ECA VIC ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
Special Interest Group

During 2005 Tracy Young and Sue Elliott wrote a policy position statement on Early Childhood Environmental Sustainability for ECA. This policy can be viewed on ECA’s website www.earlychildhoodvictoria.org.au and is a starting point for the development of policy and procedures for early childhood services. This policy statement will soon include links to relevant web sites as well as information on sustainability.

We have entered the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable development, or DESD, (2005-2014) with the UN’s practice of designating International Decades, that began in 1985 to draw attention to major issues and to encourage international action on questions of global importance. With the world facing a multitude of ongoing problems and challenges, it seems timely to focus on sustainability, and in particular education for sustainable development.

WHAT IS EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

It’s about how we live our lives. Our current patterns of living are unsustainable. Furthermore, our children will increasingly bear the consequences of decisions and actions currently being made or avoided.

Elliott, Rowntree and Davis. 2005

The term environmental education is familiar to most people and many early childhood services incorporate environmental practices into their programs with worm farms, recycling, water conservation and natural materials as a few examples. This is a great starting point for sustainability, however sustainability broadens the focus to include social-cultural and economic considerations. This could mean that children do not just use a water tank or experience conserving water as they play with it in the sand pit, but gain knowledge about the social and economic reasons for doing this. There is still a great deal of discussion about how this will occur at an early childhood level but the issue becomes particularly relevant when we consider the intergenerational equity of how the earths resources are being used today, and how this will affect future generations, many of whom are children today in our services.

WHAT CAN I DO?

There is a great deal of interest in environmental sustainability at this time and we will focus on this topic in future newsletters. The ECA Vic Branch would like to develop a special interest group to explore the issues of environmental sustainability in early childhood and are calling for interested persons to become involved.

The group will meet bi-monthly, 4 times each year at Swinburne University’s Child and Family studies Department in Prahran. Tracy Young will convene the SIG and is keen for any one to become involved. You do not need to be using environmental sustainable practices or be knowledgeable about the key issues. A keen interest is the major requirement.

AIMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

- Advocate for children, families and issues that relate to environmental sustainability
- Increase awareness and knowledge
- Increase discussion on topics about sustainable education and development

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact: Tracy Young 9214 6114 tryoung@swin.edu.au