

## Early Childhood Environmental Education in the Northern Rivers

A big **thank you** and **congratulations** to staff from the long day care centres and preschools who have already taken part in the North East Waste Forum (NEWF) Early Childhood Waste Wise Education Project.

The NEWF project incorporates waste avoidance by implementing waste minimisation strategies, routines and education into child care services. This is an excellent way of becoming proactive against the over-use of natural resources such as energy and water in our society.

If you are reducing the amount of resources you throw out and use, and minimising the use of harmful chemicals, whilst at the same time using your knowledge to educate children and families, then your service will be promoting a healthier and safer world for our children to inherit.

It is wonderful to see early childhood services embracing these ideas. At the recent **Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Conference**, held in Sydney in November 2007, participants were encouraged to promote early childhood environmental education as a mainstream concept. For more ideas on educating for sustainability in early childhood please visit [www.seen.org.au](http://www.seen.org.au).

For more information about the NEWF Early Childhood Waste Wise Education Project, please contact Georgie Piper on 6681 3968.

## Evans Head Preschool's Trip to the Tip!

Allyson Kelly and staff from Evans Head preschool took the children on an excursion to the Evans Head landfill site last November, in order to show them where rubbish goes once the trucks have picked up our kerbside wheelie bins.

The children were able to see where general waste, green waste and other metal goods such as discarded washing machines go to be recycled or dumped into landfill. The tour, which was conducted by Mark Smith from Richmond Valley council also showed the children where they can bring their parents to drop off their paper, glass, plastic and aluminum recyclables (RVC currently does not have kerbside recycling collection so residents are asked to take their recyclables to the various transfer stations in the RV council area).

This excursion was a great way for children to begin to understand the bigger picture and issues around waste disposal.



Evans Head preschool children experience first hand where their green waste ends up- in this pile of mulch!

## Wollongbar Preschools Policy for a More Sustainable Future

**Well done!** to Rosemary Gillett and Staff at Wollongbar Preschool who are planning to incorporate a new policy into their service to support waste minimisation and water conservation in 2008.

This policy will support practices which have recently been implemented with the help of the NEWF Early Childhood Waste Wise Education Project. Recycling, composting & general waste was separated at the preschool; however these routines have now been streamlined. Excellent new signs that are easy to understand are being used, & low waste ideas are being promoted on a regular basis.

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#### Book Review- Educating for Sustainability

**Early Childhood Environmental Education – making it mainstream**, is an ECA publication by Julie Davis and Sue Elliot. It a **great read** for anyone wanting to include Education for Sustainability (EfS) in their service.

As a society we are becoming aware that we have a responsibility to take care of our natural environment for future generations. Elliot and Davies write that this issue is an inter-generational social justice issue and we cannot continue to degrade our planet, stripping it of resources in the name of consumerism, without considering future generations and their need for a healthy safe place to live in.

This is an excellent publication for four reasons. **Firstly** it provides solid reasoning as to why environmental education is vital in early childhood settings. **Secondly**, the authors provide us with an understanding of how current practices in early childhood teaching already lean towards an easy incorporation of environmental education into services. **Thirdly** a way of teaching which includes children, educators and parents working together towards life long learning & creative solutions is explored. **Lastly** some practical suggestions & examples of services already on the right track are given, with excellent resources included.

Elliot and Davis write that everyday practices within services are very important so that children become **resource conservers as well as resource consumers** (pg 10, Elliot and Davis, 2003).

It is recommended that anyone interested in educating for sustainability, who would like to incorporate environmental education into the philosophy and practices of your service as a whole, read this excellent publication.

#### Want to be involved in the EC Waste Wise Project?

EC services in the following council areas are eligible to be a part of this project: **Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Richmond Valley and Clarence Valley.**  
 For expressions of interest please call Georgie Piper on 6681 3968.

#### Strategies being introduced by some local Early Childhood Services

- ✓ Installing worm farms and compost bins.
- ✓ Routines organised for children to separate materials at mealtimes and compost food scraps.
- ✓ Promotion of low waste lunches, particularly for parents in LDC services where children are going to school next year.
- ✓ Streamlining of composting and recycling routines.
- ✓ Promotion aimed at parents to inform them of the environmental pollution caused by conventional disposable nappies.
- ✓ Working towards eliminating the use of disposable nappies in service.
- ✓ Informing parents of the Waste Wise Project in Newsletters.
- ✓ Re - evaluating type of bins used in the service. Re-evaluating signage used on internal bins.
- ✓ Changes in purchasing; more items purchased with recycled content and biodegradable utensils purchased.
- ✓ Re-using envelopes.
- ✓ Re-using paper for art or for drafts. Awareness of printing double sided.
- ✓ Purchasing new storage for increasing amounts of recyclables being re-used for craft.
- ✓ Avoiding the use of plastic wrap in kitchens.
- ✓ Reducing the use of bin liners in bathrooms; paper towels recycled.
- ✓ Option available to parents for newsletters to be sent out by email instead of paper.
- ✓ Incorporate low waste policy into the service (see first page of newsletter).
- ✓ Services taking part in educational group time and inviting the EC Project Co-ordinator to parent night.