



Statement of Philosophy

GARFIELD STREET CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Through our engagement with the National Quality Framework¹, including the National Quality Standard (NQS²) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF³), we strive to:

- > Contribute to positive outcomes for children.
- > Provide high quality education and care.
- > Implement best practices in all areas of our service delivery.
- > Be informed by current research.

Our Community

Our staff and families come from diverse cultural backgrounds; we believe this to be a great strength, and we aim to reflect our connectedness through core principles and values within our service philosophy. We recognise that approaches to education and care for young children can be varied and individual, thus our service philosophy aims to identify the core values that our service adheres to, without being

*I like about teachers: "the colour of their skin. I like every colour in the rainbow."
– Isobel, 4y*

¹ The National Quality Framework encompasses several initiatives to maintain and improve the quality of Australian early childhood education and care. Under the NQF, are two core documents, the NQS and EYLF – these documents are closely linked and aligned with each other.

² The seven quality areas in the NQS are: Educational program and practice; Children's health and safety; Physical environment; Staffing arrangements; Relationships with children; Collaborative partnerships with families and communities; Leadership and service management.

³ The EYLF recognises that children learn from birth, and outlines practices to support and promote children's learning. The EYLF is set out in the document 'Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia which mandates learning outcomes for children birth to 5 years as follows: Children have a strong sense of identity; Children are connected with and contribute to their world; Children have a strong sense of wellbeing; Children are confident and involved learners; Children are effective communicators.



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unnecessarily restrictive. We aim to respect and incorporate family values through our daily practice, while continuing to uphold the core values and principles that define us and our service.

Any differences of philosophy (among families and/or educators) will be approached respectfully. Our service is committed to providing a quality and ethical service to children and families.

Our Philosophy of Education

This section explains the principles and beliefs that we hold about young children's learning and our role in the process.

How our Service Relates to the NQS and EYLF

A fundamental part of the process of engagement with the NQS and EYLF is the involvement of children and families. The Garfield Street Children's Centre Community has reflected on Our Beliefs, Values and what makes us Unique. This is articulated throughout our Service Philosophy document.

Our Core Beliefs and Principles

This Statement of Philosophy is a living document that is the foundation for daily practice. It describes the core beliefs and values we hold as they apply to our delivery of Early Childhood Education and Care in relation to our children, families, educators and broader community. Our service philosophy should be the foundation for our approach to achieving quality outcomes for children and should be clear enough to guide our decision making and service practice.

At Garfield Street Children's Centre, we recognise each individual's personal strivings to balance the many aspects of their lives and to experience Wellbeing. To us, the Centre is a place of **Belonging**. It is a physical space as well as a network of supportive relationships. The centre has its own history which we contribute to and in turn the experiences and people here become part of our families and lives – past, present and future.

We acknowledge the **Wangal Clan** of the Darug language group of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land where we gather. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognise they are the first people of Australia.

We value our **Natural Environment**, cultural diversity and the services and facilities of the local area.

Our team is committed to an **Inclusive Philosophy**. We believe in providing "all children with the opportunities to participate in activities that encourage learning and development within relationships with peers and adults and in a manner that reflects the interests and strengths of all children inclusive of physical, cultural and linguistic diversity." (www.ku.com.au/inclusion-support).

"I like to say 'Hello!' to my friends. I get excited and happy to see them."

– Richa, 3y



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Learning and Education

A Statement From Our Educational Leader...

As an Educational Leader my role is to make professional judgments about how to plan and implement learning programs for each child. These decisions are informed by my professional skills and knowledge as well as by my experiences in many situations and in relationships with parents, children and the community.

On different levels, learning occurs at every minute of our lives. While opportunities for learning are certainly more apparent when we are awake, it has been long established that children are learning and gathering experiences while still in the womb and that our dreams may also influence or reflect our feelings and behaviour.

Opportunities to learn are all around us and come in all forms ... music, talking, listening, watching, playing ... in fact, within everything that belongs to the day-to-day buzz of our lives.

In the early childhood setting Curriculum means 'All the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events planned and unplanned that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development'.⁴

Educating happens when you read a story to your child, when you reassure them or guide them. It is happening when we talk to them about other people, when we make judgements about what they have said or done ... even when we don't comment on situations, we may be sending messages about what we really believe or value.

Individualised Learning

While we certainly can (and do) continue to grow and change throughout our lives, the core elements of our views about the world and ourselves are formed by our early relationships. This is acknowledged by the EYLF and approaches such as the Circle of Security which links children's Attachment and Learning. Young children's attachments within trusting relationships provide them with a secure base for exploration and learning.

Consequently, children learn to answer questions such as:

How do I experience love and support?

Whom can I trust when I need help?

Can I do it myself?

What if I don't succeed?

Each child is unique. Children have their own strengths, needs, rate of development and personality. This means that every child experiences learning in different ways.

The appropriate educational process for each child will also be unique to them.

⁴ EYLF page 9.



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The Learning Environment

A Statement From Our Educational Leader...

It is a child's right to enjoy the early years of childhood – to play, explore, and learn within the secure knowledge that responsible adults will protect and care for them.

I subscribe to the view that the hallmark of quality for non-parental care is not very different from quality of care by mothers or fathers; warm, responsive, consistent care giving geared to the needs of individual children. – [Shore, 1997]

Children learn in the context of important relationships. This means that we better understand a child by knowing something of the family background. We work better for the child by working in partnership with the child's parents, and by sharing our knowledge, experiences and a mutual respect for each other.

There is plenty of research to support the view that educators do not replace parents and families as the primary influencers of a child's beliefs and behaviours. Educators work with, or complement, the family environment.

In addition, the child, their family and centre staff all form part of a wider, diverse community. We honour this broader community as a source of ideas, social practices and the many different ways of learning about and making sense of the world.

My role as an educator is to balance the educational needs of the Group with those of the individual. Effective educators should not only be aware of the sensitivities, strengths and weaknesses of their students, but should be working differently with each individual to bring out the best in them.

"I just be myself and do what I want."

– Adele, 4y

Children's Voices

Children are at the heart of what to do. It is fundamental for us to see things from their perspective; to hear their voices; and to take their ideas into account.

Throughout this document, children's voices are evident as they relate to various aspects of our Service Philosophy⁵. Below is a brief summary of the things children themselves say make them happy at our centre:

- > Having choices;
- > Being able to play and engage in a varied educational program (pretend play, building, puzzles, books, music, games, painting, multicultural language experiences);
- > Being with friends.
- > Having their likes and dislikes respected (e.g. food)
- > Feeling supported to be "themselves";

⁵ These quotes come from a series of Child Interviews conducted informally within our service on 2.3.21.



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- > Feeling included;
- > Feeling protected by their teachers (e.g. when educators care for children when they are hurt or upset, and intervene to resolve conflicts and ensure 'fair' situations).
- > Observing diversity and respectful interactions within our educators, which children both recognise and value.

Educator Critical Reflection

In developing our service philosophy, management facilitate critical reflection with educators, through questionnaires, conversations, and group discussions. Focus ideas for such critical reflection can include significant influences and experiences from our own early years. Although each educator contributes their unique backgrounds, there is agreement on some core values; a brief summary of these is presented below⁶:

- > Children need stability and security in their environment to help them through times of change and challenge.
- > Children's lives can be permanently more grounded when people from their extended family and community (e.g. aunts, grandparents, teachers) help them feel valued, safe and heard.
- > Children respond to social experiences, sharing music and games with peers, as well as opportunities for introspective and meditative moments e.g. gardening, craft, and reading.

Implementation: Collaborative Partnering

This section and the following one cover the practical ways in which we implement the principles and beliefs expressed in Section 2.

Family Collaborations

Our centre promotes a working relationship with families which is based on mutual respect, openness and collaborative partnership. Families regularly take opportunities to contribute to decision making about various aspects of the service that affect their children. The operation of a regular parent committee is one of the many ways that we manage Garfield Street Children's Centre. This committee has been in place since the business was established in 1994.

As a specific example, in 2012 parent and staff workshops were held to gauge the things that our community expected from the centre and what they valued most⁷. A summary of feedback from this process is that we value:

⁶ These ideas come from a whole of service team meeting summary, from 25.2.21.

⁷ The workshop asked parents and staff to brainstorm words and phrases in three categories. These were "memories" of their early childhood, "associations" that they had with our service and "expectations" that they had of a good service.



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- > The sense of community that the Centre promotes including the continuity of a child care service over many years that allows for siblings and relatives to share positive experiences many years apart.
- > Relationships with Centre staff that are collaborative and honest.
- > Happy children and an atmosphere that emphasises the importance of Family and provides a sound start for life (rather than merely an academic based preparation for school).
- > A natural outdoor environment (grass, sand, dirt, trees, soil, herbs and vegetables) and the promotion of good health and physical activity.
- > Quality resources and an actively managed educational program.

Once or twice every year, our Centre invests significant effort into creating “Special Events”. These are free events that are organised by parents, educators and children for our community to enjoy shared learning experiences. They are an ongoing part of our Service’s culture and have included:

- > A “Vivid” light show and activities evening for all families and members of the broader community. (2015)
- > Multimedia Art Exhibition featuring all of our children’s art explorations. (2016)
- > A week-long Story Festival including story-telling, drama, music and a two day author visit by Mem Fox as well as parent reading sessions and a book fair. The program involved contributions by Rhythm Village, NIDA and Scholastics. (2017)
- > Wellbeing Week for children, educators and families, with a range of experiences focused on our physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Guest speakers were invited from the NSW Health Munch & Move Team as well as relevant professionals from amongst our parents. (2019)
- > My Day Evenings for families to experience their child’s day, Taronga Dream Time incursion, African Drumming, Rhythm Village, Christmas Party, Preschool Concert, Graduation and Family Dinner. (annual)

Educational Community

In addition to the prescribed resources of the NQS and EYLF, we promote numerous contacts with the broader educational community, including:

- > Kindergarten Union (KU) Inclusion support.
- > Professional memberships – Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Community Early Learning Australia (CELA).
- > Professional development courses and resources for all regular staff including Be You, Koori Curriculum, Early Learning Language Australia, Early Learning Stem Australia, CELA, Roads and Traffic Early Childhood Unit, Munch & Move.
- > In-house courses or presentations that are of interest to parents.
- > Health professionals.
- > Network with other ECEC services and educators e.g. the Canada Bay Council Sustainable Childcare Network and Narragunnawali Learning Circles.



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- > Registered Training Organisations and Universities to provide support to pre-service educators and teachers.

Local Community

We promote relationships with our local community in a number of ways, including:

- > Long standing relationships with local providers of meat and vegetables who deliver in person.
- > Neighbourhood excursions e.g. library, post office, cafe and visits to the local schools.
- > Incursions for children by local fire brigades and law enforcement.
- > Connecting with local experts e.g. artists, child development experts.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Provide quality, reliable, and affordable education and care, linking to the NQS.

The service will:

- > Provide an inclusive and individualised educational program, that respects and acknowledges each child's sense of being, belonging, and becoming. Encourage and support inclusive play practices. Further detail on our approach to the educational program is evidenced through various Centre Policy and Practice documents, including the children's individualised learning records (QA1: Educational Program and Practice).
- > Provide a safe, caring environment where those who enter feel welcomed and respected (QA2: Children's health and safety).
- > Provide physical resources, learning experiences and social interactions that nurture each child's growth and development and sense of worth (QA3: Physical Environment).
- > Have higher levels of staff education and specialized training, low staff turnover and higher levels of staff job satisfaction. (QA4: Staffing Arrangements).
- > Select educators who are "emotionally available" and in tune with the needs of our children. This will be reflected within our rostering, enabling children and educators to develop and maintain secure and trusting relationships (QA5: Relationships with Children).

"I feel frustrated and angry when people don't let me play."

– Darcy, 5y

"I like teachers being caring to everyone. They make me better when I am sad; they give me cuddles."

– Lucille, 4y



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- > Support all parents, children and staff to feel that they belong to the Garfield Street Children's Centre Community, and that as much as possible, they are actively involved in building the service and sharing a sense of cooperation (QA6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities).
- > Provide administrative stability, supportive management and inspirational leadership (QA7: Leadership and Service Management).

STRATEGY 2

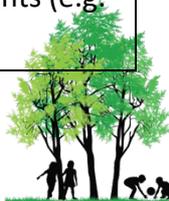
Provide quality, ethical, and responsive education and care, linking to the EYLF principles, practice, and learning outcomes.

Educators will:

- > Continuously reflect on our practices to ensure balance of our role to nurture children's freedom of self-expression with our responsibility to guide and protect children and facilitate individual learning in a social setting.
- > Adopt an Authoritative approach to behaviour guidance which means that children have the secure knowledge that there is a special person available who is always kind and stronger, older and wiser than themselves, who will follow their needs and wherever necessary will take charge. In this way, our service refers to the theory of Circle of Security.
- > Allow children time to enjoy moments of quiet, reflection and wonderment.
- > Nurture children's well-being, building resilience so they are able to deal with anxiety, grief, loss and other challenges.
- > Show children how to act with care and respect for themselves, others and the environment.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility For
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Ensure that the Statement of Philosophy underpins the Quality Improvement Plan.
Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Ensure that the service philosophy is reviewed at least annually, and that this review process includes the voices of staff, children, and families.> Support educators, children and families to engage in processes of critical reflection around our philosophy, and its core components (e.g. identity, belonging, quality education and care).



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Monitor implementation of the Philosophy Statement, and that it guides all aspects of service operations.
Educational Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ensure that the educational program adheres to the core principles of our service philosophy.
Early Childhood Educators Responsible Person/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Adhere to the strategies, principles, and values outlined in this Statement of Philosophy. > Reflect on how practices align with the service philosophy, and how our principles and beliefs shape the education and care we provide.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Share with the service, things that are important to them, regarding education and care for their child/ren.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Our service Philosophy will be monitored annually, to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

Educators, Children, and Families are essential stakeholders in the Philosophy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved e.g. through policy review processes (e.g. surveys), parent meetings, and/or staff meetings.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service.

Relevant Guidelines, Standards, and Frameworks

National Quality Standard	<p><i>Our philosophy shapes the way we understand and enact the entirety of these documents, which we consider to be at the core of all aspects of our work and education.</i></p> <p>NQS Element 7.1.1 in particular, requires that every service has a documented 'statement of philosophy', and that this document guides all aspects of a service's operations.</p>
Early Years Learning Framework	
Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics	

Relevant Law

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010	Section 3(3) – the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework.
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Education and Care Services National Regulations

Regulation 55 requires the Approved Provider to ensure that the service Quality Improvement Plan links to the service's Philosophy Statement.

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