could do with that, rather than throw it away.

Our interactive nature tables have become quite popular, and we have an area of our yard dedicated to collections of sticks, branches, wood, leaves, gumnuts and other natural items we find. In this day and age, we are surrounded by computing devices and new technology, and we find that by encouraging our students to use their imagination, they are able to reconnect with the natural world.

We have spent years developing our yard into a fascinating natural experience, complete with a grassy knoll, boulders, bushy areas where the children may play and hide, a small waterfall and creek bed and recycled pavers, and now we are lucky enough to have many residents and visitors to our yard. These include bees, skinks, frogs, butterflies and many native birds, which we use to teach the children about our wonderful wildlife. We also keep a fish tank inside with many types of fish, and when a fish passes away, we utilise this to teach the children about life cycles. Inside the kinder you will also find many books and puzzles which prompt discussions about sustainability and the environment.

Inspiration

I have always believed in the importance of natural play spaces for children. When others were removing their swing frames and putting in fake grass, I began to design a challenging play space which would encourage risk taking. I was particularly inspired by the Children’s Garden in Melbourne. I visited a number of new centres and was saddened to see the ‘safe’ environments that were provided. At three centres I toured in one day there was not a single swing, and the climbing opportunities consisted of one, small ‘A’ frame. I was told many times that I could not include elements like running water, river pebbles, boulders or plants that would attract bees, so I studied the regulations and made sure that everything complied. Then we installed the biggest swing frame we could get. It has four stations.

I also take inspiration and support from groups like EEEC, coming away from the recent conference with some new ideas I want to try. I have already purchased two metal sieves which I am going to wire together and use to pop corn over our fire pit!
I would not classify this as a ‘project’ but rather, an ongoing journey to embed sustainable practices within the centre, both indoors and outdoors. Further, I believe that by making this a normal part of each child’s time at kindergarten it will impact on them, and their families, in the future.

Outcomes

Parents line up at our kinder from 2am on enrolment day, to ensure they secure one of our limited available spaces for the following year. When we ask parents why they have chosen our kinder, they often mention our healthy eating programme, recycling programme and purposely designed yard in which the children can learn and grow.

Our practices are being recognized by the community as word spreads. I have submitted a number of articles to the local paper which bring attention to sustainability issues. The community has provided time and materials to make the play space a reality. Similarly, they support our indoor programme by donating materials. It is not uncommon for businesses in the area to contact us and ask if we would like to have materials they no longer want. We rarely buy materials for craft work, relying instead on what we collect and what is donated (recycled).

I am finding that staff are also beginning to embrace sustainability, bringing in junk, scouring through tables at garage sales and asking if I want things before they throw them out.

Over the past few years I have seen the contents of children’s lunch boxes improve considerably. Past families understand our expectations, and most new families have heard about our ‘Healthy Eating’ promotion.

Children take the message home when we rescue tadpoles from swimming pools that are about to be emptied. We talk about how frogs are endangered, and discourage ‘tadpoling’ (unfortunately still a common past time in a rural community). We care for them until they begin to develop legs, and then send them home with families who have dams or creeks on their properties.

Recent finds of a witchetty grub and some unknown beetles ended in research on the computer and the results went into the Programme Book for families to see.

I have recently had a discussion with a local Primary School Principal who wants to know how we promote ‘Nude Food’ and healthy lunch boxes as she wants to introduce it at her school. One of our parents who strongly supported our programme was inspired to introduced ‘Healthy Tuck Shop’ lunches in another local school, where hot dogs had been the only lunch children could previously purchase.
Outline of submission:

With the implementation of the NQS our organisation has already come a long way towards embedding sustainability in our service. This has included establishing a parent sustainability committee who previously audited our environmental sustainability practices across the organisation. With the Brunswick West Community Garden moving in next door an amazing opportunity opened up to further extend our existing practices.

Sustainability is a strong value in our community and our ‘Planting The Seeds’ project aimed to create a partnership with the community garden adjacent to our service. Through this partnership we hoped to develop a connection with the land and people in our community; working alongside them towards our shared aspiration for a sustainable future.

This unfolded in multiple ways…
Inspiration: The Garden
There are many things we can do to empower children and make a difference, including creating opportunities for play with natural materials or establishing recycling and conservation practices at home and perhaps on a larger scale, connecting with local community sustainability initiatives. Radich, 2011, p 20

Outcomes:

Experiencing *belonging* – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. *Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, 2009, pg 7

We aimed to create a tangible connection between the community garden and the child care centre.

Including:

*Physical connection*
The local council ‘Moreland’ was approached to install a gate to join the community garden to the centre’s outdoor playground. This has allowed easy access for small groups of children throughout each day.

*Stepping stones:*
To develop a sense of belonging and welcome for children inside the community garden we engaged with a local arts group ‘Brunswick Arts Space’ on a stepping stone art project.

“We have really enjoyed being part of a greater community project. Its always refreshing to hear about the world from the perspective of a child.” *Alister Karl (Brunswick Arts Space Committee member)*
This involved the artists working with the kindergarten children to create mosaic stepping stones. These were then integrated into the paths of the community garden.

The stepping stones were installed in the garden as part of a joint working bee with the Moreland Community Garden and the MCCCC staff and families. This allowed an opportunity for members of the community group and parents of the service to come together and share stories.

Gardening:
The garden provided children, staff and families an opportunity to engage in the food cycle on a larger scale.
As we all know our children can be amazing catalysts for our own behaviours. When children are armed with enthusiasm and understanding of the impact our activities have on our environment, never underestimate their ability to impact on family and community attitudes and behaviours.


**Composting and worm farming**
Along with the existing worm farm and centre chickens, the children now have the opportunity to compost the remainder of their food scraps in the community compost bins.

**Soil regeneration:**
The soil from the compost bins and juice from the worm farm is used as an organic fertiliser to maintain the nutrition and structure of the soil. Any extra worm juice is then offered to the parents.

**Planting & Growing**
The Moreland Community Garden Group allocated a new garden for the MCCCC children inside the community space. A handful of families within the service also have personal plots in the garden that children enjoy visiting whilst at child care.
One of the members of the garden group worked directly with MCCCC children to maintain and replant the gardens.

*Harvesting and cooking*

The educators and children use the produce from the gardens to encourage healthy eating practices for children and families... such as these broccoli muffins

When the children have finished their composting or gardening they enjoy using the winding paths of the garden as an open natural learning environment in which to run and explore the vegetables growing around them.

*Thoughts from the Moreland Community Garden*

“The partnership with the child care centre has successfully extended the community of the garden with access for the children and families of the child care centre. They also provide us with power and contribute lots of compost material to the community compost bins”. *Mark Sanders - Head Gardener at Moreland Community Garden*

It’s really nice having the children around. My parents had a big garden. I remember when I was little helping them. It was those experiences of getting my hands in the soil that made me the avid gardener I am today.

*Lorraine - Community garden member and private plot holder*
Future directions:
The partnership is just part of our wider efforts towards a sustainable and equitable future. Moving into the future and to further strengthen our partnership with the community garden we aim to:

- Install a water tank to harvest the water from the west side of the roof for use in the garden.
- Source a bee hive to live in the garden and help pollinate our plants
- Share responsibility with the garden group for the chickens in our yard and the new coop in the garden

Children’s Learning:
Alongside this; the children’s exploration and learning within the garden has taken various and often unexpected directions.
The following are examples of that learning:

- Egg, larvae, pupa, adult
- Our little garden
- Pham’s stepping stones
- Visiting the community garden
- Fresh from our vegie patch
- Easy peasy lemon squeezy

What we’ve learnt:
1: We have been amazed by the strength and knowledge of our surrounding community.
2: With the right group of people and a little enthusiasm anything is possible.
3: Children have the capacity to bring people together. They inspire us to work towards a sustainable future.

Phoenix Street Children’s Centre – Sunshine North

Director: Narelle Cahill      Second in Charge: Serena Lasslett

Our journey
It our belief and passion to promote sustainability within our educational program, throughout our service, as well as, the broader community. We believe as educators we have an active and significant role to play; ensuring children experience connections with the natural environment in meaningful ways. Ways that will assist their understanding of connectedness both within and in the natural environment and ultimately promote action for sustainability. We also believe it’s important that environmental education is incorporated into our program and is part of our daily practice. This project was developed due to interest from our families and wider community on how to integrate sustainable practices within services and the home.
The aim of the project was to develop a user friendly handbook with essential information about reducing household waste, and conserving water and energy in our local community. At Phoenix Street Children’s centre we strive to empower children, families and the community with sustainable living principles.

The aims of this project were also to:

- Demonstrate the many ways we can do our bit for the environment, such as; reducing rubbish, saving water, planting fruits & vegetables, composting, recycling and keeping chickens.
- Disperse the book at no cost in order for the information to be accessible to the low socio-economic families and community residents.

Outline of the project

- Share & promote the benefits of environmental citizenship for present & future generations
- Encourage individual & collective action to support a sustainable community
- Network with passionate professionals, families and support services in order to make connections with the local community
- Provide opportunities for the children to learn through direct hands on involvement encouraging a sense of ownership and responsibility


cultivating connections

Educators support children to develop connection with the community in the following ways:

- City West water donates collapsible water saving buckets & gardening gloves for the children. This provides the children with the necessary tools to explore, question and take part in looking after our natural environment.
- Soilworks provide our service with hands on workshops for the children about the benefits of having a worm farm and the responsibility they are empowered with to take care of it
- Bunnings provide us with inservice workshops to teach the children about caring for our vegetable & herb gardens
• In consultation with the children we entered our garden in the Healthy Sustainable Garden Competition

• Our children are involved in our sustainability expo by bottling up worm wee, bunching herbs from garden and picking vegetables; all of this being sold for fundraising

• Three times a year we visit the local primary school to have our children involved in their sustainability program
Progression and achievement:

• As part of our ‘Little Green Hand Prints’ training we visit other services as well as, welcome them into ours, to train, mentor and support fellow educators and families on their sustainable journey.
• We received second place in City West Water’s ‘Healthy Sustainable Garden Competition’.
• The publication of our sustainability guide ‘Save Money, Save the Planet’ was launched in 2013.
• The introduction of a sustainability officer who’s role is to support & guide our service, educators, children and their families in sustainable practices.

Further information:

• Save Money, Save the Planet is available in English and Vietnamese
  [http://issuu.com/moodyrobot/docs/issuu_savemoney_savetheplanet](http://issuu.com/moodyrobot/docs/issuu_savemoney_savetheplanet)
Early Years Facilitator: Melati Conwell

Briefly outline your sustainable journey and current practices

UnitingCare Gippsland is an environmental and socially responsible organisation and currently has a "Green Ambassadors Group" which is responsible for implementing Green Office practices within the agency.

The Green Office Program promotes cultural change within the agency and encourages management, staff and volunteers to play their part in environmental sustainability. The program will operate across all UnitingCare Gippsland office locations, including childcare centres and kindergartens.

The Green Team developed an action plan consisting of three key points - 1. Waste 2. Purchasing 3. Early Years. The three key points will be worked through individually in a sequential order. Early Years is the last key area to be addressed and due to the current interest raised through the Sustainability in Early Years group the implementation of the Eco Early Years project will assist in working towards the agency's plan in promoting sustainable practices across the agency into early years services and wider community.

There has been a growing interest in Sustainable Practices across all Early Years Services. As an agency we wanted to embrace this interest and have formed a Sustainability in Early Years working group which consists of Early Years Practice Leaders, Early Years office based staff and Early Years field educators (Kindergarten teachers and family day care educators).

The first meeting held on the 28th of February 2011, identified a need for support for educators in the form of practical tips and ideas. This group now is an advisory group while key players look at policies and ongoing funding strategies to implement sustainable practices.

A survey was sent out in 2012 to identify current sustainable practices implemented to a total of 31 early years services and a further 60 family daycare educators, from these surveys a total of 32 responses were received. The responses varied to the amount of sustainable practices currently implemented, although 100% of educators have indicated that they are currently implementing some form of sustainable practice. These practices ranged from have tubs for recycling to having rain tanks, worm farms, encouraging ‘nude food’ and vegetable gardens. 87% have indicated they would like to attend professional development on sustainability in early years and 87% have indicated they would like further information on sustainability.

The results from this study indicate an interest in sustainability in early years and that the early childhood educators want further information on the topic.

This Eco Resource Kit (ERK) highlights the value that UnitingCare Gippsland places on the importance of considering environmental sustainability in a diverse range of settings. By embracing sustainability principles, we are being proactive towards sustaining a green environment and ensuring a cultural change within programs. Where possible, involving the broader community is encouraged to work in partnership towards a positive green future for our children and generations to come. UnitingCare Gippsland is committed to the education of its staff and wider community through programs and resource development.
What were your inspirations and intention in commencing this project?
Through funding possibilities we felt inspired to create this resource. The ERK resource has been made possible through the Forest Hill Trust Grant from The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies (AGECS). Through networking possibilities and sharing of wisdom and learning, the information and valuable knowledge has been shared and sourced from the following: Kindergarten Union, Gosford Council (Little Green Steps document), Environmental Education in Early Childhood Vic (EEEC), Gippsland Climate Change Network, Wellington Shire Sustainability Team and UnitingCare Gippsland’s Green Ambassadors and Early Years Sustainability Team.

We are always inspired by the educators and teachers in our area and services. The children and families within our community provide consistent inspiration and motivation to move forward in this journey. Thanks for the services, families and children that agreed to their photos to be shared. We are inspired by our natural environment our local champions and groups that we are fortunate to have in Gippsland this gives us reason to strive move forward in our sustainable practices.

The intention for starting this project was to support Early Years services to implement sustainable practices and education for children and families.

ERK was developed to provide practical ideas and tips for Educators and Service Coordinators to use in their daily practices in the operations of the centres. The Eco Resource Kit aims to provide educators, families and the wider community with consolidated information and resources about sustainable practices that can be promoted within homes, early childhood settings and the wider community.

The Eco Resource Kit aims to assist with linkages to environmental agencies that will promote local knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues and resources in your local area. The Eco Resource Kit provides a fun, socially responsible and consistent message around the importance of sustainability and the environment. This in turn, can enhance a deeper understanding and respect by children of their environment and will foster an understanding around the importance of our world and the impact that we all have on it.

The Eco Resource Kits highlights the link between national and state frameworks and presents ideas for embedding sustainable practices within early childhood settings. It is a tool to support growth around sustainable principles for educators, which will assist with engaging positive relationships with families, the broader community and most importantly, involving children. Involving families in conversations and actions aim to provoke discussion towards environmental awareness, sensitivity and understanding. This supports families’ ability to adopt positive change, and empowerment towards embracing sustainable principles and cultural change within the family home and early childhood services environment.

Early childhood services need to be able to invite the wider community into their services and also facilitate children and families to be connected with the wider community. This enables a holistic and informed approach to be part of the decision making process on how to best minimise our global foot print and support increased environmental awareness. Providing children with this foundation and involvement will form our future in years to come.

What outcomes and benefits have been observed?
The aim will be to educate families, children and agency staff across Gippsland on environmental and sustainable practices and how to tackle climate change. This ERK will set foundations for children and families to have an awareness of environmental and sustainability issues and will be transferred into lives outside of the service and taken with them in the future.
Staff will have the opportunity to provide feedback at any time. A survey will be developed to see how practices may have changed. Sustainability workshops were organised in conjunction of the launch of the ERK. Practice Leaders will help support self-building audits and implementation of the information on their visits. These case studies will include the stories of staff, families and children, with photos and personal anecdotes. The aim of the ERK is for sustainability to be embedded in the culture of the agency and all early years services. Sustainability education will be part of the services daily practices, experiences, environment and curriculum and will continue as a key area following the completion of the project.

The ERK is/will be available on the UnitingCare Gippsland website so all members of the community or non UCG early years services can access this resource. All UnitingCare early years services received an ERK a list of the content is listed on the CD.


Sponsors of the RESPECT Award

Thanks to M.A.N Made Creations for sponsoring the RESPECT Award and providing an outdoor stove.

M.A.N Made Creations is committed to providing quality handcrafted wooden furniture and play equipment to Kindergartens, Preschools, Child Care Centres and Schools that will last. We aim to provide long term value for money by manufacturing sustainable items that are durable, versatile and practical. We value the natural beauty of wooden items and strive to turn them into practical open-ended pieces that can be used in a multitude of ways and areas. Our inspiration truly comes from the reactions we get from teachers, parents and especially the children.

We would like to thank Garry Baker from Rainwell for sponsoring the RESPECT Award and providing a hand pump.

Rainwell

“Rainwell consultation and design service for a Waterscape – improving our environment and connecting children with nature, and more.” Garry Baker

Rainwater is harvested from a building’s roof, then stored in a Rainwell Waterseat, or rain tank before a hand water pump draws and spills rainwater onto a meandering watercourse to a swale, or rain garden.

The Rainwell Waterseat is a rain tank cleverly concealed in an outdoor seat to become an attractive and functional feature. Constructed using sustainably managed Australian Jarrah, its magnificently rich coloured grain, durability and smooth finish makes it ideal for outdoor seating and an activity platform.

The 400/600 litre tank can be connected to a downpipe or existing water tank for rainwater supply. Rainwater release can be regulated to share water activities between rainfalls. An empty tank then captures stormwater for more activity, and will help reduce flood risk and waterway damage when storms occur.

The classic, cast iron hand water pump’s simple and robust design is easily maintained. Using it requires technique and action to get the water flowing - an experience shared with many children in remote villages around the world.

Filling buckets and watering cans requires teamwork and brainstorming to pump the desired measures, and carrying their containers to sand pits for experiments or, watering garden beds can be fun and challenging.

Hand pumping from storage is not endless. Children will discover the connection between rainfall and water supply, enlightening them to water conservation.

The watercourse’s natural stream-like setting and meandering course through splash pools is an inviting amenity for children to play, learn and develop an appreciation for our natural environment. Watercourse activity may include finding and making objects to float, filling and emptying splash pools, making dams, getting wet, keeping dry and more…

When the children return indoors the watercourse comes alive again with wildlife, such as birds, enjoying a drink or bath in the splash pools - another natural spectacle for the children to enjoy. On warmer days, evaporation will cool the area, and the splash pools will dry out to prevent mosquitoes breeding.

Swales and raingardens are an attractive way to improve the health of the environment. They slow down and reduce stormwater runoff and thus help prevent flooding and erosion in our waterways. In addition, the free-draining soil and plants filter pollutants in rainwater, which helps maintain healthy ecosystems, required for good fish stocks and water activities.

An indigenous bushland garden set in and around the Rainwell Waterscape can provide habitat to attract wildlife, such as insects, birds and lizards. Children to will be given the opportunity to let their senses discover nature’s continuous display of colour, movement and life.

Understanding, valuing and practicing conservation will ensure the health of our natural environment, and can save money through reduced energy, water consumption and maintenance.

Garry Baker | Rainwell Pty Ltd
03 9879 0651 | 0434 433 377 | garry.baker@rainwell.com.au | www.rainwell.com.au
37-39 North Valley Road, Park Orchards VIC 3114
Thanks to Kate Slade, the Director from Projects Inspired, for sponsoring the RESPECT Award and providing a Projects Inspired, Recycling Station.

Kate Slade, the Director of Projects Inspired, informs us about a new and innovative product called Projects Inspired, Recycling Station.

“"We provide you with a choice of 4 recycling options which include Bottles and Cans, General Waste, Food Scraps and Paper Waste. These 4 sticker options allow you the flexibility of picking the best 3 suited to your organisation.

Let's work together to teach kids from a young age the importance of reduce, reuse, recycle and the environmental benefits that follow.""

More information and to purchase a Recycling Station -

Designed with kids at mind, this waste and recycling unit is child friendly and engaging. Features include; bright colours, clearly distinguished openings, labeled compartments, easy to comprehend decals and colour coded bins to achieve non cross contamination and organised waste control. It is also aesthetically pleasing in a learning environment, neatly and hygienically positioned in an easy to clean, compact cupboard.

Our objective is to teach children the importance of recycling and the environmental benefits that follow. We would like to enhance sustainability practices for everyday living and learning.

I look forward to hearing from you and receiving any feedback on the positive impact the Recycling Station has made in your learning environment. kate@projectsinspired.com.au
Thanks to EcoViva for sponsoring the RESPECT Award and providing beautiful play mats.

EcoViva is an Australian based company inspired by Jane Aufderheide. Her focus is to combine a love of style and fun with child safety and functionality at the heart of it all. Influenced by her loyal childcare customers and four children of her own, Jane’s aim is to take a whimsical and cost effective approach to bringing safe and practical products to life, for children Australia wide to enjoy.

The journey began with EcoViva’s non-toxic, waterproof play mats which have made an impressionable mark in playgrounds across the country. With the introduction of gorgeous soft fall mats and waterproof cushions, the EcoViva product range continues to grow.

Environmental ideals govern education today and wherever possible EcoViva supports this message with sustainable products, processes and practices.

EcoViva brings fun, colour and excitement to any environment where children learn.

“EcoViva mats; so simple yet so versatile; great for the outdoors, beautiful enough for the indoors.”

Our exclusive non-toxic/non-allergenic reversible mats are made from 100% reclaimed Polypropylene (plastic). They are not only environmentally friendly and very practical, but 100% waterproof and so easy to clean; simply hose down! Impervious to dirt, sand or liquids, EcoViva mats are ideal for children’s play or snack time. Light weight, they fold down for easy storage and transport.
The focus of the EEEC Conference Embedding Sustainable Culture (2013), was on celebrating education for sustainability, as well as acknowledging the inspiration and effort required to embed sustainability in curriculum and practices, each and every day. Throughout the day, participants were provided with an opportunity to respond and share their thoughts about the following -

**Sustainability... beliefs...definitions...**

**Hopes...aspirations...statements...goals**

**Challenges...**

Participants wrote their responses on ribbons and these were collated onto a piece of hessian - this is now displayed at the EEEC Resource Centre.

**Sustainability... beliefs...definitions...**

- To nurture our world. Enough of everything for all time. Respect, Share, Love.
- Means connecting, developing an appreciation for the future!
- By caring for country we can only grow.
- Connecting children to nature.
- Sustainability is a willingness to change the way you think, and learn from each other.
- For all children to love nature.
- Is Respect, Share, Beauty and Wonder for our planet... for our children's future.
- Is child's play.
- Take the time...take a breath of fresh air.
- We are all connected to the web of life.
- Is natural and second nature.
- Embeds values beliefs care and love for the world.
- Is a way of living.
- Means children, families and educators are on a continual journey of behaviour, practice, conversations through discovery, learning and doing in everyday being!
- Means to empower early learners by generating innate, sustainable behaviours.
- From little beginnings Big things grow. One step at a time.
To show by example in everyday practice patience, kindness and respect.
Respect the children, sustain your aspirations, be inspired, love our world.
To open our hearts to new possibilities to sustain ourselves, those around us and the world we live in.
Let the children play, mess is best.
It becomes an instant part of who we are and is in everything we do.

Hopes…aspirations…statements…goals

- I wish all children could enjoy the joys of nature everyday.
- My hope is that sustainability will be embedded in my program so it creates good habits for all.
- If it is to be it is up to me…
- My hope is that all children get to engage in natural play spaces.
- For everyone to look after each other.
- Lets provide authentic all weather play opportunities – it’s critical to connect!
- Hope for the future for children and everyone!
- That children are able to freely explore outdoors and connect to nature.
- I wish senior staff can hear the joy of children when they are exploring the outside.
- May groundskeepers everywhere learn to maintain play spaces to a high degree of natural potential.
- May every child have the opportunity to play outside often.
- Familiarity is the pathway to empathy.
- Goal to really look deeper at centre practices rather than focusing on the obvious.
- I am enthusiastic about starting my sustainability journey through who I have met, heard and shared this conference with…small steps.
- What a delight to work with children, families and colleagues; sharing a love of nature and working towards sustainability.

Challenges…

- From disinterested staff.
- I am challenged between guiding safely and teaching, and ensuring children can discover independently in uninterrupted ways

Thank you to the conference participants for sharing their thoughts; and a very special thank you to Katina Grammatoglou, Annie Belleville and Jo Falconer for coordinating this project.
WORKSHOPS

**Educator Workshop 1 - Friday May 2nd** (10.00am to 1.00pm) - ‘Infant and toddler sustainable connections’ @ Jika Jika Community Centre - Corner Plant Street and Union Street, Northcote.

**Educator Workshop 2 - Friday 6 June** (10.00am to 1.00pm) - ‘Weighing up the risks of nature play’ @ Jika Jika Community Centre - Corner Plant Street and Union Street, Northcote.

**Educator Workshop 3 - Friday August 22** (10.00am to 1.00pm) - ‘Indigenous cross-cultural awareness’ @ To be confirmed.

**Educator Workshop 4 - Friday November 7** (10.00am to 1.00pm) ‘Sustainable Storytelling investigating Eco-literacy’ @ Jika Jika Community Centre - Corner Plant Street and Union Street, Northcote.

SUSTAINABLE CENTRE VISITS

**Sustainable Centre Visit - Saturday May 24** (11.00am to 1.30pm) Phoenix Street Kindergarten-Phoenix Street, Sunshine followed by Frameworks Recycled Materials for Arts and Crafts - 10 Davies Street, Sunshine.

**Sustainable Centre Visit - Saturday June 21** (11.00am to 1.30pm) – Yarralea and their Nature Play Environment- 54 Yarralea Street, Alphington.

**Sustainable Centre Visit - Saturday August 2** (11.00pm to 1.30pm) - The Farmhouse - 3494 Maroondah Highway, Mansfield.

**Sustainable Centre Visit - Saturday September 13** (11.00am to 1.30pm) - Moreland Community Childcare Centre- Dunstan Reverse Service, 49 Everett Street, Brunswick West.

EEEC CONFERENCE

E EE C Conference ‘Cultivating Caring Communities’ – **Saturday October 18** (9.30am to 4pm) ‘Richmond Town Hall’ 333 Bridge Road, Richmond. Featuring guest speaker from New Zealand-Adam Buckingham, an early childhood educator and author of Turning Trash Into Treasure for Young Children.

AGM

**Annual General Meeting - Saturday November 15** (1.30pm to 4.00pm) Venue- TBA

A Shared Country
The Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) in partnership with the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) and Monash University will present a variety of Indigenous activities and presentations.

**When:** Tuesday 29 July 2014

**Where:** Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, Auditorium at the Visitor Centre, Australian Garden

**Bookings:** Bookings essential 5990 2200

**Cost:** $50

The Early Childhood Program is an enjoyable and safe first excursion for four year olds. Each program is led by a Royal Botanic Gardens early childhood teacher and can be adapted to suit individual group needs. There are a number of options for excursions, including:

- Raindance
- Katie Koala’s bush birthday
- Baby Bilby where do you sleep?
- Scents and Senses
- You me and Murawee

Cranbourne bookings and further information [rbgc@rbg.vic.gov.au](mailto:rbgc@rbg.vic.gov.au)

For your information, each year the Children’s Garden takes a break in winter for regular maintenance and restoration. This year the **Children’s Garden winter closure will be extended** to accommodate the construction of the new education area, beginning on Monday 14 July and re-opening in time to mark its 10th birthday on Sunday 26 October.
Phillip Island Nature Parks is a self-funded, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation of Phillip Island's wildlife and natural features.

The Nature Parks, established by the Victorian Government in 1996, manages approximately 20 per cent of Phillip Island. As a not-for-profit organisation, all revenue generated is invested into research, sustainability, ecotourism, environmental conservation and education.

The diversity of ecosystems within Phillip Island Nature Parks provides an ideal location for students of all ages to engage with amazing flora and fauna while learning about the importance of conservation. The education team at the Nature Parks consists of rangers who are passionate about education for sustainability and have a diverse background in teaching and interpretation.

A Teaching and Learning Resource has been produced by Phillip Island Nature Parks titled, The Australian Fur Seals Early Childhood Teaching and Learning Resource. The resource aims to assist teachers in implementing an engaging unit of work focusing on Australian fur seals. This resource is divided into two sections: the ‘What Animal am I? picture storybook and a teaching and learning activity book. The program addresses key learning outcomes within the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and the National Curriculum.

“We are extremely proud of our first step in working with the Early Childhood sector and hope to spread our anti rubbish message far and wide through the process of life long learning.”

Dr Rebecca Overeem, Education and Interpretation Manager, Phillip Island Nature Park

These FREE resources are available http://www.penguins.org.au/conservation/education/early-childhood-t-and-l-resource/

The story explores the amazing features of the Australia Fur Seal and empowers every child to take responsibility for their rubbish, so that it does not enter our water ways.
Victoria’s most sustainable schools and early childhood services are being encouraged to enter the ResourceSmart Schools Awards 2014.

CEO of Sustainability Victoria Stan Krpan said that Victorian schools and early childhood centres are amongst the most sustainable in Australia. "Every day, thousands of children and students across the state are working on innovative and interesting projects that engage them on a sustainability journey. We are encouraging them to enter the ResourceSmart Schools Awards 2014 and share their inspirational stories," Mr Krpan said.

The awards are run by Sustainability Victoria as part of the Victorian Government’s ResourceSmart Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI Vic), helping children embed sustainability into their everyday activities.

"These awards recognise children and students of all ages from all over the state for their environmental sustainability work that will, hopefully, continue for the rest of their lives," said Mr Krpan.

"For the first time, the awards now recognise and reward all Victorian children from early childhood services though to primary and secondary school students, as well as their teachers and educators for their outstanding achievements in sustainability," added Mr Krpan.

The award categories recognise community leadership and the work of schools across the resource areas of the ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic framework - water, waste, energy and biodiversity - as well as teachers and student-led initiatives.

The theme for the 2014 awards program is Ideas + action = change, a reference to the formula for a successful sustainability project.

Winning schools and early childhood services will share in $40,000 prize money. Award entries close 5pm, Friday 4 July.

“Sustainability is a big part of the EYLF and the NQS and more than ever before services are being asked to incorporate sustainable practices into their day to day operations and their work with children. In this program we want to investigate what that really means. What does it look like and how do you do it?” Luke Touhil


Melindi Robertson, Mt Gravatt Kindergarten, Brisbane (affiliated with Gowrie Queensland)
Margaret Sear, C and K Redlands Community Kindergarten, Brisbane
Catherine Lee, The Point Preschool, Sydney

While the three sections are interconnected they each provide a slightly different perspective on the many ways in which services can go about incorporating sustainability into their everyday practice. http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/e-learning-videos/talking-about-practice/embedding-sustainable-practices/

The publication (2013) by Sue Elliot, Susan Edwards, Julie Davis and Amy Cutter-Mackenzie documents the best of research, theory and practice to date and questions where has early childhood education for sustainability come from and more importantly, where is it going? There are multiple possibilities for educators, researchers, policy makers and managers to take action in early childhood settings for an environmentally sustainable future.

ECA Best of Sustainability: Research, theory and practice by Elliott, Edwards, Davis and Cutter-MacKenzie collates a range of key articles focussing on sustainability from past editions of the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood and Every Child. Sustainable service operation and promoting children’s responsibility and care for the environment are now part of the National Quality Standards and more importantly, all early childhood services must engage with sustainability in this time of increasing global environmental concerns.

This is 67 page publication is available only as ebook (PDF) for $24.95 from ECA - http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/shop/details.cfm?prodid=1000
Sustainability is a global issue that urgently needs addressing, and for which the most serious consequences are for children and future generations. This insightful research text tackles one of the most significant contemporary issues of our times – the nexus between society and environment – and how early childhood education can contribute to sustainable living. By offering international and multidisciplinary research perspectives on Early Childhood Education for Sustainability, each chapter explores and investigates the complex topic of sustainability and its relationship to early childhood education. A particular emphasis that runs through this text is young children as empowered citizens, capable of both contributing to and creating change for sustainability.

The chapter authors work from, or are aligned with, a transformative education paradigm that suggests the socio-constructivist frameworks currently underpinning Early Childhood Education require reframing in light of the social transformations necessary to address humanity’s unsustainable, unjust and unhealthy living patterns. This research text is designed to be provocative and challenging; in so doing it seeks to encourage exploration of current understandings about Early Childhood Education for Sustainability, offers new dimensions for more deeply informed practice, and proposes avenues for further research in this field.

Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC) is on Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/pages/EEEC-Environmental-Education-in-Early-Childhood/240238262781562
If we don’t stand up for children, then we don’t stand for much.

*Marian Wright Edelman*

Diane Levin, in her book *Remote controlled childhood: Teaching young children in the media age*, provides these introductory comments:

"The environment in which many young children are growing up today is saturated with screen media such as television programs, movies, apps, video and computer games, and Internet websites. Children have a rapidly expanding number of ways to access this screen media — including through televisions, computers, and handheld devices such as tablets, smartphones, and video game consoles. In addition, children are exposed to numerous toys and products that are linked to what they see on screens. This media-saturated environment touches most aspects of children’s lives and is a central part of the foundation they are building to understand their world, how it works, how they fit into it, and how they can influence it. Often it affects how they behave and treat one another. It even shapes how they learn, what they want to learn — and much more...."

"Not all media exposure and technology use is inherently negative or passive. There can be situations where children use technology to write, create, learn, and share information. Video-chatting with a grandparent who lives far away can be a meaningful way to keep in touch. In addition, not all children are exposed to the same types and amounts of screen use. Nevertheless, the ever-growing influence of media exposure and technology use means that adults should be knowledgeable about and pay close attention to children's screen-related activities. What children are experiencing and learning through media can be a cause for concern... about how the influence of media and technology on children surfaces at school and home, affecting children's thinking, behavior, interests, and relationships."

Teachers need to understand how screen time and media culture are affecting children and families and find effective ways to promote children’s healthy development in today’s media-saturated environment.
Play Australia is offering its very popular outdoor play seminars for the early years in 4 groups over 2 sessions and 2 separate days, throughout the year. The first seminar for this year -

Early Years Outdoor Play June 2014

Session 1 Day 1

Teaching potentials – the philosophy and practice of working outdoors with children in the early years. This workshop will explore the value of quality outdoor play in the development and learning of Preschool children.

Participants will explore a range of strategies:

- how to plan for the outdoors, including supervision and risk management strategies;
- how to encourage and extend play - intentional teaching in the outdoor place space; and
- ideas to manage the behaviours that can disrupt play outdoors

We will share ideas for provisions for play that will allow centres to equip their play environments with no cost/low cost equipment and play props.

Session 2 Day 2

Participants in this workshop will be given:

- an overview of a range of design concepts to guide either the construction and development of outdoor play spaces or to set outdoor environments to maximise the value of the outdoor program;
- the implications of standards and regulations; and
- ideas for natural environments;
  - plantings for play spaces;
  - sustainable practices;
  - environmental provisions will be explored - including butterfly and bird friendly gardens.

More information, including dates, cost and registration -
We have created a new space in our Green Beginnings Newsletter for Nature Tales. Do you have something to share about your Bush Kinder of Nature Program Journey... please email any information or photographs to info@eeec.org.au.

Bush Kinders (new Initiative)
Kindergartens wishing to conduct regular sessions in the bushland at Royal Botanical Gardens Cranbourne are welcome to join this rapidly growing and exciting initiative. Contact Mick.Robertson@rbg.vic.gov.au

Koorie Kids Bush Playgroup
This initiative is currently under development and it is hoped that the first sessions in the bush at Royal Botanical Gardens Cranbourne will commence in May 2014. Aboriginal families are invited to register an expression of interest with the Gardens Mick.Robertson@rbg.vic.gov.au

This is your opportunity to find out …

Questioning sustainable practice, questioning sustainable ideas
By Tracy Young

Do you have an early childhood sustainability question that you would like answered? Email your question to info@eeec.org.au and Tracy Young will seek out the answer.

EEEC Resource Centre open during the holidays

**Resource Centre Shop** Holiday opening- Friday July 11 (10.00am to 2.00pm) ‘EEEC Resource Centre’- @ Jika Jika Community Centre- Corners Union and Plant Streets, Northcote.

**Resource Centre Shop** Holiday opening - Friday September 3 (10.00am to 2.00pm) ‘EEEC Resource Centre’- @ Jika Jika Community Centre- Corners Union and Plant Streets, Northcote.
What is the RESPECT Award?
Recognition of Excellent Sustainable Practice in Early Childhood Teaching

The inaugural RESPECT Award was awarded in 2008. We felt that early childhood best practice in education for sustainability should be recognised. Winners are issued a plaque and showcased in the EEEC Green Beginnings newsletter and finalists will be invited to display their project journey at the EEEC annual conference.

Be a leader in education for sustainability and share your journey with others.

Award Submission Form due **Tuesday 28 October 2014**

**Award Category A or B**

**Category A**
**Embedding Sustainability**- *Education for sustainability and sustainable practices are embedded in curriculum.*

This category is about celebrating the journey with children as they are involved in education for sustainability, as part of everyday practices and happenings. Applicants should consider the following criteria and explain-

- How sustainable practices are embedded in curriculum? (the starting point and progress)
- Which elements of environmental awareness have been the focus? (i.e.- energy efficiency, water saving, waste reduction, growing edible gardens and using the produce)
- If there is more than one element because you are further in your sustainable journey, how do they merge together and how are children involved?

**OR**

**Category B**
**Cultivating Connections**- *Educators promote environmental awareness with children, as part of the broader community. Educators support children to be involved in these community connections.*

This category is about recognising how children and educators have been involved in environmental awareness with children and how this links to the broader community. Applicants should consider the following criteria and explain-

- Why the project or journey was started? (the history of the project)
- How have educators supported children to be involved in connecting with the broader community in their learning about environmental responsibility? (i.e.- links to community projects and services)
- How has progression and achievement been shared within the community to keep the motivation and engagement of all stakeholders?

**Outline of Submission**
Briefly outline your sustainable journey and current practices.

**Inspirations**
What were your inspirations and intention in commencing this project?
Outcomes
What outcomes and benefits have been observed?
(Impact on the attitudes and practice of staff, children and their families)

Contact Details
Service/ Organisation’s Name:
Contact Person:
Position:
Address incl. postcode:
Phone:
Fax:
Email:
Date application submitted:

Visual documentation and support materials
Finalists will be given the opportunity to display their submission at the EEEC annual conference, so please consider this when submitting documentation - Video, U-tube clips, Photos, Power Point Presentation, PDF documentation or USB submissions.
Please note, in order for your service to be highlighted in the EEEC Green Beginnings newsletter, your application needs to also be submitted in a word document. This can be emailed to EEEC or provided on a USB.

Forward documentation to EEEC at info@eeec.org.au or P.O Box 5138 Alphington, Victoria 3078
For further details visit www.eeec.org.au
Please note, there’s a RESPECT Award application form on the EEEC website.

DISCLAIMER – The products and services advertised in this newsletter, do not imply any endorsement by Environmental Education in Early Childhood.