

Wise Water & Waste Management Newsletter



This newsletter is collaboration between **Rous Water** and the **North East Waste Forum** to inform, inspire and strengthen outcomes for wise waste and water use and education for sustainability in our local Early Childhood Services.

**NEWS from Workshop
March 08 at Ballina**

**Our Children & Our Environment:
take action, take care!**

"Thanks to all the Early Childhood Services who attended the workshop in March and Narelle Dewhurst for hosting our gathering at River Street. Staff came together to discuss water & waste minimisation and look at other aspects of Education for Sustainability in EC Services. We enjoyed idea sharing, good company, a walk to Eco-Options and some delicious food & coffee. This newsletter is feedback from the workshop."

Wise water use: at Richmond Hill Preschool



Our Centre is in a shared facility, ie community hall. This means that our water conservation actions will reach a larger audience but also creates more discussion to make changes. We were keen to have the program and able to take action almost immediately by fitting the single flush toilet with a flush reduction device and purchasing sink sieves for all the plug holes. We investigated the options for tap flow restriction devices and dreamed of a rainwater tank. As well to strengthen the program effectiveness we provided information to the parents through our newsletter. And then, with great excitement we won the Rainwater Tank from Rous Water. Not only is this perfect for our veggie garden but it demonstrates to the community, our commitment to water conservation. Installing the tank proved to be a challenge but we believed in the importance of what we are doing and worked hard to make it happen. *Maureen*

NEWS

Front page

- Hearing about water & waste actions and issues from Richmond Hill & Wollongbar Preschools.
- Comments from workshop participants.

Back page

- Biodiversity ideas
- Energy ideas
- Policy ideas

Wise waste management: at Wollongbar Preschool



It was great to have Georgie visit, conduct a waste audit and then speak to the children during a language time. The children were very interested to see someone sorting the rubbish. We were surprised about the amount of compost that was going into the general waste bin and also it was good to be reminded that we could be recycling many more items than we were previously. At times it is hard to find time to wash out items such as yoghurt containers, but we do when-ever possible. Georgie showed the children the items which could be composted and also examples of containers that could be used instead of plastic wrap or throw away items. This was a great way for children to start thinking about the rubbish which they throw out after eating from their lunchboxes. Georgie attended a staff meeting a few weeks later and that was a great way to motivate all of the staff. We brainstormed and worked through strategies which are now in an action plan to keep us committed to waste minimisation in our service. Some strategies include sending out newsletters by email, recycling and composting effectively, double sided printing where possible promoting low waste lunches and letting parents know our focus and our aim to reduce waste where possible. We will also be introducing policy to support our low waste focus. *Rosemary*

**What participants
said . . .**

Which section of this workshop was most valuable to you?

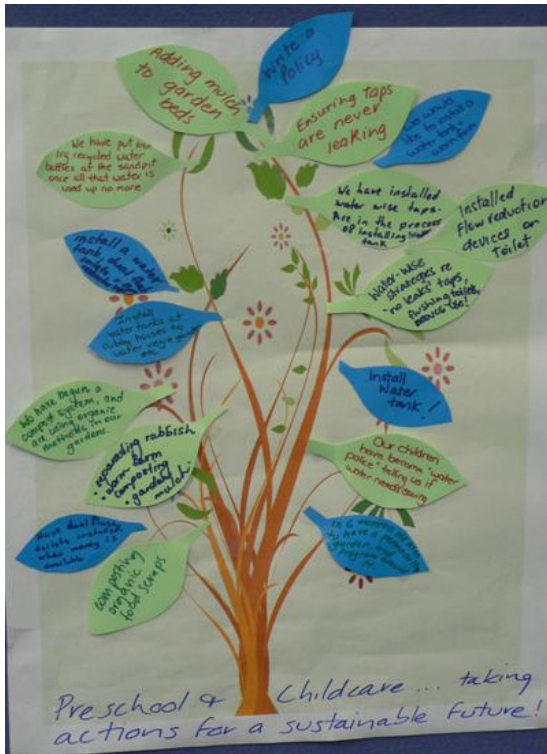
- Hearing practical ideas from other centres.
- Hearing what they were achieving and putting into practice.
- Hearing what other centres are doing in regard to recycling and water usage.
- Visiting the Eco-options Shop

Which message/idea will you be able to take back to your Services?

- To educate families by sharing what we do and try and get the parents (families) involved at home.
- Draw the threads of the ideas already developed & implemented and new ideas gained today, into a complete policy for the pre-school.

Education for sustainability is more than just worm farms & rainwater tanks!

It's about values, aims to foster lifelong skills and includes biodiversity & energy use. It helps us all to connect with the natural world, realise our dependence on it and consider ways we can 'step lightly'.



Biodiversity

What is it and why is it important for us all?

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. It is all around us and looking after us. We may not see it but biodiversity helps keep our water drinkable, our air breathable and our soils fertile for growing food. The importance of biodiversity to a healthy environment has become increasingly clear.

How can we foster interest & understanding about it?

The curiosity of young children serves as a perfect starting point to investigate biodiversity. Early childhood educators are skilled at capitalising on these opportunities, enhancing interest & knowledge and using the outdoor area as a learning environment.

Four key areas to focus on are:

Tuning into your local natural environment – by observing and interacting with the daily changes like wind, puddles, visiting wildlife and flowering plants children have a chance to connect with the environment. They explore, delight and wonder; this helps to develop positive attitudes for our environment.

Wildlife diversity – by noticing the plants and animal behaviours, adaptations and interactions like spider webs and insect colours, children can start to question and communicate about our environment. They start to learn about it and develop an interest for it.

Local habitat uniqueness – by learning about their local native species eg Bangalow palms children can start to develop a sense of place and belonging to their local natural environment.

All our actions have an impact on the environment – by discussing the consequences of our actions like bare areas under the swing and recycling the water play, children can start to understand we all have a role and responsibility to care and respect our natural environment.

Photographs (front and back) from the workshop and courtesy Wollongbar Preschool & Sandhills Early Childhood Centre.

Energy

During the March workshop we briefly discussed energy as part of the bigger picture for a eco-friendly service. Tony Meldrum from Eco Options in Ballina generously gave us permission to discuss an energy audit that he had undertaken at Fox Street Preschool in Ballina. Tony outlined room by room all of the physical changes which could be made to the building to make it more energy efficient. Some are simple changes like changing light bulbs, while other changes require more planning and budgeting. At the workshop we talked about the importance of everyday interactions with children to raise awareness of energy usage and strategies used eg role modelling & discussion with the children about using blinds or opening a window in favour of turning on the air conditioning.

For energy conservation ideas ring Tony Meldrum or visit Eco Options Shop at 18 Cherry St Ballina ph 6686 8887

Environmental Management Plans or Policy

To finish this newsletter we would like to promote the concept of Environmental Management Plan (EMPs). An EMP is a very useful tool to keep staff, families and committees on track if your goal is a Service which models and embraces Education for Sustainability. An EMP will ensure that a service's commitment to sustainability initiatives are maintained into the future (*page 27 Climbing Little Green Steps*). An EMP will give you a long term focus and it will enable to you move to a position where you are able to implement policy to support sustainable practices. EMPs do not have to be complicated, rather they are Action Plans describing how you will meet your goals in small, measured steps. For example, raising awareness with families and children that excess packaging and gimmicky foods in lunches is a waste of our natural resources, is one small step towards waste minimisation and an eco-aware Service.

For more ideas see the Climbing Little Green Steps Manual at www.itsalivingthing.net.au

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