

# Sustainability in your backyard



NSW FAMILY DAY CARE ASSOCIATION RESOURCE SHEET

AUTUMN 2014

## By Kiri Combi from Backyard in a Box



Why can embedding sustainability be so hard?

Because practising Educators are being asked to teach something they sometimes themselves know very little about. But I suspect educators know much more than they give themselves credit for.

So how can you comply with national laws and start the ball rolling?

Grab a cup of tea and find a quiet place to sit down. Close your eyes and cast your mind back to your earliest memories of your grandparents and parents. Now try and recall memories that relate to being outdoors, in your backyard, at a park, near a river, or family gatherings – you may need a box of tissues at this point! Now just sit and let the memories flow in.

What is your strongest memory? Write it down and make a sketch of your memory.

For most of us this exercise will trigger a memory of a loved one who modelled behaviour very much in sync with sustainable practices. It may have been as simple as feeding stale bread to ducks on a riverbank, or reusing left over boiled rice to make rice pudding, or perhaps your grandfather was like mine – he literally licked his plate clean and would consume old food because he couldn't bear to throw it in the bin! Grandpa Ricky (or Koro Ricky) had a cast iron stomach, a practice he developed no doubt during the Great Depression and Second World War. I'm not advocating this, mind you. I am a strong believer in throwing old food into the chicken coup or compost bin.

You have had models of sustainability around you in your life and perhaps you didn't even know that's what they were. It's so simple that perhaps you overlooked it. We

are human beings. We know this stuff. We are designed and wired to survive and adapt to new conditions. Part of successful adaptation is maximising resources on hand and being innovative or creative with how they are used. That's all. Pretty basic stuff.

Of course current teaching and learning pedagogic theory and practice also comes into play but I developed Backyard in a Box with these same fundamental principles. Backyard in a Box simplifies and helps guide your practice until you gain the confidence to expand on your existing knowledge and do it yourself.

Project based learning is particularly useful in embedding sustainability because it takes place over a period of time and allows ideas to flourish and develop in natural directions that can be documented and proven. Growing vegetables is a choice example. The fear of not knowing 'how' to do something or 'getting it wrong' usually thwarts these types of projects. Backyard in a Box covers 7 themes that remove the fear and empower you to progress professionally and personally. Consider Resource Recycling, Worm Farming, Composting, Guinea Pigs, Chickens, Organic Gardening and Water Recycling.

The benefits to Family Day Care educators are fourfold. Firstly, the training resources teach you while you are teaching. The classroom resources minimise your own preparation and planning time investment. Our Community and School Readiness resources also create continuity from home and school, engaging families in ways that will inspire new behaviours and help you comply with National Quality Standards in numerous Quality Areas. And finally you have the benefit of dual use, once for your family day care families and again for your nuclear family.

Visit [backyardinabox.com.au](http://backyardinabox.com.au) to view our online tutorials and learn more about how easy it is to become a sustainable Family Day Care Educator.





*Round and round the garden  
Like a teddy bear  
One step – two steps –  
Tickled under there!*

Young children can be easily engaged with rhymes and rhythm. Add some actions, such as playing 'This Little Piggie Went to Market' with their toes and you are likely to find a toddler giggling and squealing with delight 'Again!'.

Playing with sounds and rhyme helps young children find out how language works – its spaces and patterns and beats – and is an important bridge to reading. We learn about words through our ears as much as our eyes, which is why it's so important to read out loud to children – poems and nursery rhymes as well as picture books – from an early age.

## Why do children love poems?

Most of us approached storytelling through rhymes and poetry. The first stories we have been told as children were probably poems. Why do children love poems? Are rhymes important for the child development? Indeed, they are.

Rhymes are important for language development, cognitive development, social/emotional development and physical development.

## Language Development

Rhymes make it easier for kids to learn new words. Learning new words appears effortless, because the rhythmical structure creates a familiar context for unfamiliar words. Moreover, reading rhymes aloud or repeating rhymes helps them practice pitch, voice inflection, and volume. It may seem trivial to an adult, but the level of coordination required to master all the variables of voice is extremely complex.

*Poetry can provide a relaxed and playful way for children to gain language skills.*

## Physical Development

This brings us to the impact of rhymes on physical development. Breath coordination, tongue and mouth movements are made easier by the musical structure of the rhyme. Rhymes create a perfect environment for children, because it looks like right things happen easily. Rhymes help you understand when you need to breathe, and for how long, with no need of theory of explanation. The physical awareness developed through rhymes can be naturally applied to reading aloud as the children grow older.

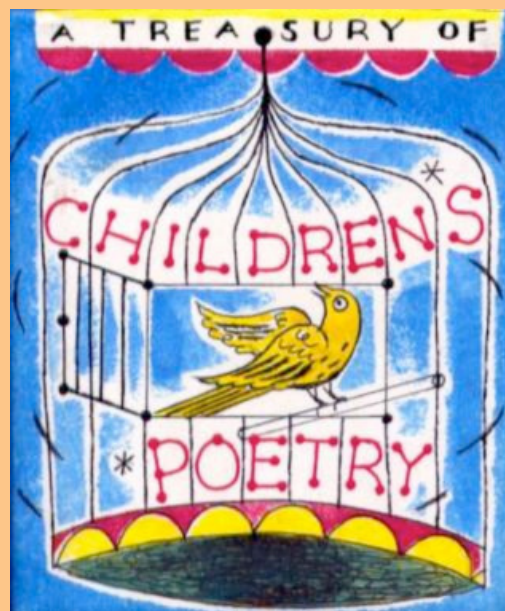
*"Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and use the individual sounds or phonemes in spoken words. Helping children understand rhyming is one key skill of phonemic awareness." (Block & Israel, 2005)*

## Cognitive Development

Through rhymes and poems, children understand that there are words which are similar in sound but with different meanings. They learn what a pattern is and become capable of recognizing patterns. They understand, through patterns, what a sequence is. They have fun memorizing rhymes, thus practicing their memory. Memory, patterns and sequences are also extremely helpful for approaching math and new languages.

## Social/Emotional Development

Poetry can help children to know more about themselves and about their emotions. This can enable them to establish healthy relationships with other children and adults around them. Rhymes encourage children's sense of humour. Sharing rhymes with their family creates space for inside jokes and for an emotional attachment to the stories children read together with their families. When children feel lonely, or need comfort, they can easily recall the rhymes they shared with their parents and feel cherished, also if they're not with their family in that exact moment.



## A Treasury of Children's Poetry

by Melissa Stein (Editor), David Borgenicht (Compiler)

Poems can purr. Poems can fly. Poems can sing, poems can dance – poems can tell about life, and about you.

## Sources:

<http://timbuktu.me/blog/why-do-children-love-poems>  
[www.kids-bookreview.com](http://www.kids-bookreview.com)