

# Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments

## Vision and values

This statement acknowledges **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**

### The Convention has as one of its Principles

*'The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions or actions that affect the child or children as a group. This holds true whether decisions are made by governmental, administrative or judicial authorities, or by family members.'*

Every child has the right to:

- leisure, play and the opportunity to participate in cultural and artistic activities
- an education that fosters respect for the natural environment.

### The Vision

Enactment of these rights means that children:

- experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors
- have optimum opportunity for and ready access to stimulating outdoor environments for learning through play and authentic experiences in order to support the development of mind, body and soul
- access knowledgeable and enthusiastic educators who recognise and provide for the potential of learning and development in the outdoors
- experience an outdoor learning context that provides opportunity for participation and individual and group learning
- access materials that allow them to activate a process of research and reflection.
- Young children need adults who are committed to and understand why outdoor play is essential and who are able to maximise the full potential of the outdoor area.
- As part of the outdoor experience, activities should be planned for young children to support their creative, social, emotional, physical and spiritual development as well as developing their sensory and dramatic play.
- The outdoor learning environment should be enriched by natural resources. The range of resources should be of varying textures, adaptable and flexible, to provide children with a connection to nature where they can explore, imagine, discover and experiment with natural materials.
- Outdoor learning environments should be dynamic, flexible and versatile places where children can imagine, choose, create, change and be supported to make decisions about their play environment.
- Planning and design of the outdoor environment should support inclusion and meet the needs of individuals, offering a diverse range of play experiences.
- Children need room to play and have a range of outdoor learning experiences.

### Core Values for high quality outdoor experiences for young children

- Young children should be outdoors as much as indoors. They need well-designed, organised environments that allow a free flow between indoors and outdoors.
- The outdoor learning environment should provide challenge and risk while being physically and psychologically safe and secure.
- A well-planned, designed, outdoor learning environment includes natural shade provided by well-positioned mature trees, complemented by appropriate structures for shading throughout the day.

### Contact

Early Learning Partnerships and Planning  
 telephone: (08) 8226 0901  
 email: [DECD.Preschools@sa.gov.au](mailto:DECD.Preschools@sa.gov.au)