



The Subicare Model for Reducing Waste in the Early Years – July 2020

LGSWA was lucky enough to visit Subicare early learning centre for a virtual tour with Lindsay Poggenpoel, Centre Director and Agnes Poon, the Sustainability Co-ordinator in early June 2020.

Subicare clearly values the ‘fostering of opportunities for children to build resilience, explore their natural curiosity and engage in meaningful interactions’. This is highlighted by their substantial and embedded sustainable practices directed by a 5 themed Sustainability Improvement Plan of actions and initiatives which arose from a collaborative effort from within the Subicare community of staff, families, Earthwise next door and passionate individuals.

‘This improvement plan guides educators to embed sustainable practices’ says Lindsay ‘and having a Sustainability Co-ordinator such as Agnes to turn to, provides our Care areas with regular support to think about sustainable opportunities in everyday play’

You only need to look at their multiple embedded practices to reduce waste to see the plan is alive and children play an active role in being environmentally responsible.

The garden beds are the focal points of this service and they are designed by children & community utilising old shoes & socks, in tyres, in magnificent looking bath tubs, in old fridges from Earthwise & wooden crate beds which show creative re-use at work. The children plant, maintain, harvest, eat and take home, the food produced in season, so their efforts have real meaning and they learn the importance of not wasting the precious food they eat. This is reinforced by the Centre’s practice (pre-Covid) to only take one serve to eat from the communal plate at a time.

The natural procedures then follow which close the loop on food wastage, as the children take the leftover food scraps to their compost and worms with any excess food scraps being collected by Earthwise community next door. The children cut up the worm scraps very small ‘as they all know worms have no teeth’. This practices vital fine motor skills, embeds sustainable behaviours early and encourages curiosity to explore one of our hardest working nature recyclers, the worm.

‘The parents tell us they are corrected on the re-use of their food scraps on numerous occasions at home’ Agnes laughs, which simply reinforces how embedded these behaviours are becoming. Of course those lovely garden beds are richly producing because Subicare uses the compost produced from their food scraps, the worm castings and worm juice back on the gardens.

Excitingly, Agnes credits LGSWA with her learning on worms and making compost in a bottle from when she attended an LGS Reducing Waste workshop hosted at Earthwise in 2018.

Interestingly too, Subicare introduced a whole service Wet bag policy to their families when the plastic bag ban was initiated in June 2019. This solution to reduce the impacts of single use plastic in Childcare has been espoused by LGSWA at our reducing Waste workshops for some years and

Lindsay ensured her family community were on board and supported in this behaviour change, by pre-purchasing 2 reusable wet bags per family and passing on the discounted rate them as well.

Some other highly effective reducing waste initiatives which Subicare have embedded, include having a creative reuse corner for children to visit for resources for their play experiences. Educators are encouraged to also source from this area as well as consult Agnes' folder of sustainable ideas to maximise learning during play.

Subicare is also wonderful at community partnering and is a collection centre for many hard to recycle items such as batteries, bottle caps for Envision hands and coffee pods. In normal times children & educators walk to a florist in Subiaco to deliver these pods and of course stop in for the obligatory babycino!!

Subicare feels privileged to be situated right next door to Earthwise community as this relationship is multifaceted, based on mutual support and beneficial both socially and inter-generationally. The support Peg Davies from Earthwise has given to Subicare to reduce waste includes the setting up of their fridge garden beds and worm farms and helping them to propagate donated seedlings which have now grown into a flourishing native garden. In return Subicare donates their excess compost, worms and worm juice and in normal times the children make and deliver muffins on a Thursday, with the extra fun by- product being they get to pick mulberries from the mulberry tree.

Thanks so much Lindsay and Agnes for sharing all that you do to our wider Early Years community. To inspire us further still Lindsay has filmed these processes and in conjunction with LGSWA we can share this as a short film clip.



