

# Child Care Industry News

February 25, 2014



Welcome, this week we are delighted to introduce sustainability expert and early childhood educator, Kiri Combi, who offers some suggestions on improving sustainability programs in your service. Also meet Tara Colwell Director of Only about Children in Mosman NSW and learn about her holistic approach to early childhood education and care.

## Developing programs which support sustainability



*This week early childhood educator and [Backyard in a Box](#) designer Kiri Combi offers her advice on how to develop and implement programs which support sustainability in the early childhood environment and beyond.*

Writing programs to support the integration of sustainability in early learning environments can be a challenge for first timers. Long standing safety concerns by consecutive and varied governments has seen crucial elements such as water, animals, and food plants approached with extreme trepidation, to the degree that attempts by licensees to incorporate these 'elements' have been relegated to the 'too-hard basket'.

For many years services have simply lived with the fact that they couldn't introduce experiences beyond the token water and sand troughs or a visiting chicken hatchery or animal farm once a year at Christmas time.

All things in moderation is the best approach and so it is now with the recently introduced National Law. This Law makes clear provision for the

incorporation of common sense notions relating to the thrifty use of the earth's resources, including human resources, necessitating the use of these previously and largely ignored 'elements'. Grass roots sensible approaches that my grandparents and great grandparents undertook as a matter of course, simply because it was the smartest and most viable action to take at the time.

The National Quality Standard and National Quality Framework make a clear and deliberate attempt to return to this age of common sense with the inclusion of Quality Areas 1 and 3, Educational Program and Practice and Physical Environment which requires educators to provide children with a fundamental education in sustainability.

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## Child care person in the spotlight



Tara Colwell - Campus Director at Only About Children, Mosman NSW

**What is your name?**

Tara Colwell and I think "Tawa" is the most common name for me by the children.

**Which centre do you work in? How many staff and children are in the centre?**

I am very proud to be the Campus Director at Only About Children (OAC), Mosman Campus (NSW). We cater for 98 children aged between six weeks to six years each day across the campus. Across the week we cater for over 120 families. I lead a dedicated team of 23 passionate early childhood professionals.

**What is your professional background and career experience?**

I headed eagerly into full time studies in Early Childhood in Canberra upon completion of my HSC, as I knew that I always wanted to work with young children and families.

After completing my studies I moved to Sydney and worked in a Team Leader position at a service in Mosman for two years before being offered the Director position. This was quite a "young" age in terms of being a centre manager. However, the director who I had worked under had been a passionate and inspiring mentor and had instilled in me an honest perspective about how we engage children and families in learning that is truly meaningful and how this is made evident through the process of visible documentation of children's relationships and following processes of learning and investigation.

I have now been a part of the early childhood profession for more than 11 years, with nine of these as a centre director- a role that I absolutely love and feel inspired and challenged by on a daily basis.

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