

Canning Vale Prekindy making sustainability a lifestyle choice

Canning Vale Prekindy teacher, Lisa Vreeken, has been making sustainability integral to her children's learning for many years. She first attended a Little Green Steps WA (LGSWA) workshop at the Canning River Eco Education Centre (CREEC) in 2014 and since then has embedded many simple practices into her class's daily routines.

In 2015 Lisa came up with a more sustainable alternative to the use of paper towels for washing hands which works very well for the children in her kindy. Lisa stated *"We used paper towel for years but found we did not have the capability to compost the amounts we used, so it all went to landfill. It was at a Little Green Steps workshop that this solution was suggested to me"*.



Now children use cloth hand towels, cut from donated old towels and stored in an easy to reach dispenser in the children's bathroom. Initially Lisa was concerned about the environmental impact of washing the cloths but was reminded at the workshop of the environmental impacts from manufacture of paper towel in the first place; trees, power, water, chemicals, transportation. *"We floated the idea with our families and received overwhelming support, with many donating old towels and others volunteering to cut and edge them. We have been doing this for 3 ½ years now"* Lisa said.

When children wash hands with 'Walter the Water drop monitor looking on', they grab only one and place the used washer in a bin lined with a laundry bag which is then sent home for washing via a family roster. *"We encourage families to include children in hanging the cloths out and putting them back into the washed bag to return the following week, so they are part of the process"* Lisa said.



Recently, Lisa's sustainability focus has been to raise awareness in her community. In May 2018 the Canning Vale Prekindy celebrated their tenth anniversary. Lisa successfully received a City of Canning Community initiatives grant, which funded the celebrations. The 3 days of community celebrations included a day of fun, sustainable outdoor activities for children and their families at the Children's Reunion and Open Day on 6 May. LGSWA, as the hub of sustainability support for early years, has been providing Lisa with support along the way.

Lisa became an LGSWA member in 2017, so now accesses resources which assist her to teach children how to ecologically step lightly in our world and at the same time reach out socially. This network of sustainable educators has helped the City of Canning Libraries find a solution to acquiring reusable resources for its new program 'All About Play' and Canning Vale Prekindy was just one contributor providing the solution of squeeze bottles and ribbon.

Lisa uses a sustainability planning document for each year which provides the Centre with direction and helps her to progress along those little green steps made with the children.

For further information on the Little Green Steps Program contact the LGSWA Education Officer, Megan Mentz, on 08 9461 7160 or send an email to m.mentz@aaeewa.org.au.