

## Document Summary

<b>Document Title</b>	Philosophy Statement	<b>Revision / Publish Date</b>	06/07/2010	<b>Next Date for Review</b>	1 July 2011
<b>Revised By Author</b>	Natalie Higgins	<b>Approved By</b>	Natalie Higgins & Sharon Carrafa	<b>Policy Reference</b>	VISIONING_PHILOSOPHY_Policy_05
<b>Family Input</b>	Parent Committee 12/06 Parent Committee 12/07 Rachael West 06/08 Darren Higgins 04/07/09 Rachael West 07/09 Rachael West 05/10 Tamara Cracknell 06/2010	<b>Team Member Input</b>	Bree Hall 30/07/09 Sharon Carrafa 2/07/09 Tabitha Cretchley, Bree Hall, Emma Hedley & Rachael Day 04/2010		
<b>Revision History</b>	<p>Rev. 1 – 09/2005 (Natalie Higgins) Immediately prior to opening, philosophy developed in collaboration with new team members after a thorough review of best practice from other external services.</p> <p>Rev. 2 – 12/2006 (Natalie Higgins) After some professional development training on <i>'how to implement our philosophy &amp; goals into action'</i> with our team and in consultation with our newly formed parent committee, we revised our philosophy to actively reflect our changing practices.</p> <p>Rev. 3 – 12/2007 (Natalie Higgins) Team review with only minor revision. Issued to parent committee with no modifications required.</p> <p>Rev. 4 – 06/2008 (Natalie Higgins) Team review. Parent committee temporarily disbanded</p> <p>Rev. 5 – 07/2009 Full Review (Natalie Higgins) Reformat and goals incorporated within philosophy statement. Additional information to support our practice and understanding of early childhood care, development and learning. Parent committee reformed and draft for comment provided as well as draft also posted to website for review.</p> <p>Rev 6 – 07/2010 Restructure of philosophy statement to be more concise with strategies and explanation provided in the latter part of the document</p>				

### **Purpose & Rationale**

There is a myriad of opinion and philosophy in early childhood development and care, with many belief systems contradictory and highly contentious. For many educators the quantity and uncensored quality of information is overwhelming. It is for this reason that many services choose to wholly adopt philosophies and educational practices defined under specialised care/educational systems like Montessori, Steiner, and Reggio Emilia etc. While wholly adopting such philosophies simplifies and more easily guides an educator's practice, for many educators like ourselves, we found elements of these philosophies to be too limiting, radical and/or exclusive. Instead, we found that through careful trial and selection, we could adopt the best elements of each of these systems into our own philosophy, which is continually reformed and improved as new information and best practice emerges.

This document summarises our collective collaboration on the guiding principles which steer our practice and where our practices have recently changed due to new information, an explanation for these changes.

### **Philosophy Statement**

#### ***For children in our care...***

Our aim is to provide the highest quality early childhood care and education. We do this by providing programs informed by best practice in both care and early childhood education, which will ensure our children grow into happy, well-rounded individuals.

Our programs aim to provide a balanced approach to children's overall social, emotional and educational development and we endeavour to merge the best aspects of traditional child care philosophies with modern learning and understanding of child development. Our programs recognize the importance of 'play' in fostering enjoyment and encouraging children's love of learning. We seek to provide children with choice, giving them the opportunity to explore their environment freely with a wide selection of experiences that leverage their natural curiosity; engaging and promoting their development in all the key developmental domains:

- Language & literacy, including a wide range of media forms;

- Mathematics and problem solving;
- Science, exploration and experimentation;
- Artistic expression, music and movement and aesthetic appreciation;
- Health and physical development including development of healthy eating, active lifestyles and a clean and hygienic environment; and
- Social and emotional development, including the fostering of a healthy self esteem, self regulation, compassion and independence.

We also aim to provide flexibility to meet children's changing interest and abilities, and it is for this reason our programs are often modified 'mid-program' to immediately meet the changing needs and/or interests of children. We acknowledge that teaching and intervention strategies and tools need to be engaging, flexible and customised to meet the best meet individual pace and needs of children.

Combating prejudice is a key objective for our team and we include a variety of play resources and teaching themes in our service to actively encourage respect and appreciation for diversity and inclusion of all people in our community. ***For our team***

Our team is very important to us. They define who we are. We aspire to create a stable and diverse workforce whose professional education, experience, talents, life experience and other skills complement one another. Retaining our employees and continuously building our collective talents is also vital to us and this is why we provide an extensive induction program followed by ongoing mentoring, professional development and training to all staff. We work together to include our team in the development and revision of all our operational processes. We aim to foster an environment in which our team can share ideas and resources, feel comfortable providing positive and constructive feedback and are respectful of one another. We also acknowledge the importance of a work life balance by providing support and flexibility during periods of family strain or crisis.

***For our community***

Finally, being an active member of and contributing to our community is a core value we aspire to. This is why we work with councils, schools and universities to provide student placements and other information. We participate in key fundraising activities to help raise awareness and funds for charities.

### **Expanding on some of our key educational philosophies**

One well recognised educational strategy utilised in early childhood learning is the process of scaffolding (Mynard, 2006), where adults introduce new challenges and concepts to children by actively assisting/guiding them through the learning process, and as children begin to master these challenges gradually withdrawing adult assistance at the optimal rate that supports learning but ultimately drives children to be able to successfully complete a task autonomously. More simply this style of learning follows the path of:

1. Adult: "I will show you how to do it"
2. Child & Adult: "Let's do it together"
3. Child: "I can do this myself"

The challenge for educators is to provide the right balance between child initiated and adult initiated learning to optimize this process of scaffolding and we strive continuously to deliver the optimum balance between the two.

We believe it is important to work with children both on an individual/self paced way, as well working with children in groups with activities that can be used by all competencies within a group in more open ended or flexible ways.

Understanding both individual and whole group competencies is facilitated through:

- A thorough and continually revised understanding of early childhood development and learning;
- Careful observation of both individual and group learning and interest;
- Working with families to compliment our observation of children in our care and can include a range of methods such as daily communication, program feedback and surveys, developmental checklists, external specialist information etc.



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We provide time in every day for special group group-time (both small and large), where children come together and discuss their ideas and thoughts , as well as share stories, music, song, dance, exercise, yoga, games and meditation. During this time children develop vital life skills such as listening, effective communication, teamwork, basic public speaking and performance. This time also allows us to create magical experiences which stimulate children's imaginations. At Smartie Pants, we work with a variety of materials and resources, including both natural materials and synthetically manufactured toys. We do not ask if the material is 'natural' but rather 'what learning can a child achieve through a resource'.

There is a significant amount of new research emerging about the benefits of computers in early childhood education (Whithaus, 2009) and it is for this reason we have adopted the use of computers as a key educational tool within our preschool program. Similarly, new research into the benefits of carefully selected educational television in child care (NCAC, 2009) has also led us to revise our policy limiting the use of this medium. Instead it is now understood how complimentary educational programs such as documentaries and educational programs like Playschool and Sesame Street can enhance learning. These programs also provide some down/rest time from a very busy and long day and it is for this reason that we sometimes now use television during the transition between the busy morning and afternoon programs.

Our learning environments are attractive and enticing to children, with rooms full of beautiful colours, arrangements and textures. We display our children's work both inside rooms and in our corridors so children can share their work with siblings, families and visitors thereby promoting children's self confidence and belief that their works are valuable masterpieces.

We promote praise, acceptance and encouragement for all children, which we believe will assist them in developing a healthy self-esteem. We see our role to nurture and assist children in development of their own independence and self responsibility and we understand children take enormous pride in this. We observe each child's skills carefully throughout all of our programs, in order to provide the optimum level of encouragement, assistance and recognition of their amazing achievements. This is why from a very early age, we foster self help and responsibility skills such as dressing, eating, toileting and cleaning up. We believe that it is a fundamental part of providing the highest quality of care and education.



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We believe that the link between home and our centre is important, therefore, we provide a nurturing 'homely' environment that enables children to feel safe, secure and loved. A key aim of our centre is to build a healthy bridge between the care and child's home environment. We do this by incorporating elements of the child's home life including language, routine and comforters. We also seek to find effective ways to communicate with families about their child and where possible to share experiences from home within the program experiences. We do this by inviting parents to participate in our programming process and regularly attend special events at the centre. We also aim to work collaboratively with our families to make Smartie Pants better each day. We do this by seeking regular feedback from our families, communicating through a variety of techniques (eg surveys, emails, phone calls, newsletter, noticeboards, handouts, posters, our website, etc.) and working closely with our parent committee.

We endeavour to implement behaviour management methodologies, which focus on prevention and reduce escalation. We see the adult/teacher's role within our service as a crucial one where we actively role model the behaviours we promote. We see our role to nurture development of skills and strategies which help them manage their own emotions, particularly in the very early years when children lack the language skills to communicate their needs and frustrations.

At our service, we also pride ourselves in role modelling behaviour which promotes equity, diversity and inclusion. We are fortunate to have a unique opportunity to introduce early, in each child in our care, values of respect and appreciation for each other's differences. Not only do we role model these values by our acceptance and welcoming of all families into our service regardless of family structure, gender, disability or background; but we also seek to include into our programs experiences which promote understanding and appreciation of the many types of people who share in our community. Furthermore, we promote values of empathy, compassion and fairness, which we believe assists children better to understand, manage, and ultimately overcome negative emotions which sometimes occur when people meet or see things in other people that are different from what they understand.

Ensuring children settle well into their rooms is very important to us, which is why we provide extensive orientation processes, not only when children start at our service, but when they graduate between rooms. We provide time for our program leaders to work with families on an extensive planning process for orientation and we believe that communicating honestly about how children are managing each orientation is a vital part in nurturing and building open and collaborative communication with families.

We encourage our children to understand, nurture and respect our environment, not only by incorporating nature and environment into our experiences but by actively recycling and setting a high standard by which we can role model to our children, our families and the rest of the children's services industry.

Healthy eating is a key value we pride in our service. We provide a variety of meals (6 sittings from breakfast through to dinner). Our food quality is extremely high and we aim to provide children with a range of quality fresh food, cooked onsite to meet at least half of each child's total daily nutritional requirements. Our menu is selected using a range of diverse cultural influences and we aim always to be respectful of religious, medical and health requirements. We believe that nurturing and supporting children's development of healthy eating habits is vital and we take time to assist children throughout their developmental stages by providing foods that are fresh and enticing. This is particularly important during the first few years of life, when children are slowly being introduced to solids and we strive to work with families to slowly encourage very young children to explore new tastes and textures in a safe and nutritious way.

Providing a clean, safe and hygienic environment is paramount to us and through continuous revision of new information and best practice, we continuously review and maintain our systems, equipment and practice to ensure that our service is always clean, safe and hygienic.

Rest is also an important part of each child's day and we aim to provide an environment that is soothing and comfortable for children with blinds partly drawn, comfortable beds with clean linen and soothing rest music. Rest however is not compulsory and children choosing not to rest are provided with range of quiet activities in ample light so that while they may not sleep, they can still recharge for the second part of the day.

### Measuring Tools

6 monthly program reviews

### Links to Forms, Factsheets and Other Documentation which Support this Policy

PRO\_Audit Tool\_Rev0 - Program Review Guidelines

### Links to other Policies

Links to all policies for the organisation

### QIAS Links

1.2, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 7.1, & 7.2.

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