

# ***Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner Preschool Service Philosophy***

## **Family Charter**

### Glenaeon Preschool

1. Recognises that the family members are the child's first care-givers and teachers and we as Early Childhood educators join you in partnership in this task.
2. Values the nurturing lifelong love and care you provide for your child and the immense task this really is.
3. Welcomes you to our centre and invites you to be with your child as a part of our community whenever you wish.
4. Is interested in all the unique gifts your family brings to your child and the ethics, family background and collective wisdom of your culture.
5. Appreciates that you as parents are your child's advocates and know them deeply; their needs and interests and subtle unique qualities are elements about which we wish to learn.
6. Is honoured that you have placed trust in us and our wish to give your child the support and care they need. We wish to share your insights into how this can best be done.
7. Seeks to establish open, warm and respectful communication and begin a joyful journey together, in which we will also share our program and your child's journey here.

### **Access, Equity and Diversity**

At Glenaeon Preschool cultural and linguistic diversity is embraced and acknowledged. Educators model inclusive practices and engender an atmosphere of acceptance. Integration of children with additional needs and diverse lifestyles is supported. Our curriculum is inclusive and every child will be supported to participate in the program. Our learning program and planning will reflect the individual child's needs, and where appropriate, resource and inclusion support workers will be accessed.

The families are valued, and the children's diverse backgrounds are accepted and reflected in our educational curriculum. We encourage families to come and celebrate their significant festivals with us and share their stories and cultural arts and crafts. This enriches our community.

### **Reconciliation at Glenaeon Preschool**

At Glenaeon Preschool, we are committed to acknowledging the traditional custodians of this land, who were caretakers for tens of thousands of years, the Cammeraygal people. We value the importance of reconciliation and have begun a journey of preparing to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan and connecting to indigenous people who could support this step.

### **Sustainability**

Our aim is to promote a sense of gratitude, respect and responsibility for the natural environment. For the young child this begins with fostering appreciation of the wonders of the natural world and its bountiful gifts, which we believe will support their wish to protect the planet for future generations. We also involve children in active sustainability practices including recycling, gardening, composting, energy and waste conservation as well as sustainably sourced equipment. Today's children will need to be change agents as they grow up so as to leave the world in a better condition for the future development of humanity.

### **Critical Reflection**

We are committed to developing skills in deep reflection, based on our own observations of children, multiple viewpoints of educational theory and consideration of research so as to work with the families and community so that all children learn and develop as fully as possible.

## Essentials of our Educational Philosophy

### Love and Warmth

Love and emotional warmth create the basis for the child's healthy development. These qualities are expressed in what lives between the adult caregiver and the child, in the children's behaviour toward one another, and among the early childhood educators, parents and the surrounding community.

### An Environment that Nourishes the Senses and a Secure Rhythm

Early learning is profoundly connected to the child's own physical and sensory experience. Everything the young child sees, hears, and touches has an effect. Thus a clean, orderly, beautiful and calm setting is essential. The physical environment, should provide varied and nourishing opportunities for self-education—experiences in touch, balance, lively and joyful movement, and also inward listening. The care, love, and intention expressed through the outer materials and furnishings of the environment are experienced unconsciously by the child. The child experiences the immediate environment as filled with soul and nurturing.

The educator shapes the temporal environment as well as the spatial. Through a rhythmic daily routine, in which something happens at the same time but with different creative nuances, the child gains a sense of security and confidence in the world. The different activities of the day take place in a comfortable flow with smooth musical or spoken creative transition verses and songs.

### Creative and Artistic Experience

In early childhood, the art of education is the art of living. The teachers are artists in how they perceive and relate to the children and to the activities of daily life. They orchestrate and choreograph the rhythms of each day, each week, and each season in such a way that the children can breathe freely in a living structure. In addition, the teacher offers the children opportunities for artistic experiences in singing and music, in movement and gesture—through movement and rhythmic games—and in creative speech and language—through verses, poetry, and stories. The children model with beeswax, draw, and do watercolour painting. Puppet and marionette shows put on by the teacher are an important element in the life of the kindergarten and children like to recreate these in their play.

### Meaningful Adult Activity to be Imitated

*“The task of the early childhood educator is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child's imitation through play. . . . The activities of children, must be derived directly from life itself rather than being “thought out” by the intellectualized culture of adults. ....*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Child's Changing Consciousness*

Real, meaningful work with a purpose, adjusted to the needs of the child, is in accordance with the child's natural and inborn need for activity, and is an enormously significant part of the education. The teacher focuses on the meaningful activities that nurture, such as cooking and baking, gardening, composting, washing and cleaning, creating and caring for the materials in the immediate environment as well as taking care of the needs of the children. This directed attention of the teacher creates an atmosphere of freedom in which the individuality of each child can be active. It is not intended just that the children copy the outer movements and actions of the adult, but that they experience also the inner attitude—the devotion, care, sense of purpose, focus, and creative spirit of the adult.

### **Self-Initiated Free, Imaginative Play**

*“In the child’s play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play, through everything that cannot be determined by fixed rules, stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child, the real educational value of play lies in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theory, and allow the child free rein.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *Self Education in the Light of Anthroposophy*

Little children learn through play. They approach play out of their entirely individual ways, out of their unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their unique experiences of the world in which they live.

The task of the teacher is to create an environment that supports the possibility of healthy play. This environment includes the physical surroundings, furnishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social interactions; and the inner/spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the adults.

### **Protection of the Forces of Childhood**

The lively, waking dream of the little child’s consciousness must be allowed to thrive in the early childhood group. This means that the educator refrains as much as possible from verbal instruction. Instead, their stories, musical circle activities, gestures and actions provide a model for the child’s imitation. Familiar daily rhythms and activities provide a context where the need for verbal instruction is reduced. Simple, archetypal imagery in stories, songs, and games provides experiences that the children can internalise but that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation.

### **Gratitude, Reverence, and Wonder**

*“An atmosphere of gratitude should grow naturally in children through merely witnessing the gratitude the adults feel and express as they receive what is freely given by others. If a child says ‘thank you’ very naturally—not in response to the urging of others, but simply through imitating—something has been done that will greatly benefit the child’s whole life. Out of this an all-embracing gratitude will develop toward the whole world.*

*Out of these early, all-pervading experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embedded in each and every child, begins to blossom...*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

This is the basis for what will become a capacity for love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for spiritual devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

### **Joy, Humour, and Happiness**

The teacher’s earnestness about their work and their serious striving must be balanced with humour and a demeanour that radiates happiness. There must be moments of humour and delight in the preschool every day. The children need many moments of laughter and joy.

### **Early Childhood Educators on a Path of Inner Development**

We foster an ethical soul-spiritual environment in our early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adults who care for the children are important. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child’s development. The spiritual environment includes recognition of the child as a threefold being—of body, soul, and spirit. Through this we recognise their uniqueness and the wisdom in their being. Ultimately, the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings—and who we are becoming and how. The child experiences the ideal we strive towards.