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[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw\\_branch/eceen.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nsw_branch/eceen.html)

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**“Our Vision is an active, environmentally aware community that ensures a sustainable future for our shared world.”**



ECA NSW Branch proudly  
auspice NSW ECEEN

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## Safer Cleaning Practices

On Sunday October the 30th, NSW ECEEN held a Network Meeting at the Mount Annan Botanic Gardens. Our guest speaker, Bridget Gardner, presented a fantastic workshop exploring safer cleaning practices in Children's Services.

Bridget highlighted the potential risk to our health from chemical cleaning products, possibly triggering conditions such as asthma, allergies, depression and poisoning.

Young children are even more at risk as their body weight is smaller, their faster metabolism means they absorb more contaminants and they are closer to the ground. Therefore they come into contact with the build up of chemicals that settle there (Jo Immig).

Avoiding the use of these toxic chemicals is made all the more difficult as manufacturers are not legally required to list all the ingredients placed in their products, and rarely do so.

So how can we choose

products that are not hazardous for our health? Bridget explained the indicators to look out for on the labels of products that can help assess how safe it is, "Cleaning chemicals are given numbered schedules to show how poisonous a substance is; *Caution*, *Poison* and *Dangerous Poison*. Other words that can be used are *Warning*, *Harmful* or *Corrosive*." Bridget's advice; "Choose only products that have no warnings."

Another way you can identify hazardous products is by requesting a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) from the supplier. They have information about the products poison schedule, corrosiveness, potential health hazards, first aid and precautions for use. Although the ingredients are not listed, it provides valuable information that you won't find on the label alone.

The best way to ensure that the cleaning products you use are safe is to use substances known to be non toxic such as bicarbonate of soda, warm soapy water,

vinegar and liquid castille soap (see page 2 for safer cleaning tips)

Bridget recommends the use of Microfibre cloths. It removes dirt and moisture effectively using water and good old fashioned elbow grease. It's said that 90% of the cleaning action is done with the tool, water and your arm. Bridget emphasised that strong spray surface cleaners are quite unnecessary as most grime can be lifted from surfaces with Microfibre or warm soapy water.

The new Health and Safety in Children's Services Model Policies & Practices and the NSW Reg's clearly state that bleach or other disinfectants are **not** for general cleaning. Maybe it's time for your service to evaluate cleaning practices and trial safer cleaning products and procedures this year. Think of the potential savings of reducing your chemical usage as well! The *KU Environment Policy* is a great resource to get you started; [www.ku.com.au](http://www.ku.com.au)

## Resources for your service

NSW ECEEN has put together Resource Kits that are available for your service to borrow over a two week



period. The kits contain a range of resources, (including the *KU Environment Policy*) along with books, videos and play equipment that will give you great

ideas about how to provide meaningful EE experiences for young children. For more information Phone (02) 95287509, or email: [nsweeen@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:nsweeen@earlychildhood.org.au)



## Safer Cleaning Tips

### Microfibre Cloths

Cleans by physically 'scraping' and absorbing dirt and moisture, requiring only water and no chemicals. There is no need to buy expensive brands. Cloths purchased from the supermarket are fine for home use, however for commercial use search around for a quality supplier. Flat weave is preferable to terry weave because it can be folded to avoid cross contamination of surfaces, and dries the area that has been cleaned much better. Wash and dry cloths (preferably in the sun) then store clean dry cloths in a container with a lid.

### Vinegar

Is a mild bleach with a million and one uses. An excellent glass and mirror cleaner — dispense into a spray bottle and use a good quality squeegee with replaceable blades to clean off. To clean floors mix with warm water.

### Bicarb Soda

Cleans by chemically soaking up the grease, and physically scouring the surface. Dispense into a stainless steel parmesan cheese shaker and store in a dry place. Sprinkle a little onto a damp cloth and rub surface gently. You know it's time to turn the cloth over and reapply when the bicarb turns brown (dirt). Use sparingly as the more you put on a surface the more you have to rinse off! Bicarb cleans everything from mould around taps and in tiling grout through to bench tops, baths, sinks and pots and pans. Can be mixed with pure soap (See Castille)

**Remember:** Store all cleaning agents in containers that are clearly marked with their contents, dispensing and safety information. Never use empty drink bottles.

### Warm Soapy Water

Dilute a mild neutral detergent or pure liquid soap (See Castille) in warm water. This creates an extremely effective solution to soften dirt and make it easier for the cloth to lift and absorb it. It's important not use too much 'soap' as it can leave a residue that will actually encourage bacterial growth. Dry surface well as this also prevents bacterial growth (terry towelling nappies are great)

### Pure Castille Soap

Made with pure vegetable oil and can be purchased from a quality health food shop. Is in liquid form making it easier to mix with water and other products. Use in place of a detergent. Combine with bicarb to make a creamy cleanser paste. Removes crayon, cleans ovens, grease, bath scum, stains etc.

Source: Bridget Gardner, 2005

## World Wetlands Day

'Wetlands and water - supporting life, sustaining livelihoods' World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on the 2nd of February. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Ramsar, Iran, on the same date in February 1971. Ramsar is a Convention to protect wetlands and was one of the world's first global environmental treaties.

Use this day to explain to children about the importance of our wetlands, and the diverse range of

plants and animals these areas support.

Kim Michelle Toft has written this beautiful book called *The World That We Want*. This story explores the unique eco-systems that exist in a variety of wetland areas, such as mangroves, rivers, reefs



and tide pools in North Queensland. Children can identify different creatures that live in each area and discuss the value of preserving these fragile environments. Reading this book with the children would be a great way to recognise World Wetlands Day, and is a part of our centre resource kit (see front page).

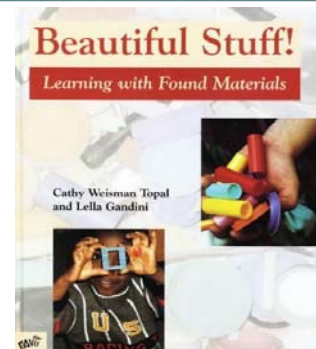
For more information go to [www.deh.gov.au/water/wetla](http://www.deh.gov.au/water/wetla)

## Book Review

***Beautiful Stuff; Learning with found materials*** by Cathy Topal and Lella Gandini Inspired by the educators from Reggio Emilia, this book provides exciting ideas about how to create meaningful experiences for children as they explore a range of found materials. Hundreds of full-colour photographs document the fascinating journey of a group of four to five year old children as they engage in the processes of

exploring and displaying the materials that they have collected from home. Creativity flourishes as children discover, collect, sort, arrange, experiment, and problem solve with found and recycled objects and materials. Linking exploration to drawing and construction projects are a strong feature of this book.

*Highly Recommended.*



### 'SPROuts Practice' Award Update

#### Sustainable Projects Recognising OUTS tanding PRACTICE

Thank you to all of those EC services who have sent in their SPROuts Practice Award case studies.

Entries have now closed and judging will take place shortly. The winner will receive \$500 to put towards further EE projects or resources. All case studies will be posted on the website as inspiration for others wanting to promote EE in their Early Childhood Service. What environmental projects could you start to enter in the 2006 SPROUTS Practice Award?



### Young Children and Education for Sustainability

The United Nations has declared 2005-2014 as the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. During this period countries around the globe will develop policy at all levels of government on sustainability with a focus on education, including Early Childhood.

The aim is to provide children with the knowledge, skills and values required to take environmentally responsible actions. To get you started, here are some suggestions of what you can do at your service;

- \* Explore Safer Cleaning Practices
- \* Create natural play spaces
- \* Use natural materials for play
- \* Reuse materials and equipment rather than constantly purchasing new resources and throwing items away.
- \* Start a food garden

\* Reflect on the amount of energy your service is using/wasting and look into smarter practices

In relation to cleaning practices, "The children today live in a very different environment from years ago. There are new patterns of illness emerging, and many more chemicals to which children are exposed. More than 10million products contain chemicals. ...We are conducting a vast experiment on our children which will effect generations to come. "

(Dr H.Needleman, 1997)

Safe cleaning practices should protect children and staff from infectious diseases AND protect from exposure to hazardous cleaning chemicals

Based on "Early Childhood and Education for Sustainability: Why it matters. What's happening." A presentation by Julie Davis, Sue Elliott and Noeleen Rowntree at Early Childhood Australia Biennial Conference, Brisbane 2005.

### Clean up your act

#### Don't let rubbish become part of the scenery! Do your bit for Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday the 5th March 2006

Every year hundreds of thousands of Australians help clean up their local environment on Clean Up Australia Day. Most people make it a fun day by getting together with other family members, friends or local groups to organise a Clean Up site and make a day of it, or simply volunteer to join

an existing site. Either way you know you will be contributing to a worthy cause and helping to remove rubbish from the scenery.

Schools (and EC services) can also get involved in this important event by organising to take part in the **School's Clean up Day on Friday the 3rd March**. Schools have taken part in their own clean up day since 1992, using it as an opportunity for children to learn about their local environment and take responsibility for making it a better place.

For more information go to [www.cleanup.com.au](http://www.cleanup.com.au)

Every school that registers for Schools Clean Up Day receives a **Kids Clean Up Kit**. The Kit, this year on CD, contains 14 environmental activities, and although designed for primary school students, can still be adapted for younger children.



### Low Waste Lunches

Having a 'Low Waste Lunch Day' at your service is a great way to mark Clean up Australia Day this March. Parents are asked to pack a lunch for their child/ren that produces minimal waste:

- \*Packing lunch in small reusable plastic containers with lids to eliminate the need for plastic/foil wrapping.
- \*Buy food in larger quantities and dispense using smaller containers as needed—save \$\$\$
- \*Buy reusable plastic drink bottles.

- \*Avoid commercially packaged snacks that are often over priced and wrapped in material that is not biodegradable, recyclable or reusable.
- \*Choose foods that do not require wrapping at all, like bananas and apples—they are healthy food choices as well.

Instead of single serve cheese & crackers (with processed cheese packed in non recyclable plastic), purchase cheese & crackers in bulk. Cube cheese as needed and dispense in reusable containers. Much cheaper, more nutritious and better for the environment.

- \*Wrap sandwiches in cloth serviettes or grease-proof paper instead of plastic or foil.

This is a great way to encourage children and their families to stop and think about their packaging choices, and how they can help the environment by reducing waste. This is an excellent way to celebrate Clean Up Australia Day too.

## Green Dates

### January

**26th**

**Australia Day**

National Australia Day Council  
[www.australiaday.gov.au](http://www.australiaday.gov.au)

### February

**NSW ECEEN Regional Network Meetings in Nowra and Central Coast on Safer Cleaning Practices in Children's Services.** (Dates TBC)

**2nd—8th**

**World Wetlands Day**

'Wetlands and water—supporting life, sustaining livelihoods'

Hunter Wetlands Centre

[www.deh.gov.au/water/day/nsw.06.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/water/day/nsw.06.html)

**28th**

**Business Clean Up Day**

Clean Up Australia [www.cleanup.com.au](http://www.cleanup.com.au)

### March

**1st-3rd**

**World Sustainable Energy Days**

[www.esv.org.at/wsed](http://www.esv.org.at/wsed)

**3rd**

**Schools Clean Up Day**

Clean Up Australia

[www.cleanup.com.au](http://www.cleanup.com.au)

**5th**

**Clean Up Australia Day**

Clean Up Australia

[www.cleanup.com.au](http://www.cleanup.com.au)

**5th –12th**

**Seaweed**

'Footprints for our Future'

Marine Education Society of Australia

[www.mesa.edu.au/seaweed2006](http://www.mesa.edu.au/seaweed2006)

**9th-11th March**

**'Vision into Action'**

2006 NSW Environmental Educators

Conference (Shellharbour)

Contact NSW ECEEN for more details

**22nd**

**World Water Day**

'Water and Culture'

United Nations

### Check out these websites

**NSW Waste Educators Working Group**

[www.wmaa.asn.au/nsw/edu.html](http://www.wmaa.asn.au/nsw/edu.html)

**EPA Victoria Eco Footprint Calculator**

[www.epa.vic.gov.au/Ecofootprint/Households/Calculator.asp](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/Ecofootprint/Households/Calculator.asp)

**Earthday Network Ecological Footprint Quiz**

[www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp](http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp)

**Australian city farms and community gardens**

[www.communitygarden.org.au](http://www.communitygarden.org.au)

**Forest Schools**

[www.forestschools.com](http://www.forestschools.com)

**What can I do?**

[www.whatcanidousa.org/](http://www.whatcanidousa.org/)

(Suggested by NSW ECEEN Member Jo Kennedy)

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\* If you have come across any great websites that \*  
\* you would like to share with the network please \*  
\* email your suggestions to \*  
\* [nsweceen@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:nsweceen@earlychildhood.org.au) \*  
\* \*\*\*\*\*

This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust

## A Great World Water Day

**Resource;** You can order a set of A1 size full colour posters from OZ GREEN for \$16.50 including postage. The posters have 8 water related images from around the world, with water facts and suggested activities on the back. Go to:

[www.ozgreen.org.au](http://www.ozgreen.org.au)



*Our aim is to bring together interested people and organisations in order to promote the paramount importance of integrating environmental education into all facets of young children's lives in NSW*

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/)

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