CASE STUDY

Where do our food scraps go?

An on-site worm farm to learn about reducing waste and the cycles of nature

SERVICE	Montessori Minds Childcare
SERVICE TYPE	Long day care
MEAL PROVISION MODEL	All meals provided on-site
BUSINESS MODEL	Private, for-profit
AGE RANGE	1 to 6 years
NUMBER OF APPROVED PLACES	127
NUMBER OF STAFF	30-40
REMOTENESS AREA CLASSIFICATION	Major cities

LOCATION

Geelong, Victoria



Background

Montessori Minds Childcare is a relatively new service in Victoria, that has been in operation for around two and a half years. The centre serves a highly diverse community and plays an important role in education and support for the whole community.

The building was designed with intention, with the aim of creating a learning environment where sustainability, food education, cultural inclusion, and community engagement were embedded into daily practice rather than treated as standalone programs or events.

The Montessori philosophy underpins all learning experiences, emphasising real world connections, practical life skills, observation, and respect for living things. This approach creates an inclusive environment where learning flows between the centre, families, and the wider community.

The worm farm at the centre is one tool they use to teach children about sustainability and how to care for the environment they are part of.

What did you want to do?

- They wanted to have education about food systems, sustainability and how to care for the environment embedded into everyday practice at the service.
  - This also included helping children develop care and understanding for the living things around them, reducing waste, and making meaningful connections between food, people and the environment.
- They also wanted children to be aware of the life cycles all around them every day, and how they could be part of that too through composting food scraps.

What did you do?

- As part of the planning for the Montessori Minds building, space was allocated for vegetable patches, herb gardens, fruit trees and a worm farm.
  - Garden patches were located in spaces with ample light and ventilation to ensure good crops.
- Maintaining these has become embedded into the daily program.
  - Children participate in planting, watering, harvesting, composting and worm farming, learning about lifecycles, food origins and waste reduction.
- Children also collect and compost their food scraps throughout the day, helping them to learn how the cycle works – food → scraps → compost/worm farm → garden soil → planting → food!
- The worm juice is used on the centre's garden, and extra is given to families at the service to use on their own gardens at home.

The difference it has made

- Children have learned to value where food comes from, how to use resources responsibly, and how their everyday actions can support a healthier and more sustainable world.
- The children are developing a deep, practical understanding of food systems, sustainability and environmental responsibility.
- Community collaborations have been built as they now collect coffee grounds from neighbouring cafés to reuse in garden beds.

Top tips

- Make sustainability a part of the service's vision, then embed it into everyday routines to create long-term habits that support that vision.
- Use real-world activities and experiences wherever possible to create rich learning experiences for children.
  - This includes incursions and excursions out into the community, and community collaboration.

Through real-world experiences, children at Montessori Minds are learning all about sustainability and environmental responsibility and becoming the sustainability superstars of the future.