Sturt Street Early Learning Centre:
Philosophy

Parents:
We understand that for a parent, placing their child in to the care of our service can be a difficult and overwhelming process. Building trusting relationships with parents is a very high priority. We will show this through:

- Taking time to get to know parents and acknowledging their primary role in their child’s development
- 2 way communication about children’s development and learning – our goal is to work in partnership to support children’s development and learning
- Offering parents opportunities to be involved in centre experiences, to provide feedback and take part in decision making
- Listening to parents, acknowledging their concerns and interests and respecting their views
- Following up parents concerns and referring to other services where necessary
- Providing information about our program and service – so that parents can be involved and have input into what is going on.

Children
We see all children as powerful learners and encourage them to express their point of view and make choices about how they want to learn.

Learning at our centre is a social experience where children learn from each other as well as from interactions with staff and our environment. It is important to us that children feel happy, cared for and secure so that they can gain the most from the learning environment. Developing healthy attachments between children and staff is vital to help children feel safe, supported and for them to have a real sense of belonging at our service.

We understand that children will need a range of supports at different times in their development to promote their learning – this includes supporting children with disabilities, with family crises, with language and cultural diversity and with social and behavioural learning. We acknowledge that all children learn in different ways and at different rates.

We respect the family culture, beliefs and lifestyle of all children at our centre. We strive to provide an environment rich with play experiences designed to both reflect and extend children’s interests.

Our aim is for children to be curious and enthusiastic, to have fun and to learn to challenge their own abilities and try new things. We want children to develop skills, knowledge and positive dispositions in all areas of their learning and development.
**Educational program:**

We believe that our program has a focus on learning. We provide a variety of educational experiences that will challenge and enhance individual development and social learning.

We develop our program in staff teams to focus on children’s interests and with consideration to feedback from families. We use the Early Years Learning Framework as the main reference for our program – but also use information from other sources to provide diverse and enriching learning experiences.

We use every day experiences and interactions as an integral part of the learning program. We are flexible and adjust our program according to children’s needs and interests. We evaluate our program by considering children’s involvement and parent feedback. We document children’s learning through learning stories which focus on both individual development and children’s interactions with group experiences. We provide an outline of our program for parents’ information and also highlight aspects of our program in displays and newsletters.

**Staff:**

We believe that staff play a vital role in centre development as well as in each child’s learning and wellbeing while at the centre.

Working with children, parents and in teams is a demanding role with complex responsibilities. For staff to be happy, friendly and relaxed at work, there needs to be a strong support base.

This includes

- Open communication and respectful listening between all staff
- Understanding and respect for other people’s feelings and points of view
- Willingness to help each other and cooperate across the centre
- Team meetings and structures that allow people to contribute to decisions and develop their skills or working together and handling stress.

Professional learning is a priority – staff are encouraged to

- attend professional development both on site through staff meetings and in courses
- learn from others and have access to professional reading and resources
- reflect on practice and
- gain feedback on their practice.
Environment:

We believe that children are entitled to be cared for and learn in a positive and happy environment. The atmosphere and culture of relationships in the centre are as much a part of the environment as our physical space and resources. We foster a culture of inclusion where children’s and family’s needs and interests and catered for. We use support services to provide for these diverse needs, and develop staff awareness about disability, language and culture. We provide inviting learning spaces both indoor and outdoor which are aesthetically pleasing and cater for different types of play including active, physical, creative, sensory, messy, peaceful and social play, rest and independence. The environment is organised to ensure hygienic practices including food safety, cleaning, infection control and maintenance of equipment as well as being flexible to allow children to use their initiative and take charge of the environment. Equipment is chosen carefully to provide a variety of open ended play experiences which are age appropriate and engaging. We foster the use of recycled and natural resources as well as manufactured / commercial equipment. We aim to reflect cultural diversity and inclusion within our choice of resources. We develop our learning environments with a view to exploration, appropriate risk taking and variety as well as safety.

Developed by staff and parents in a collaborative process Dec 2011 – April 2012. Ratified at ELC Advisory Committee June 2012.