

SALTWATER CHILD CARE CENTRE PHILOSOPHY



ENVIRONMENT

We acknowledge the Environment as our 'Third Teacher.' Our interactions with our physical environment teach us how to be independent, care for our natural world, and recognise our power to create positive change. Our daily practices and routines at Saltwater encourage children to develop lifelong awareness of sustainable practices through recycling, reducing, and reusing. This is demonstrated in our commitment to using loose parts. Not only do we encourage children to be mindful of our impact on the environment, we also support them to explore their place within it by spending extended time outdoors in natural spaces to rest, relax, and just be.

How do we prioritise the ENVIRONMENT in our practice?

We encourage children to understand that our environment is to be nurtured, respected, and embedded into our everyday routines. This includes eating from our kitchen gardens, using compost, observing wildlife, and embracing the natural elements of our play spaces. Our environment engages the senses through our sandpits, rainwater rivers, fragrant gardens, native-inspired landscapes, and now our newly established Herb Garden, created in partnership with our families and community. This shared space not only enriches children's understanding of sustainability and growth but also strengthens our sense of community connection as families are invited to plant, harvest, and contribute to its ongoing care.

We celebrate the weather and changing seasons in a symbiotic relationship through a program largely facilitated outdoors. We also ensure that our safe and secure environment reflects the children's abilities and interests. Both indoors and outdoors, it stimulates a sense of wellbeing and belonging and inspires children to initiate and direct their own play. By empowering children to interact with their physical environment independently, they can self-initiate learning opportunities and extend their interests in their own time and space.

There are opportunities for children to design their own spaces using loose parts. Loose Parts play invites Educators to use the Playworks Principles, by standing back and respecting children's right to conduct 'secret children's business'. We encourage and celebrate their sense of agency when using our Loose Parts Library.

COMMUNITY

We pride ourselves on our sense of community – built on reciprocal relationships with children, families, and our vibrant, multicultural Footscray. We celebrate local events and remain deeply connected to our local spaces through walking excursions and collaborative experiences. We work closely alongside our local primary school through shared incursions and excursions, strengthening children's sense of belonging within the wider community and supporting confident transitions to school.

We openly welcome Year 10 work experience students and invite them to learn alongside our educators as part of our intergenerational program. We also partner with the local university to accommodate work placement for pre-service educators and teachers. Within our service, parent volunteers play a valued role by running activities within our rooms or assisting on excursions, further enriching children's learning experiences.

Our commitment to community engagement extends beyond our walls. We actively support local businesses, including hosting our end-of-year staff dinner at a restaurant owned by one of our service families, as well as providing our kindergarten children with an excursion to the same venue to learn about food, culture, and community connection. We proudly participate in broader community initiatives such as Share the Dignity and

local food appeals, encouraging children and families to experience the joy of giving back. We have also established a Community Swap, where families can donate items, they no longer need and take items they may find useful—promoting sustainability, dignity, and mutual support.



These collective efforts amplify the rich and diverse heritage of our community and strengthen the meaningful connections that define Saltwater.

How will you be welcomed to our Saltwater COMMUNITY?

We encourage parents to actively engage in their children's learning and development. We invite you to support and continue your child's learning journey at home, and we work with you to develop strategies that strengthen your child's engagement. We prioritise co-operative, respectful partnerships with families, maintaining open, constructive communication while ensuring confidentiality and privacy at all times. These relationships allow us to meaningfully include each family's cultural background within our program. Our educators foster a collaborative approach to parenting by offering information, guidance, and opportunities for shared learning. Reciprocal relationships—where families and educators support one another to nurture children's growth—are central to our strong sense of community.

PROFESSIONALISM

At Saltwater, we take pride in maintaining professional standards for our assessment, documentation, and planning for children's learning in accordance with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. We are committed to supporting each child's individual learning journey and making environmental modifications that are responsive to their growing needs and interests. We consistently encourage our team to pursue professional development and have established a strong Leadership Team who guide reflective practice to ensure we deliver a responsive, relevant, and high-quality program for every child in our care.


Our professionalism extends beyond our internal practices. We actively engage with the wider community to ensure we are meeting children's diverse developmental needs. This includes collaborating with the Preschool Field Officer and working closely with outside agencies such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and other specialised support professionals. These partnerships allow us to implement tailored strategies, align our programming with expert recommendations, and ensure that children receive consistent, holistic support across all learning environments. We engage in open, constructive discussions—both internally and with external partners—that inspire and challenge us to continually uphold best-practice standards.

We value open communication, cooperation, and mutual respect as the foundation for effective teamwork and strong community collaboration.

How does our PROFESSIONALISM look and feel in our practice?

Every child in our care, regardless of their age, experience, or ability, is able to participate in activities that explore:

- Music and Movement
- Relaxation
- Numeracy and Literacy
- Language and Communication
- Discovery / Science
- Creative / Expressive Arts
- Manipulative
- Construction
- Dramatic Play

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- Project Work
 - Sustainability
 - Appreciation and care for the natural environment
 - Incursions and Excursions

Our commitment to each of these learning areas demonstrates our knowledge, passion, and dedication to delivering an innovative and stimulating program. Our programs provide open-ended learning experiences that foster creativity, curiosity, and self-awareness. We make learning ‘hands on’ and use the environment as our third teacher to support children in developing independence and essential life skills. We scaffold children’s play with positive, meaningful interactions and celebrate their achievements alongside them.

We ensure that all families are invited to be part of the learning process, valuing their insights and contributions. As educators, we uphold high standards of professionalism while engaging with external agencies, community partners, and families—representing Saltwater Child Care with pride in every interaction.

RESPECT

At Saltwater, a culture of respect has been developed strongly within our working relationships, and for the children and families in our care.

How does RESPECT manifest in our daily practice?

Our programs are reflective of Australian history and culture, including positive and meaningful representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Across the centre, children have the option of practising their Acknowledgement of Country each day, and we facilitate ongoing discussion to deepen their understanding of its significance. Through these conversations, children come to appreciate why the Acknowledgement is an important part of their daily routine and how it connects them to the land, its traditional custodians, and the stories that came before them.

Equally, we respect and celebrate the rich diversity and heritage of our local community. We encourage children to use and maintain their first language while supporting their acquisition of English at their own pace. We acknowledge and incorporate each child’s cultural background into our programs to ensure their individual needs are recognised and celebrated. We promote gender equity by encouraging all children to actively participate in every area of the program, remaining mindful that our actions, language, and perspectives model equality and respect.

Within our programs, we support children to build their self-esteem by providing opportunities to make choices, extend their interests, and engage in uninterrupted play. We aim to create positive, joyful, and respectful environments that honour their right to simply be children. We offer equal opportunities for them to explore their individual strengths and passions.

Within our team, we value the diverse life skills and experiences that each Educator brings. We acknowledge and celebrate staff milestones and achievements, and we foster cooperative teamwork across the Centre, encouraging strong partnerships between our Management Committee, families, and employees.

We believe mutual respect underpins positive relationships and healthy social-emotional development. This is why we speak respectfully to one another, to children, to co-workers, and to families. We consider each other’s feelings and needs and encourage everyone within our community to reciprocate respectful attitudes and language toward peers, educators, and the wider community.

WELLBEING



We nourish the wellbeing of all children in our care, acknowledging their physical, emotional and educational needs.

How is WELLBEING nurtured in our Early Childhood Setting?

At Saltwater Childcare Centre, we create a healthy and hygienic environment where children learn to care for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. This commitment extends to our relationships with one another—employees, families, and all visitors to our centre.

Our programs enhance self-help skills, social skills, problem solving, language development, physical awareness, and creative expression. We provide an environment that challenges children and encourages the development of resilience, independence, and a positive sense of identity, supporting them as lifelong learners.

We actively promote children's emotional wellbeing by encouraging self-awareness and the expression of feelings. Children are supported through conflict resolution, positive social interactions, and the development of self-regulation skills—enabling them to communicate effectively and manage emotions confidently.

As part of our holistic approach, we incorporate yoga and guided breathing techniques into our routines. These practices support children's mindfulness, body awareness, emotional regulation, and overall calmness, helping them build strong foundations for mental and physical wellbeing.

We have also begun exploring e-safety as an overarching topic within our programs, ensuring children begin to develop early digital awareness and safe online habits that reflect the evolving world around **them**. **This** learning is introduced in developmentally appropriate ways and will continue to grow as a core component of our curriculum.

Across all ages, we facilitate children's general wellbeing by providing adequate time for rest and sleep, ensuring they feel safe, supported and ready to learn.