

SINGLETON HEIGHTS PRE-SCHOOL INC.



PHILOSOPHY

RELEVANT LEGISLATION / LINKS:

ACT: Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010: Section 323

REGULATIONS: Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 73, 155, 162, 166, 168,

NQS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2

Our service Philosophy is a commitment in relation to the management, leadership, policies, practices, play-based curriculum, inclusive practices, a natural outdoor environment, interactions, relationships, community partnerships and highly qualified, experienced staff, committed to continual professional development. The Pre-School honours, and is committed to, the rights of all children, child protection and child safe practices, the provision of a culturally safe, welcoming environment, and the continual improvement of the service in response to the needs of our local community.

Children and our Play Based Curriculum

We believe that Pre-School should be an enjoyable and fun place for children to be. We see children as being active participants in their own learning and recognise that this will happen best in an environment which provides fun, enjoyable and engaging experiences, and where children are supported and encouraged to use their imagination and think creatively. They are given time to explore, investigate, ask questions, and express curiosity and wonder in their world.

Play is a context for learning which allows the expression of personality and uniqueness, enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity, enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning, supports them to explore and develop relationships, builds on skills and knowledge, stimulates their senses, promotes problem solving, engages them in decision-making and stimulates a sense of wellbeing. Play is often messy and untidy, and the children are encouraged to explore and learn through their senses, so getting messy is part of the fun.

Our experienced, knowledgeable educational team plays an important part in supporting children's learning across all developmental domains, within the context of our play-based program. Experienced, knowledgeable Educators thoughtfully plan our environment and resources which support uninterrupted, fun, child-led, interest-based engagement, as well as opportunities for relaxation. We maintain a balance between experiences which are initiated by the children and those including which are supported, by thoughtful intentionality, including school readiness. Our Educators place a high value on being creative, asking questions and providing an endless variety of loose parts that scaffolds children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Risk taking is an important element of children's play, with our outdoor and nature programs providing, many opportunities for them to learn to consider and manage risk and safety, in a controlled and carefully supervised environment. We provide the opportunity for children to take part in experiences that build on their capabilities, as they climb a tree, jump from a height, balance, swing and slide, encouraging them to accept challenge and experience feelings of success, pride, thrill and exhilaration.

Children's Safety

Our service is committed to providing an environment that ensures children receive the care and protection necessary to ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, upholding the rights of all children irrespective of cultural background, gender or disability. All Educators, Management Committee and volunteers of our service are committed to building and maintaining a child safe environment which is inclusive, transparent, promotes child participation, and ensures interactions and engagement with children are appropriate and safe. We advocate for child safety and protection through every interaction, relationships, curriculum, design of the environment, conversations, practices, policies, and procedures.

We listen to, and empower children, having zero tolerance of abuse. All are aware they are Mandatory Reporters, following documented systems to take allegations seriously and respond appropriately if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm and have current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.

Risk assessments of our environment, practices, experiences/excursions, resources and child health conditions, are created and continually updated.

Families

Engaging in a holistic approach to working with children and their families, we recognise that the diversity in family and community life means that families experience belonging, being and becoming in many ways. We respect each family as unique, and genuinely strive to understand the individual situations that impact the family unit. Families bring their diverse knowledge, experiences, home languages, perspectives, expectations, expertise, skills and cultural ways of knowing, being and doing, and by understanding and respecting the decisions of families, this supports their engagement with our service, along with enhancing the wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.

We continually reflect to create a culturally safe place, working in intercultural ways through pedagogy, practice and interactions. Each family is greeted each day with a smile and a warm, friendly welcome. Our partnerships with families are based on genuine relationships, characterised by mutual respect, understanding, trust, kindness, compassion, sensitivity and open, honest communication. Families are invited to engage with the curriculum and their child's learning journey through our regular communication sharing their child's Pre-School experience and learning, and invitations to participate in the Pre-School day, experiences and special events. They are also supported to engage with their child's development and learning through conversations the many home-based learning programs created and shared by the Pre-School.

Curriculum

Educators celebrate the individuality of all children and strive to promote a love for learning through the promotion of curiosity, wonder, fun and exploration and the celebration of their participation and learning. Children are viewed as active participants and decision-makers, with a voice, learning at their own pace. Early learning influences their continuing educational journey and life opportunities, with each child's wellbeing, strong sense of connection, optimism, engagement, resilience, risk-taking and persistence, facilitating the development of a positive attitude to learning. We know that when given periods of uninterrupted time, space, educational support, planned resources and a thoughtfully planned environment, a child can ask questions and participate in experiences to explore and construct new ideas, as well as build on existing knowledge. This supports children to develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills, including inclusion, fairness and sustainability, necessary to understand and make sense of the complex and diverse world we live in.

The curriculum encompasses all interactions, experiences, environment, transitions, routines and events, planned and unplanned, as well as spontaneous and intentional teaching opportunities, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development. The Pre-School provides an educational program that is based on the "Early Years Learning Framework V2", promoting the highest expectations for all children's learning, and encompassing Educator's understanding and respect for the unique qualities and culture, as well as the developmental capabilities, needs, interests, knowledge, experiences, and learning styles of each child.

Educators draw on their professional knowledge of child development and learning theory, as well as their in-depth knowledge of each child, and the group, to choose appropriate teaching strategies, practices, and to design interesting, stimulating and challenging, indoor and outdoor learning environments. Educational programs are balanced and varied, offering opportunities for quiet/active times and spaces, individual/small group/large group experiences, time for individual education and development, child interactions, support of children's individual and group interests, and experiences that support holistic development across the language, physical, creative, exploratory, dramatic, musical, cognitive, social and emotional, independence and life skills domains.

Educators engage in professional decision-making as they engage in a program cycle of learning which encompasses the observation of children, analysis of learning, planning, implementation of the program and evaluation of learning. Children thrive when they, their families and Educators work together in partnership to support their learning, development and wellbeing. Family participation is valued and relationships are strengthened when Educators recognise and affirm children's home languages and cultural identities and when they create culturally secure and safe places for children and their families. Educators reflect on relational and place-based pedagogies relevant to our local community, supporting them to build trusting, respectful relationships between children, families, professionals, and members of the community.

Incursions and excursions are a valued part of our curriculum, as Educators seek and take advantage of opportunities to extend children's learning, introduce new understandings, as well as a sense of belonging to "country" and their local community.

Environment

Research tells us that the environment has a crucial and formative impact on the way children's brains develop, through its potential to inspire and engage children in learning. We believe that our learning environments support development as children are encouraged to be curious, make choices, think independently, engage with challenges, take considered risks, explore and investigate ideas, ask questions, interact and collaborate with others, be spontaneous, experience fun and joy, and appreciate beauty and diversity. This promotes wellbeing through feelings of being nurtured, respected and safe. The environment, offers opportunities for time to be alone, engage in a social play-based context or delight in messy, busy areas. The rhythm of the day is supported by flexibility in routine to include indoor/outdoor play, supporting children to play outside in wet weather under purpose-built undercover areas or being outdoors to feel the light sprinkle of rain.

Learning spaces respect children as capable by providing them with authentic materials & tools and invite open-ended play, and these are cared for and respected by the children and the Educators. We provide quality, safe resources which are meaningfully considered for their purpose and inclusion, supporting the development of interests, knowledge, skills, collaboration, communication, creation, construction, socialisation and problem solving. We value resources which are open-ended, multifunctional and accessible for all children, while a variety of thoughtfully considered loose parts are also included to support exploration and creation.

Our service values learning through play and experiences in our natural outdoor play environment, supporting Educators as they encourage children to develop an appreciation of, and understanding of our impact on, the natural world. We promote the understanding of the interdependence between people, animals, plants, lands and waters and the importance of connection to, and acknowledgement of, caring for "Country". Our outdoor space, and engagement with our surrounding community environment, supports physically active play, games, discovery, and connection with nature and "Country". The children access and engage with plants, dirt, mud, rocks, water, sand, trees, planting, weeding, harvesting, watering, digging and raking, while learning about ecosystems below and on the ground, as well as in the abundant tree canopy. Children are supported to take an active role in sustainable practices, caring for the environment and to think about ways they can contribute to a sustainable future.

Risk taking is an important element of children's play, with our outdoor and nature programs providing, many opportunities for them to learn to consider and manage risk and safety, in carefully supervised environment. We provide the opportunity for children to take part in experiences that build on their capabilities, as they climb a tree, jump from a height, negotiate the movement of logs and rocks, balance, swing and slide. Educator's encourage them to accept challenge and experience feelings of success, pride, thrill and exhilaration. Children are encouraged and supported to explore, experiment, problem solve and take appropriate risks, according to their current capacities, strengths and interests.

Celebrating Relationships, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation

The diversity in family and community life in Australia means that children experience belonging, being and becoming in many ways. Children are born belonging to a culture, and bring their diverse experiences, home languages, heritage, ancestral knowledge and histories, values, beliefs, perspectives, expectations, funds of knowledge, traditional practices, and cultural ways of knowing, being and doing to their learning. Educators acknowledge this and believe children and families have the right to celebrate their culture and heritage and should experience inclusive access and participation in Early Childhood Education, irrespective of disability, individual needs, family circumstances, strengths, gender, capabilities, or diverse ways of living, being and knowing.

We acknowledge the Wanaruah people, the traditional owners of the land on which we play, learn and live, respecting the thousands of years of learning that has taken place on this land. By valuing and practicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other cultural perspectives, and embedding these in the service curriculum, practices, conversations and environment, Educators promote intercultural connection and Reconciliation. Our physical environment proudly includes a yarning circle, artworks, murals and our "Physical Acknowledgement of Country", while we also maintain connections with local Elders. We support an Educator in the role of "Aboriginal Community Liaison and Program Mentor" and maintain an annual "Reconciliation Action Plan", (RAP), relating to professional development goals, program inclusions, environmental inclusions, special projects and relationships with Aboriginal organisations.

Our Leadership, Management and Educational teams engage in critical reflection and challenge practices relating to inequities or discrimination. Decisions in relation to the curriculum, physical environment and resources, promote genuine access and participation, and the creation of inclusive, respectful learning environments for all children, families, visiting professionals and community members. We adopt flexible and informed practices, and make adjustments to optimise access, participation and engagement in learning, supporting child wellbeing, and positive outcomes for children of all diversities.

We prioritise the value of additional Educators and their continued professional development, to support the diverse needs of the children. This ensures each child is given every opportunity to celebrate personal milestones and achievements, learn, and develop to their full potential. We place value on ensuring that our programs are accessible and meaningful for all children, achieved through planning for individual learning programs, room and outdoor curriculums, the inclusion of a variety of practices and strategies, and modifications to practice, resources and the environment.

Educators

Our Pre-School acknowledges that qualified, passionate, knowledgeable and committed Educators are a core factor in the quality of an Early Childhood service. We celebrate the individuality of all Educators, and they are encouraged to engage in professional development and share learned knowledge, skills and talents, in relation to early childhood development and pedagogy. We value the role of consistent and experienced leadership and governance and understand that collaborative leadership and teamwork are built on a sense of shared responsibility, professional and respectful conversations and professional accountability for children's learning, development and wellbeing, along with the continual development of the learning environment, policies, procedures, and practice.

Individual expertise and knowledge support child learning outcomes, with Educators taking on specific roles. These include an Educator supporting curriculum, environmental development and community engagement through her role as "Aboriginal Community Liaison and Program Mentor", an "Art Curriculum and Program Mentor", the "Environment and Sustainability Program Mentor" promotes sustainability learning in the curriculum and practices in the environment, our "Music Program Coordinator" moves between rooms sharing her passion for while another facilitates our Glencore tree growing partnership.

The Pre-School values the inclusion of an above required number of Educators and Early Childhood University trained teachers, who are supported to maintain their teacher NESA teacher accreditation. Educator's role model and engage with children during play, and our Educators have the experience, knowledge and training to include learning through a play-based program. Our service welcomes new Educators and those training, with all Educators mentoring and supporting orientation, development and the meeting of course requirements.

The Pre-School values a culture of reflective practice, where ongoing professional development for Educators is encouraged and expected, supporting continual service improvement in relation to practice, curriculum, the learning environment, policies and procedures. There is a high expectation of the quality of the educational curriculum and environment, as well as a mutual respect and partnership between families, Educators and the community. Supporting our goal for excellence, all Educators participate in the service individual professional development and review process and the service promotes the wellness and wellbeing of our team. In response to our local community context, the Pre-School prioritises staff training in relation to mental health,

Transitions

We are committed to the role of our service in relation to supporting children and families during transitions from home or other Early childhood services to the Pre-School, and in relation to transitions to other services and school. The transition to the school environment is supported by each child's engagement with the Pre-School curriculum, individual child summative assessment of learning throughout the year, professional communication and documentation, relationships with local schools, engagement in a formal transition to school reporting process and meetings, as well as support for families throughout the process. Experienced, knowledgeable Educators provide children with a school readiness program across all developmental domains as well as the foundations of literacy, numeracy and other pre academic skills being enhanced by responsive and intentional teaching opportunities through play-based learning, Formal programs across many developmental domains have been created to support families.

Early Childhood Education and Guiding Documents

Our service respects, understands and engages with the regulatory, operational, educational, and general guidance provided by the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, "Early Years Learning Framework Version 2.0", the National Quality Framework, the "Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics" and the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child".

The Educational team and Management Committee, engage in reflective, and critically reflective practice, which supports the quality improvement review process, with a consultative approach engaging families, children and community members. In conjunction with the annual creation of a Quality Improvement Plan, (QIP), the service maintains a Reconciliation Action Plan, (RAP). We are committed to advocating our role in advocating the value of quality early learning and education, and the role of our service in our community.

Community

Our service is committed to reflecting our unique geographical, cultural and community context with relational pedagogy underpinning the importance of Educators building trusting, respectful, collaborative relationships and welcoming the perspectives of children, families, other Educators, professionals, educational support services, local schools and members of the community.

We recognise that culture is a fundamental part of being for every individual, shaping their sense of identity and belonging. Community connections and ongoing relationships, support the children and families to engage with, and learn about, the diverse nature of community, the interrelated roles of the cultures to which they belong and engage with, and the connectedness of home and community. We believe that children are citizens in their own right, and promote the opportunity for them to participate, contribute and engage meaningfully within their various communities. We recognise our responsibility to provide a culturally safe environment for children and their families, where everyone feels supported and empowered to embrace their own culture and identity.

We understand that in Aboriginal culture, identity is formed through relationships with family, community and land, which forms the foundation for learning in which Elders play a vital role as knowledge holders and teachers. We seek cultural knowledge and expertise from our local Elders, to inform our curriculum, practices, environment and professional development, and strive to promote and preserve the culture and knowledge of the community through our commitment to Reconciliation.

The children engage with the community through excursions which support the curriculum. We value, and maintain, community connections and partnerships including relationships with local Aboriginal Elders, two local aged-care facilities, the town's army heritage, Singleton Tidy Town's Committee, local schools, community facilities and services/businesses throughout the community. We are very proud of our long-term sustainability partnership project with Glencore Ravensworth Open Cut Mine. We engage with our local community through grant opportunities from local mines and community sources, to support maintenance and new projects in the Pre-School relating to sustainability, continual physical improvement of the premises, supporting families in need and staff professional development.