

As a Community Education Officer for a regional water authority I have been running an Early Childhood – Water Education Program (Water Aware Centre Program) for a number of years for about 60 Early Childhood Services in Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Richmond Valley Council Areas. From the beginning it has been well received and I have visited all the services in my region, most having the Program each year. The Centres have been both appreciative of the support and quick to take up actions for sustainable water use and management. These have been actions to empower the children, improve daily practice and incorporate water conservation into their policies and programs. I was also successful with a NSW Climate Change Fund Grant (5 Star Water Aware Centre Program) to work with 7 Centres and their communities implementing water conservations measures and community education eg installing tanks to flush toilets & upgrading to water efficient taps and toilets. This demonstrated the Services commitment to wise water management and the possible action they can take to become sustainable water users. Leading on from the success of the Water Aware Centre Program I got more funding in partnership with another organisations and developed the Cool Cubbies Project. This worked not just on sustainable water use but also included the other main components of environmental sustainability education eg energy, waste and biodiversity. For more information please visit the Early Childhood Section of the Rous Water website at [http://www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/cp\\_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-GKK-21-73-55](http://www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-GKK-21-73-55)

Because of the response and the actions from Early Childhood Centres in my region I see that there is no question - the inclusion of QA 3.3 in the NQS has led to awareness and change by early childhood education for environmental sustainability. I have other Programs for Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and the Community and from my experience I would go even further to say that the Early Childhood Sector is promoting and demonstrating leadership in area of environmental sustainability.

I firmly advocate that in any review of the NQS to simplify or remove standards and elements is a backward step, as indicated under Recommendation 7.1, (Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 274), that Quality Area 3 and in particular, that Standard 3.3 pertaining to sustainability. It must be maintained, if not strengthened. This standard for the first time nationally and internationally, has set a regulatory benchmark for the implementation of sustainability principles and practices in the early childhood sector. And I would like to congratulate the initial writers of the NQS for their initiative in including sustainability.

Regards Barbara

Barbara Jensen  
Rous Water Community Education Officer