The Sustainable Kindergarten Project – year one, 2013.

This year we set out to create a learning culture for change:

- A culture where sustainable practises are embedded in our daily kindergarten routines and activities.
- A culture that supports children to understand the need for sustainable practices at kindergarten, at home and in the community.
- A culture that encourages every member of our community to reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink.
- To develop a community that understands, recognises and respects the Kaurna people and their connection to land.

The Early Years Learning framework (EYLF, 2009) and the Australian Curriculum (AC, 2011) both have a strong focus on sustainability.

Recent reflection on our progress in this project has demonstrated that these practices have become embedded in our daily activities. We see evidence that the children understand in so many ways.

We hear the children talking to each other about sustainable practices. They remind each other about reusing lunch wrappers, or what to put in the bin for composting. They use the words from our Kaurna acknowledgement as they discuss the ways in which we can ‘care for our land and the animals’.

The children have learned songs, read books, investigated websites, watched educational videos (Dirt Girl), discussed, drawn and played games that build understanding about sustainable practices.

Recycling: lunch wrappers and containers are sorted, washed and reused; scrap paper is put into the recycling bins; boxes, cards, bottle tops etc are utilised in craft activities. Visit from NAWMA (Northern Area Waste Management)

Containers with a 10 cent deposit are collected, taken to the recycling centre and the profit used to buy new resources.

We save paper (and therefore trees) by drawing on both sides of the page.

We save electricity by celebrating Earth Day and by turning off lights during the brightest part of the day and when most of the children are outside.

We save water by watering with cans and drippers as much as possible. The children pour any water they haven’t drunk onto the vegetables or other plants rather than down the drain. We have
water saving taps in the children’s bathroom. In 2014 we will start to use water from the rainwater tank to water the garden, too.

We have established a worm farm. We learnt about which food scraps are suitable for the worms to eat. We use the water and castings from the worm farm to fertilise the vegetables.

We have established 3 raised garden beds with vegetables. The children helped to set the garden beds up—they moved straw and soil, added compost and then discussed what vegetables they would like to have. We then worked as a team to plant seedlings and seeds. The children have worked to care for the growing vegetables, watering and weeding. We have just harvested our first crop of lettuce! The children have also been able to eat the mulberries straight from the tree and we have used them to cook with, too.

We often see the children picking up sticks or offering to sweep up fallen leaves. They know that these can be composted and will eagerly tip their buckets into the big green bin.

The children are learning about the creatures we find in the garden and caring for our kindy pets. I have observed a child carefully moving snails off the path and others filling the bird bath with their watering cans on a hot day. The Living Eggs program showed children the life cycle of animals and built understanding of the interdependence between living things.

The Cultural food day supporting the Universal Children’s Day project to establish wells in Sri Lanka fosters children’s understanding about global sustainability and the need for communities to support each other.

We will soon be working in conjunction with NRM Environmental education to write a Site Environment Management Plan (SEMP). This will help to focus our plans and support us to apply for grants to fund different projects.

In 2014 we will be establishing a Kaurna garden on the eastern side of the site. We are working together with Salisbury Council and NRM Environmental education to plan the layout and to choose indigenous plants that will be suitable for the kindergarten; plants that are hardy and need limited water.

**Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world.**

When educators create environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships with people and the environment, children respond accordingly. When children participate collaboratively in everyday routines, events and experiences and have opportunities to contribute to decisions, they learn to live interdependently. Children’s connectedness and different ways of belonging with people, country and communities helps them to learn ways of being which reflect the values, traditions and practices of their families and communities. Over time this learning transforms the ways they interact with others. (EYLF, 2009)

‘Sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of Earth to maintain all life’. (AC, 2011)