WHAT IS INNOVATION?

Innovation, like creativity, can be hard to define. Innovation begins with a thought, an idea, a light bulb moment, even a vague sense of what might be possible. Innovation also includes transforming that idea into something that can be tested. In essence, innovation is a process that moves from idea to reality. Not all innovations will be usable or even practical. However, the creative process of moving from an idea to something that can be tested often results in more ideas or the refinement of ideas. The following are some definitions of innovation, all of which identify the inclusion of an end product.

- Clegg, Kornberger and Pitis (2011, p. 366) define innovation in an organisational context as ‘the creation of either a new process (process innovation) or a new product or service (product/service innovation) that has an impact on the way the organisation operates’.
- Dey (in Logan, 2012, p. 3) states that the ‘process of translating what starts off as a creative idea or notion into something useful that people want and need is innovation’.
- Bordia, Kronenberg and Neely (2005, p. 1) define innovation as ‘the ability to define and develop new products and services and deliver them to market’.

Innovation inevitably leads to change and, as such, innovation and change go hand-in-hand. Innovation usually occurs as a result of problem solving: ‘How do we fix this problem; What could we do differently? What if ...?’ Such problem solving leads to the generation of ideas, some of which will be worthy of further investigation. At this point in the innovation process it is important to support creative thinking by removing the normal barriers or constraints; for example, by suspending judgement or not worrying about cost or resources. An innovative idea needs to be trialled, refined and tried again until it looks and feels like a viable idea. The next step is to work out how it can be put into practice and sustained over the long term. This requires consideration of how the innovation ‘fits’ into the operations of the organisation, and the identification of practices or processes that need to be adjusted to support the innovation. This process will ensure the innovation can be implemented with a high likelihood of success. The evaluation of innovation can also lead to refinement processes or changes in other areas of the organisation’s operation.

While innovation is often a result of problem solving, it can also be a result of promoting a creative environment in which employees are given the autonomy to try new ideas. This can be supported in a workplace environment where strategies such as brainstorming, think-tanks and collaborative discussions are encouraged and supported. In children’s services, a barrier to innovation can be isolation. Even educators who actively engage in professional development and read widely may lack exposure to catalysts for innovation. This is particularly true where the sole focus of professional development is limited to the core specialisation of early childhood education and care. In other words, educators need to be exposed to other professions and other practices that could perhaps, with a little creative thought, be applied to children’s services.
BECOMING INNOVATIVE

Often innovation, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. What may appear to be an innovative practice, product or service for one organisation may in fact be standard in another organisation. However, this doesn’t really matter – what matters is that organisations support and embrace innovation to improve the quality of the end product. In the case of children’s services, the end product is quality services to children and families.

Doing things differently

P-TECH
In the United States, IBM has developed a program called P-TECH (Pathways in Technology Early College High School). IBM is working with state schools and local universities to establish innovative high school programs that combine traditional curriculum subjects with computer science. Students remain at high school for an extra three years; they graduate with a high school diploma and a two-year associate degree. IBM also guarantees job interviews to qualified graduates of P-TECH schools affiliated with the company.

Innovate Here
Innovate Here was established by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2013) to support educators who are:

- trying new ways of doing things in their learning environments. Innovation is described as doing things in new or different ways [which may include]
- continuous improvement of existing practices through to transformation of how we achieve goals or rethinking what those goals are.

The program includes a link to TED Ed (www.youtube.com/user/TEDEducation), a free educational website for teachers and learners to share good ideas for teaching and learning.

The e5 Instructional Model
The e5 Instructional Model of quality teaching practice (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate) has been developed by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/e5.aspx) to promote innovative teaching practices designed to meet the needs of a changing learning environment. Can this model be applied to early childhood education? It looks and feels a lot like best practice in early childhood education!

Innovative thinking is not reliant on past experience or known facts. It relies on the application of imagination, creativity and thinking about problems from multiple perspectives. It also relies on having the opportunity to think creatively, to explore ideas and to use trial and error. It often starts with the idea for an end product (what might be possible) and then works backwards to investigate how that product can be produced – for example, a personal PC in every home; a handheld device that can be used as a telephone and to play music, record videos, send texts, take photographs and instantly connect to the internet; or a photocopier that can build three-dimensional objects!

The Centre for Creative Leadership (Horth & Buchner, 2009, pp. 11–12) identifies six skills necessary for innovative thinking. Each of these skills, if not already present, can be developed.
• **Paying attention** – looking at detail, looking and listening to form new perspectives and understandings. Busy people often overlook detail; we see and hear just enough to get on with the task at hand. Slowing down can help us to pay closer attention and perhaps discover something that has previously gone unnoticed. In children’s services, educators are trained to **notice** children through the process of observation. This allows educators to really **see** the child in ways that may be overlooked in day-to-day interactions.

• **Personalising** – tapping into our personal experiences, knowledge and skills and drawing on these generate innovative ideas. Each individual has a unique set of life experiences, skills and knowledge that shape how they **see** the world. This unique viewpoint can sometimes bring a new perspective to problem solving. Personalising also includes thinking about customers – their needs, wants, how they use products and services and how they interact with the organisation.

• **Imaging** – using a range of techniques to explore ideas; for example, creating images, graphs, pictures or stories.

• **Serious play** – playing around with ideas by experimenting, using improvisation and exploration to generate innovative ideas.

• **Collaborative inquiry** – sharing and exploring ideas with others, engaging in questioning, critical thinking and brainstorming.

• **Crafting** – a skill that helps individuals to move beyond taking an **either/or** approach by considering a range ideas.

Innovation relies on a willingness to consider diverse possibilities, identifying what **might** work and giving these ideas room to evolve rather than discarding or dismissing them without further consideration.

Most children’s services organisations are in a unique position to engage in innovation, because they are not hampered by the constraints of large **bureaucracies**. While services are highly regulated and must comply with the legislative requirements of the National Quality Framework, there still exists great scope for innovative practices. Consider the following opportunities for innovation:

• **The creation of the physical environment**. While it is impractical to make changes to building structures, the layout and arrangement of the playrooms can take on new dimensions if a little flair is used to create interesting spaces, secret places, quiet areas and places for messy play. Using fabric to lower ceilings, creating ‘rooms’ within rooms or simply creating a magic environment can be uplifting for children and educators. The same strategies can be used to create interesting outdoor spaces.

• **Children’s programs**. Early childhood educators are free to create a curriculum under the umbrella of the EYLF or other approved learning frameworks. This allows many opportunities for innovative curriculum practices.

• **Daily routines** (within certain obvious limits). Routines provide structure, predictability and a smooth flow to the day for both educators and children. Routines must be designed to meet the needs of both children and educators (rosters, meal breaks, staff–child ratios).

Problems with routines arise when the program is driven by routines, rather than routines being driven by the program. While routines provide necessary structure, they can also be a great source of stress if educators are required to work to a timetable that is not flexible and
may not be in the best interests of children and educators. For example, is it necessary to interrupt children’s play for morning tea and group time? Do all preschool children need to lie down for a sleep/rest?

**Responses to problem solving.** Each day, educators are confronted with various problems which must be addressed. Team members can be encouraged to take a creative approach to problem solving. This may require greater risk taking and may not always result in the desired outcome. It does, however, encourage people to think laterally and take initiative in addressing issues as they arise.

- **Partnerships with families.** Developing partnerships with families requires a range of strategies to meet the diverse needs of families.

- **Approaches to professional supervision.** The use of traditional methods of professional supervision such as staff appraisals is becoming less relevant as services employ staff with a wider variety of skills, knowledge, experiences, qualifications and cultural backgrounds. Utilising the expertise of the team by introducing mentoring and guided supervision and by encouraging team members to take greater responsibility for their own professional supervision needs can result in a variety of creative approaches to staff supervision.

- **Responses to customer needs.** Individual children’s services can use innovative practices to become more responsive to the needs of families and children; for example, by:
  - arranging for a mobile hairdresser to visit the service to cut the children’s hair
  - organising a health professional to screen infants, toddlers and preschoolers
  - organising a clothing pool where parents can buy or swap children’s clothing, toys and baby equipment.

Such innovative strategies give a service an ‘edge’ in terms of service delivery and extend the organisation’s core business beyond traditional education and care.

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**Innovation I**

**Imaging**

The service director Belle arrives in the staffroom to see Claude with his arms folded, looking intently at the whiteboard, which is covered with flow charts, diagrams and words.

‘Hi Claude, what are you up to?’

‘Hi Belle, I’ve been thinking about the team meeting discussion the other day, about the challenges of offering indoor-outdoor play and still ensuring we meet staff–child ratios. There were so many barriers put forward that I don’t think we really had a chance to think of how it could be done. I have some ideas that I think could work and I wanted to think them through a bit more by using the whiteboard.’

‘That’s great Claude. I’m so pleased you’re prepared to think about solutions. Can you talk me through what you’re thinking?’

**Crafting**

‘Well, the way I look at it, we don’t need to take an either/or approach. We just need to think about it a little differently. It’s not possible to have all three preschool rooms open and have indoor-outdoor play, but we could close two rooms, set up more things on the
leading innovation by example

Innovative organisations require innovative leaders. Innovation is likely to occur only if employees feel that they have permission to be innovative – to generate ideas, take risks and trial new practices. Leaders can support innovation by creating a workplace culture of creative thinking. This includes leading by example – being prepared to:

- model creative thinking
- act as a sounding board for new ideas
- question conventional practices
- share creative ideas (‘What would happen if ...? I think we should try ...’)
- apply divergent thinking skills draw on the experiences of other organisations (both within and outside the early childhood sector)
- encourage risk taking and experimentation
- demonstrate trust in the decision-making abilities of team members
- listen to and respect the ideas of others, use failure or setbacks as learning opportunities
- eliminate impediments to innovation
- deal with negativity
- provide access to resources
- where possible, reduce workloads so that innovators can work on their ideas
- challenge educators to think creatively by regarding problems as opportunities for creative thinking. Leaders are also responsible for creating an organisational climate. According to Logan (2012, p. 9), the key factors that support a culture of innovation are:
  - positive interpersonal interaction – creating a strong sense of cohesion within peer groups and addressing negative attitudes
  - intellectual stimulation – promoting lively debate and discussion of ideas
  - challenge – providing employees with sufficiently challenging, suitably complex and interesting tasks.

innovation II

supporting

At the following team meeting, Belle asks Claude to present his plan for indoor-outdoor play. Claude provides each team member with a handout to outline his proposal, which includes details of staffing arrangements, the set-up of the open room and the range of experiences that could be set up on the verandah. Belle is keen to see how the team will respond to the proposal. Predictably, 70 per cent of the team think the idea has merit and are willing to trial it. The 30 per cent who dissent are the same individuals who are always resistant to change. Belle thinks of them as her ‘cup half-empty’ educators.

At the meeting, Belle addresses the dissenters. ‘Thank you for your comments. I will work with you to overcome the problems you have raised if in fact they arise. We will start the trial next week. Claude will be in charge of the planning process and assigning of educators to the various play areas. Each room team will need to liaise with him. Claude
will report to me if there are any teething problems. To make this work it needs to be a team effort, so I expect 100 per cent commitment from everyone.

ESTABLISHING WORK PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT AND PROMOTE INNOVATION

The process of innovation usually begins when an individual identifies or ‘senses’ a problem or challenge and becomes motivated and interested enough to spend time thinking about it. They may examine the related information they already have, spend time recalling experiences that seem relevant to the problem, discuss ideas with their colleagues or undertake research.

While individuals can work alone to identify innovative possibilities, translating these possibilities into practical outcomes requires the support of management. It requires leaders who are willing to allocate time and resources to explore innovative ideas and translate these into an end product or service that can be trialled in the workplace.

Successful innovation occurs in organisations where there is a conscious decision by management to support innovation. By reflecting on the culture of the organisation, managers begin to assess what changes may need to be made to accommodate and promote innovation.

Encourage risk taking

**Flexibility** and a willingness to take calculated risks are important attributes for organisations that are committed to encouraging innovative thinking. Innovation often incorporates an element of risk to the organisation. These risks may be financial (particularly if the innovation fails), a strain on physical or human resources, a negative response from sceptical stakeholders or a temporary disruption to existing services. Any decision to implement innovations must be carefully considered in terms of the likely benefits and risks to the organisation. Organisations that are prepared to engage in a degree of risk taking are likely to grow more rapidly than organisations that opt for the status quo. This requires managers and leaders who are optimistic, whose focus is on ‘the best-case scenario’. However, this does not mean that ‘the worst-case scenario’ should not be considered. In fact, both are important considerations that require a balanced assessment.

Leaders can challenge educators to think about possibilities in positive rather than negative ways. Consider how educators might be encouraged to respond positively to the ideas in the following scenario.

What might happen if ...

- the daily program consisted of child-directed play – no formal group, music or story time?
- the older children were asked to plan the outdoor experiences?
- the children were allowed to play outside all day?
- several 4-year-olds were given the chance to help in the nursery each day for 30 minutes?

Innovative leadership
When trains were first developed, the King of Prussia confidently predicted: ‘No-one will pay good money to get from Berlin to Potsdam in one hour when he can ride his horse there in one day for free.’

In 1903, the president of Michigan Savings Bank gave this market advice to Horace Rackham, Henry Ford’s lawyer: ‘The horse is here to stay. The automobile is only a fad, a novelty.’

A British parliamentary committee assessed whether Edison’s light bulb would ever be useful. They concluded it was ‘unworthy of the attention of practical or scientific men’. Edison himself made these market assessments: ‘The phonograph is not of any commercial value’ and ‘the radio craze will die out in time’.


Provide learning opportunities

Dyer, Gregersen and Christensen (2011, pp. 45, 69, 98, 138, 115) suggest that the skills necessary to be innovative can be learned. These skills, referred to as Discovery Skills, include:

- **Associating**: The ability to cross-pollinate ideas in their own heads and in others. They connect wildly different ideas, objects, services, technologies, and disciplines to dish up new and unusual innovations.
- **Questioning**: Asking insightful questions that challenge the status quo.
- **Observing**: Noticing the behaviours of customers, suppliers and competitors to identify new ways of doing things. It also includes noticing workarounds (an incomplete or partial solution to a particular job to be done) and anomalies or surprises that might provide innovative solutions to problems.
- **Experimenting**: Trying out new experiences; taking apart products, processes, and ideas; and testing ideas through pilots and prototypes.
- **Networking**: Actively tap into new ideas and insights by talking with people who have diverse ideas and perspectives.

Creating a learning mind-set

Children’s services, like many other organisations providing professional services, must engage in a process of continuous improvement in order to meet quality service delivery standards.

In children’s services, a culture of ongoing workplace learning is supported by the National Quality Standard:

**QA4 Staffing arrangements**

4.2.2 Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills, to improve practice and relationships.

**QA7 Leadership and service management**

7.2.2 The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement. (ACECQA, 2011c. Reproduced under Creative Commons BY 3.0 Aus.)

The Department for Education and Skills (UK) (2007, p. 7) developed a set of national standards for leaders of children’s services. Six key leadership roles considered as essential in supporting improved outcomes for children and families were identified. One of these key
roles centres on the importance of developing a culture of workplace learning: leading, learning and development. The leadership standards state:

**The head of a Children’s Centre leads a culture that encourages children, parents and staff to become enthusiastic, independent and successful lifelong-learners.**

Promoting a learning mind-set requires managers to model reflective practices and actively discuss how ongoing learning supports the creation of a quality service. Assisting educators to make learning meaningful can be a great motivating factor in professional development. For example, how are the theories of Vygotsky, Gardner or Piaget translated into pedagogical practices? How is current research on children’s mental health made visible in daily routines? How is the voice of the child included in curriculum planning? Educators can be challenged to reflect on their practices, their professional knowledge and its application to practice.

**Learning** opportunities should extend beyond attendance at workshops or conferences. Educators can be encouraged to discuss journal articles, professional newsletters, research briefs, and information published by key organisations on websites or blogs.

Innovative and creative ideas are often generated when individuals engage in debate and discussion. Managers can facilitate discussion at team meetings, over a team dinner or by utilising technology such as an educator’s lounge on the service’s website. An educator’s lounge can be used to share ideas, ask questions, pose problems and add links to interesting articles, blogs, videos, PowerPoints or websites.

### Providing learning opportunities

**The educator’s lounge**

Kate, the director of Blue Bay Early Learning Centre, is keen to promote professional learning in the workplace. Knowing that all educators are time poor, Kate sets herself the challenge of developing a culture of learning with clear links to professional practice. Kate works with an IT consultant to set up an educator’s lounge on the service’s website. The lounge includes a blackboard to share comments and exchange ideas. The lounge also allows educators to create links to blogs, websites, Pinterest, YouTube, and so on.

Kate posts new items or links each week, and each educator is required to contribute to the lounge at least monthly. Kate is pleased to see that the educator’s lounge has been very successful. Educators mainly access the lounge after hours and have enthusiastically embraced sharing and discussing a wide range of topics. The lounge has led to the introduction of new practices and the adaptation of existing practices. Educators report that the professional nature of the lounge has validated their expertise and renewed their enthusiasm as learners.
Trial and evaluate innovations

Trialling and evaluating new ideas is an integral part of the innovation process. Not all innovations will be successful; however, all innovations are an opportunity for learning. The process of trialling and evaluating innovations will include a number of steps:
1. Clearly define the innovation. Describe the process or product – is it feasible?
2. Identify the benefits or value of the innovation to the organisation.
3. Identify any risks to the organisation, such as legislative compliance or meeting the needs of stakeholders.
4. Identify possible roadblocks or barriers to implementation – for example, are there major resource implications, time constraints, training implications, likely objectors?
5. Identify how the innovation can be integrated into existing workplace practice.
6. Identify how the process or product will be implemented.
7. Identify the resource requirements, including human resources.
8. Identify who will be involved in the implementation of the process or product.
9. Identify the skills/knowledge required to implement the process or product and the implications for training.
10. Identify the impact the product or process may have on existing workplace practices.
11. Identify the time frame for implementation of the product or process.
12. Identify the evaluation tools to be used, the criteria for evaluation and the time frame for the trial period.
13. Identify who will be involved in the evaluation process.

The educator’s lounge II

Management and educators agree to trial the educator’s lounge for a period of three months. Kate’s proposal to the management committee was quite detailed. It included the cost of adding the lounge to the existing website and working with the IT consultant to monitor the lounge and make adjustments as needed.
An evaluation tool is developed in consultation with the educators and the IT consultant.

Depending on the nature of the innovation, the evaluation process should include an assessment of each step or component part of the product or process. This will ensure a thorough evaluation, highlight strengths and allow for fine tuning as needed. It will also identify weaknesses or flaws that may lead to a decision not to proceed with the initiative or to proceed with only some components rather than the entire process or product.

MANAGING CHANGE

Innovation and change are interdependent – innovation leads to change and change often leads to innovation. Children’s services are dynamic organisations and, like most dynamic organisations, are subject to ongoing change stimulated by internal and external factors, some of which are identified in Table 4.1. A commitment to continuous improvement means that services are constantly evolving and finding new ways to achieve service goals in the most efficient way possible while maintaining quality standards. The process of change impacts on individuals within the organisation and the organisation as a whole. Whether

planned or unplanned, change can cause tension and stress and is often quite an emotional process which may result in resistance and resentment. Alternatively, change can be uplifting, exciting and generate many positive benefits for the organisation. If regarded as positive, change is usually welcomed and embraced.

The reasons for change and the pace of change may not be under the control of the manager. However, the manager can often control the way in which change is managed. Change that is managed in a timely and effective manner can have many positive outcomes for the organisation. The ability to respond effectively to change is vital for the long-term success of an organisation.

**EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE IN CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor contributing to change</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td></td>
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| Economic                     | • Changes to funding, funding criteria or funding accountability requirements  
                              | • Competition from new services  
                              | • Upturn or downturn in employment  |
| Political                    | • Changes to legislation/regulatory requirements, e.g. the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care  
                              | • Changes to requirements for accountability/evidence, e.g. the Quality Improvement Plan  
                              | • Introduction of new monitoring strategies, e.g. the Australian Early Childhood Index  
                              | • Changes to family support, e.g. the Child Care Benefit scheme, paid maternity leave, funding for professional development of early childhood educators, national workforce reviews  |
| Social                       | • Changing patterns in employment for women  
                              | • Increasing demand for care for children under 2  
                              | • Demand to support diverse needs: social, economic, cultural, ability |
| Technological                | • ICT advances: providing more options for organisational management |
| Environmental                | • Managing organisational sustainability |

Managers who convey a calm attitude towards change and focus on the positive aspects and possible benefits of change are more likely to lead their organisation successfully through the change process. Organisations that cope with change successfully recognise it as an important part of growth and continuous improvement. Change and innovation are actively promoted and used to give the organisation a competitive edge.

Managers in children’s services who successfully lead their organisation through change have strong leadership skills and the ability to develop a workplace culture with a ‘change focus’. The most important consideration for managers is not if change will occur, but how change will be managed to ensure positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

**FEATURES OF CHANGE**

All organisations move through a number of structural and strategic stages of change as they grow and develop or decline in response to both internal and external influences. Whether change is anticipated and expected or imposed or unplanned, the manager must ensure that time is taken to consider an effective response. Reacting to change without careful consideration can have damaging consequences for the organisation.

Change in organisations can be characterised as falling along a continuum that ranges from incremental to transformational. Incremental change has less impact on an organisation and typically occurs over an extended period of time. Members of the organisation usually have plenty of time to contemplate and adapt to the change; for example, a child care service may decide to change a procedure as a result of new information. Such changes are usually implemented after discussion and are usually well planned. Transformational change tends to be more radical and have a greater impact on all aspects of the organisation. An example of transformational change might be a decision to change from a traditional 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. preschool to an extended-hours service.

In children’s services, management of change must take into account the need for stability and consistency in program delivery. Any change that will have a direct impact on the children...
will need to be introduced gradually and carefully monitored to ensure that children are not adversely affected.

**TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND CHANGE**

The continued introduction of new technology and its application to the workplace is a significant driver of change and innovation in organisations both large and small. Consider the application of the following technology as a catalyst for change:

- **web browsers** – software that is used to access the internet; for example, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari
- **Bluetooth** – wireless technology used to connect electronic devices without the need for cables; for example, being able to talk on a mobile phone hands-free while driving, connecting printers to computers
- **Wikipedia** – a free, online information/encyclopaedia site where individuals can add facts or edit content instantly (it may not always be accurate)
- **smartboards** – interactive projection displays that incorporate videos, PowerPoints, touch-screen and smartboard pens, all of which interface with a computer
- **Skype** – a service that combines internet telephone connection and video connection in real time
- **apps** – software used on smartphones and other mobile devices, computers and laptops. Apps are accessed and used while online, and include a wide range of software such as games, information and navigation
- **3D printers** – printers that have the capability to reproduce three-dimensional objects
- **Wi-Fi** – technology that provides high-speed internet connections to computers, laptops and other mobile devices
- **tablets** – mobile touchscreen computers (e.g. iPad)
- **cameras and videorecorders** – handheld devices with instant sharing capabilities
- **smartphones** – phones that allow voice, text and internet connection, and that can be used as cameras and videorecorders
- **social network sites** – websites that allow users to connect with others
- **Twitter** – a social network service that allows users to send and receive short messages, newsfeeds and instant updates in real time
- **YouTube** – a video-sharing website that allows individuals to upload, share and view videos with other users around the world.

Technology and its application in the workplace continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Like all organisations, children’s services must assess which technologies can be used to improve or streamline service delivery and ultimately contribute to the quality of services provided to children and families. It is also essential to consider how technology can support and enhance the educator’s role.
Embracing technology
After some vigorous debate, educators and parents have agreed to trial the use of iPads with children in the preschool rooms. As with any technology, the children were initially very drawn to the iPads. After the initial excitement the children now use the iPads as an everyday resource. With the support of educators, the children document their work by taking photographs, access information for their projects from the internet and have recently begun to document the change of season by photographing and documenting changes in the natural landscape.

PEOPLE AND CHANGE
Each member of the organisation may react differently to change. Motivation, perceptions, feelings, values, attitudes, personality, role in the organisation, experience and maturity will all contribute to an individual’s reaction to change. Some employees may see change as a threat to their job security or a threat to their traditional role in the organisation. Others may see change as a chance to try out new ideas, or as a challenging and creative opportunity.

In small organisations such as children’s services, the manager is likely to know individual team members well enough to anticipate how each person may react to change. The manager can use this knowledge to address possible concerns when introducing change.

People and change
After careful planning, the preschool has decided to convert the facility to a long day care service. Phase 1 of the transition will include care for children aged 2 years 6 months to 6 years. Phase 2 will include care for infants and toddlers. Reactions by educators to this change have varied. Anna, who is young and vibrant, sees the change as having many positive benefits. She likes the idea of working with different age groups and is also looking forward to working different shifts. Carla is not looking forward to the change; she likes the current preschool hours as they allow her to spend more time at home with her children. She wonders how she will cope if she has to start work at 7.00 a.m. Owen wonders if he will be expected to work with infants and toddlers – it’s not something he has ever given much thought to. He decides to do some research on programs for this age group.

Resistance to change
Resistance to change is common, particularly when change has a direct impact on employee roles and responsibilities. Uncertainty, fear of the unknown, fear of job loss or anxiety in relation to developing new skills may all contribute to resistance to change. Resistance to change can also be linked to employee confidence in the manager’s or management’s ability to take control and successfully lead the organisation through the change process.

Personal factors that may contribute to resistance to change
People react on an intellectual level and an emotional level to change. Some of the personal factors that may contribute to resistance to change include the following:

- *Fear of loss.* This includes fearing a loss of job, status, familiar workplace structure, routines or work colleagues.
• *Fear of the unknown.* It is a common human trait to fear the unknown. Employees may wonder: *Will my job be secure? Will I be required to learn new skills? What if I can’t perform the new tasks to the standard required? What training will be provided?*

• *Lack of involvement.* Where decisions are made from the top down there can be a great deal of anger and resentment that may result in employees actively resisting or even sabotaging change.

• *Habit.* Workplace habits can create a sense of safety. Habit allows employees to work within well-established comfort zones. Change can be a real threat to this sense of security and result in stress, anxiety or active resistance to change.

• *Disruption to social relationships.* Organisational change that leads to the reorganisation of workplace teams or changes to contacts with customers can lead to feelings of isolation and stress, due to the loss of familiar social contacts.

• *Disruption to family life.* Workplace change can have a flow-on effect and may require employees to make adjustments to their family life. They may have concerns such as: *How will my children get to school if I have to be at work at 7.00 a.m.? Who will care for my children if I am not home from work until 6.30 p.m.?*

• *Misunderstanding the reason for change.* Organisational change that is not fully and carefully explained may result in the spread of rumours that can lead to fear, anger, misinformation and misunderstanding.

• *Vested interests.* Employees may resist change because it doesn’t fit with individual career paths or retirement plans.

• *Personal values.* Organisational change may challenge personal values, such as: *I don’t like the idea of infants attending child care – they should be at home with their mother! We shouldn’t be increasing the fees, most families simply can’t afford to pay more. Do we really need to create these elaborate portfolios? I thought our role was to support children’s development!*

**Resistance to change**

Sally has been an educator for 30 years and is now in her mid-fifties. Sally has not managed to embrace technology and complains that it takes her longer to use the computer to document her programs and observations than it does to write them by hand. The service director has arranged computer-skills training for Sally and several other team members. However, Sally does not attend the first training session because she is sick, and misses the second session because her mother is ill. The director reminds Sally that the training is for her benefit and will help her to feel more comfortable using the computer. Sally confesses that she is avoiding the training because she doesn’t want her colleagues to know ‘just how hopeless’ she is on the computer.

**Organisational factors that may contribute to resistance to change**

Organisations that embrace change as a positive challenge are more likely to manage change successfully than those organisations that regard change with suspicion. Employees will look towards management to lead them through change. Managers can support employees by acting as positive role models and demonstrating confidence in the change process. Table 4.2 provides examples of organisational factors that may contribute to resistance to change.
ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Contributing factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current reward system</td>
<td>• There may be a lack of incentive to trial new ideas because it is perceived that there are no ‘rewards’ for employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication systems</td>
<td>• There may be a lack of communication with employees, leaving them feeling ‘left in the dark’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There may be no effective strategies for employees to convey concerns/issues or ideas to management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational history</td>
<td>• There may be a history of mismanagement within the organisation that leads to a lack of confidence in management’s ability to lead the change process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational commitment</td>
<td>• There may be a lack of demonstrated commitment to change by management. This lack of leadership will result in employees being suspicious or dismissive of proposed change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consultation</td>
<td>• Management may have failed to consult employees adequately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managers may show little genuine interest in seeking employee input.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Human Factor

While decisions about change within an organisation may occur from a top-down perspective, the process of implementing change must include employees. Involving employees in the change process provides them with a sense of control and often results in better outcomes for the organisation.

Resistance to change may manifest itself in several ways. Some individuals may take the ‘head-in-the-sand’ approach in an attempt to avoid change; others may respond to change with anger, stress or fear. Some may respond with passive aggression; that is, they appear to accept the change, but in fact they resist change by doing nothing or engage in sabotage by actively undermining the change process while appearing to support the change.

Resistance to change can sometimes be indirect; for example, reduced productivity, poor work quality, increased absenteeism or an increase in the number of grievances. Managers can respond to change by working with the whole team or with individuals from small groups. Resistance to change has been found to occur in a predictable sequence, which is outlined below.
### STAGES IN RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Employees respond by denying that change can and will occur. Denial is a self-protection mechanism that is used to give the individual time to think about the possible ramifications of the change. During this stage there may also be expressions of hostility or resistance to change. Managers who talk to employees about proposed or imminent change assist in making it ‘real’. This encourages employees to move on in their thinking and explore how the change will be implemented in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>At this stage the individual tends to focus on the personal impact of change – <em>How is this going to affect me?</em> There is little consideration given to the ‘big picture’. During this phase individuals can be angry and negative, and may actively undermine the change process. It is important to acknowledge feelings of anger and resentment and encourage employees to share their concerns with their colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discarding</td>
<td>During this stage there is a gradual acceptance of the change and a focus on the processes involved. Employees will actively explore how they can adjust to the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Individuals begin to adjust and adapt to change – there is a willingness to move forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalising/ Involvement</td>
<td>In this final stage the individual is able to accept and internalise the change. There is often renewed enthusiasm and commitment to positive outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resistance to change can be addressed by making it known that it is okay to express concerns and also insisting that each person be given the opportunity to do so without fear of attack or judgement. Managers need to acknowledge employee concerns and be available to listen to and clarify these concerns. Managers must also help employees to consider change in an objective manner and identify the positive benefits to the organisation. Negative reactions to change are best managed in a calm and rational manner that will allow the
individual concerned the opportunity to move forward to a successful resolution of their concerns.

Managers can employ a range of strategies to assist individuals to modify their attitudes towards change. They can:

- share the vision and goals in relation to quality service provision – this helps to make the connections between goals and practice
- find out what employees know – do they understand what is going to happen and why?
- identify and discuss differences in perception – for example, what is considered to be a high standard or a poor standard in the performance of specific tasks
- ensure that employees have access to current, factual information which may serve to challenge their perceptions and build skills and knowledge. For example, there may be an assumption that, because members of staff work as a team to care for children, everyone shares the same level of skills and knowledge, regardless of qualifications
- address exaggerations or generalisations – for example: ‘We are always changing the way we program! I wish we could stick to one system for at least 12 months.’ ‘Throw-away’ statements such as this example can have a powerful influence on perceptions, especially when made around younger, less experienced staff
- seek clarification and ask for specific examples to back up perceptions
- get members in the team to state their assumptions about the views of others. This can be quite an interesting task and will often highlight how our perceptions can be distorted because of seemingly minor things
- encourage critical thinking and reflective practice – what are the positives/benefits of the change?

**Change as a continuing process**

The workplace culture – that is, the attitudes, beliefs and values of employees – is a significant factor in the possible success or failure of change within the organisation. In order to adapt to, and cope with, continuous change, it is necessary for an organisation to develop a change-focused culture. Cole (2013, pp. 646–50) describes six phases in the continuing process of change:

- Phase 1: ‘Pressure for change’. Change can be gradual or forced as a result of ‘internal and external pressures’.
- Phase 2: ‘The need for change is accepted’. This phase usually ‘gathers momentum as individuals realise that change is inevitable’.
- Phase 3: ‘New ways are proposed – options are considered’.
- Phase 4: ‘Change is introduced’. This phase requires strong leadership and a sense of optimism.
- Phase 5: ‘The “new way” is modified’. Modifications and adjustments are made in order to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Phase 6: ‘The “new way” becomes “our way”’. Change is accepted and becomes the norm.
Legislation
Many of the experienced, long-term family day care educators are annoyed when they learn that, as a result of legislative changes, all family day care educators must have a minimum Certificate III qualification. It is argued that this will exclude many experienced educators who find the challenge of taking on study in later life far too difficult. However, after the educators are informed that they may be able to apply for some recognition of prior learning for part of the qualification, there is a general sense of relief and acceptance of the impending change.

Monitoring change and innovation
Depending on the nature of the change and innovation, a number of strategies can be used to monitor the effectiveness and impact. In children’s services these strategies might include:

- **Regular discussion with team members** – both individually and as a team. The easiest way to avoid resistance to change is to keep team members well informed of any impending changes, involve them in planning and management of the change, and follow up this process of consultation once the change has been implemented. Change and innovation in the workplace is more likely to succeed in the long term if employees are actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. This gives employees a sense of ownership and commitment to making the change or innovation work. The process of evaluating and measuring outcomes can also provide valuable learning opportunities for educators.

- **Tuning in to staff attitudes**. Talk to team members, ask their opinions, be proactive in raising potentially sensitive issues for discussion. Encourage open and frank discussion and be aware that some team members may voice only the opinions that they think the manager wants to hear.

- **Using formal as well as informal evaluation tools** to measure the effectiveness of change and innovation. This may take a variety of forms, such as observations, surveys or interviews.

- **Seeking feedback from stakeholders** directly affected.

- **Undertaking regular quality audits** to measure effectiveness and consistency in implementation.

- **Seeking external feedback** (if appropriate); for example, from nutritionists or health professionals.

Monitoring change and innovation is just as critical as the planning and implementation process. Managers who fail to monitor and evaluate may find that, over time, any innovations or change are eroded and there is a return to the status quo.

Learning opportunities
Director Kate is talking to Dan about his evaluation of the change to the daily routine that was implemented on an eight-week trial basis.

Kate: ‘This is an excellent report Dan. It’s very thorough and objective.’

Dan: ‘Thanks Kate. You know I was very sceptical about the planned changes. Because of the staffing implication I really didn’t think they would work.’

Kate: ‘Yes, I know. That’s why I asked you to do the evaluation.’

Dan: ‘Yes, I thought so. It’s actually been a really good professional development exercise for me. I had to put aside my opinions and look closely at how the changes were benefiting the children. It’s taught me not to be so quick to judge change before giving it a
chance! I was only considering my own perspective when I should have been taking a much broader view.'

WORKPLACE INNOVATION AND CHANGE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This section of the text focuses on the development and implementation of a sustainability management plan for children’s services. Embedding environmental sustainability into an organisation is not a new practice, but increasingly there is an urgency for everyone to contribute to practices to reduce the negative impact that humans are having on the natural environment. Reducing their ecological footprint has become an important corporate goal for many organisations as they strive to become better corporate citizens.

Chapter 9 of The Big Picture explores sustainable practices in the context of early childhood education. It provides an overview of sustainability principles that can be applied to any organisation. Chapter 9 also examines how to support young children to develop a respect for the natural environment and how to introduce children to the concept of sustainability.

According to the NSW Government:

*Environmental sustainability involves making decisions and taking action that are in the interests of protecting the natural world, with particular emphasis on preserving the capability of the environment to support human life . . . It is not simply about reducing the amount of waste you produce or using less energy, but is concerned with developing processes that will lead to businesses becoming completely sustainable in the future.* (SmallBizConnect website, n.d.)

Caring for the natural environment is everybody’s business. The world’s natural resources are not limitless. Population growth in developing countries and endless consumer demand in developed countries has led to the depletion of the Earth’s resources and biodiversity. The continued high demand for fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil in both developed and developing countries has resulted in large-scale pollution and the emission of greenhouse gases, which are believed to have significantly contributed to climate change or global warming. Future generations will be faced with food and water shortages, rising sea levels, a greater frequency of extreme weather conditions and the continued extinction of threatened and endangered species.

Dee (2010, p. 3) defines sustainability as:

*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is simply ensuring that economic, environmental and social developments go hand in hand.*

He suggests that by adopting environmentally sustainable practices businesses can ‘enhance operational efficiency, improve productivity and save you money’ (p. v).

**Practices and strategies for environmental sustainability**

Being environmentally sustainable can assist children’s services organisations to reduce costs through energy and water efficiency and an efficient use of consumables. A commitment to environmental sustainability within an organisation begins by developing a set of principles and goals that provide a rationale for a policy that can be applied across the organisation to promote and support environmental sustainable practices. Principles of environmental sustainability may include:

- adopting the practice of reduce, re-use and recycle
• care and protection of the natural environment
• sourcing green products and resources wherever viable
• minimising water and energy use and using green energy if possible
• promoting education for sustainability to educators, children and families
• involving all stakeholders – children, parents, educators, support staff and service providers
• adopting a risk management approach – asking: What are the risks of not being environmentally sustainable? (greater waste, higher costs, lack of credibility); What are the opportunities of environmental sustainability? (cost savings, becoming a green organisation).

Below provides examples of the wide range of online resources that can be accessed to support the development of environmental sustainability planning as well as practical strategies that can be implemented in the workplace.

**EXAMPLES OF ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Websites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipment Energy Efficiency (E3) Program</td>
<td><a href="http://www.energyrating.gov.au">www.energyrating.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(energy rating for appliances)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Efficiency Labelling and</td>
<td><a href="http://www.waterrating.gov.au">www.waterrating.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards (WELS) scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SmartApproved Watermark (a label that</td>
<td><a href="http://www.smartwatermark.info">www.smartwatermark.info</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps to reduce outdoor water use)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td><a href="http://www.savewater.com.au">www.savewater.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable technologies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/ecobiz">www.derm.qld.gov.au/ecobiz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon footprint calculator</td>
<td><a href="http://www.climatesmart.qld.gov.au">www.climatesmart.qld.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td><a href="http://www.recyclingnearyou.com.au">www.recyclingnearyou.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable materials</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cartridges.planetark.org">www.cartridges.planetark.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-friendly vehicles</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ecospecifier.org">www.ecospecifier.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO-Buy (a guide to green purchasing)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au">www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Environmental Choice Australia (a tool</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ecobuy.org.au">www.ecobuy.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to help consumers choose goods and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that are better for the environment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability toolkit – Offices</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nswbusinesschamber.com.au">www.nswbusinesschamber.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conducting a waste audit**

A waste audit allows organisations to gain a clear picture of what is wasted, how waste is managed and how waste reduction can be achieved. The NSW Business Chamber (2009, p. 16) suggests that a walk-through audit can be a simple but effective way of ‘determining the overall resource efficiency of the organisation and the opportunities for savings’. A waste audit can collect baseline information on various aspects of the organisation’s operations, such as:

- basic data on building structure, systems and resource use
- identifying areas of wastage
- identifying areas where more efficient processes can be used to minimise waste.

For a children’s service, a number of audit checklists could be developed that focus on key areas of the organisation’s operations. The design of each checklist would depend on the type and size of the service; for example:

- office and administration (including office supplies and office equipment)
- kitchen and food preparation, including the use of dishwashers
- cleaning – floors, surfaces, equipment, furniture/furnishings, washing and the use of dryers
- outdoor areas – children’s play areas, gardens, the building exterior
- purchasing of children’s furniture, equipment and resources (for children and educators)
- the use of utilities – water, electricity and gas
- the care and health products used for children, such as nappy creams, sunscreens and first aid supplies.

Cost–benefit analysis
As well as a waste audit, organisations can carry out a cost–benefit analysis by comparing the cost of implementing sustainable practices with the cost of implementation. For example, a children’s service may find that the cost of installing solar roof panels can be offset by long-term savings in electricity, and may even generate income by selling unused power back to the grid.

The box below provides examples of a range of practical environmental sustainability practices that could be implemented in a children’s service.

**Saving water**
The installation of water tanks at Blue Bay Early Learning Centre has reduced the annual cost of water by 20 per cent. The service also introduced 10-litre water storage containers with a tap that children can access during outdoor play in areas such as the sandpit, digging patch, dry riverbed and vegetable garden. The educators set water usage limits for outdoor play with the children to encourage water conservation.

**Environmental sustainability practices**
- Where possible, use green building materials – sustainable construction materials and products – by checking their re-used and recycled content, level of toxicity, recyclability, durability, longevity and where they were produced.
- Consider installing sub-meters for electricity and water.
- Install energy-efficient area lighting with task lighting, and use natural light where possible.
- Replace equipment with energy-efficient models, based on their energy rating.
• Install a *green switch* to turn off all non-essential equipment (copiers, laser printers, computer monitors) and lights at the end of the day.
• Purchase energy-efficient office equipment and appliances.
• Reset photocopiers and printers to default to double-sided printing and minimise printing in colour.
• Install more efficient air-conditioning systems with additional thermostats and controllers; use natural ventilation and fans wherever possible.
• Assess waste to reduce, re-use or recycle and set targets to reduce energy and water consumption.
• Assess the organisation’s carbon footprint (greenhouse emissions) using a simple carbon calculator for usage of paper, gas, electricity and waste.
• Install water-saving devices or flow restrictors in kitchens and bathrooms, based on their Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme rating.
• Use the low water consumption feature on dishwashers, such as the ‘economy cycle’, and only start a cycle when the dishwasher is full.
• Only use the washing machine when there is a full load, or use auto-fill to minimise water use.
• Buy chlorine-free, high-recycled-content paper and tissue products.
• Use indoor plants to filter pollutants from indoor air, release oxygen, increase the relative humidity (in air conditioning) and create a more natural, pleasant and healthy environment.
• Avoid unnecessary consumption – consider refurbishment, reconditioning, purchasing a second-hand item or hiring equipment.
• Reduce the use of paper for administrative purposes by using email, electronic invoicing, online banking, and reading and saving information electronically rather than printing documents.
• Use refillable toner cartridges in photocopiers and ink-jet printers.
• Provide waste sorting bins to enable staff to separate and recycle waste such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, aluminium, toner cartridges and mobile phone batteries.
• Analyse goods from a whole-of-life-cycle perspective. Factor in both the initial cost and also the operational efficiency, expected life span, re-use/recycling options at the end of life and cost of disposal/replacement.
• Give preference to products that are re-usable, recyclable and/or contain recycled content.
• Use concentrated cleaning products that are non-toxic and phosphate-free.
• Recycle electronic waste, or e-waste (the term given to redundant or discarded electronic or electrical equipment). This includes computers, mobile phones, televisions, video and DVD players, stereos, fax machines, photocopiers, printers, printer cartridges, batteries and peripheral devices that come with the equipment.
• Food scraps can be composted and/or used in a worm farm to provide organic fertiliser for gardens.

Recycling
Children’s services are an ideal environment for using clean, non-toxic, recycled materials: paper, cardboard, magazines, materials that can be used for collage, plastic or glass containers that can be used for storing small items or used in water and sand play – the possibilities are endless.

Parents and children can be provided with a list of materials that can be collected at home and used at the centre. It is also important to let families know what will not be accepted for recycling, such as items that may contain traces of eggs or peanuts. A few recycle bins such as clean plastic bins can be placed in a designated area so that items collected can be dropped off easily by parents and children.

Supply chain sustainability
Supply chain sustainability is simply being aware of the practices used in the production of a product from beginning to end. It includes knowledge of how raw materials were sourced, what practices were used in the production process, what transportation was used and what employment practices were used in the production process. This, of course, can be quite a challenging task, and often organisations must rely on the reputation of the supplier or on the certification of the materials supplied. Organisations can access the Good Environmental Choice label (see <www.geca.org.au> for more information) or ECO-Buy (www.ecobuy.org.au) for information on sustainable purchasing for the organisation.

Rethinking using ink
According to a recent Choice study, the average cost of ink is around $3/ml, which equates to $3000 per litre, ‘making it one of the most expensive liquids on the planet’ (Just, quoted in Connelly, 2012). While children’s services may use refillable toner cartridges for photocopiers and ink-jet printers, the cost of ink to the organisation is high. The current practice, almost bordering on obsession, of printing portfolios of children’s development filled with colour photographs is an expensive and unnecessary practice. If services are truly committed to environmental sustainability, the practice of printing portfolios for parents needs to be reconsidered.

Services also need to reconsider the practice of printing large volumes of photographs each day as part of program documentation. While documenting children’s development is an essential element in planning for children’s learning and development, the need to print photographs to support this information is questionable. Cloud computing allows for secure document storage and secure electronic access, which means that parents can be given direct access to their child’s developmental records and learning program. Parents can then choose whether or not to print their own hard copy, thus reducing the cost to services. Those parents who don’t have access to a tablet or a home computer and printer can be offered access to the service’s computer/tablet to read the information online, and directed to public libraries if they wish to print their child’s documents. Of course, the use of photographs in children’s services has many advantages for educators, children and parents. However, it is perhaps time to make printing photographs the exception rather than the rule. Another factor to be considered is the time taken up by educators to photograph, store and document. This time would be better spent working directly with the children!
To print or not to print?

Rethinking ink I
Kate, the director of Blue Bay Early Learning Centre, is working with the committee on the annual budget. Concern has been raised at the cost of ink cartridges used by the educators. Kate is alarmed when she sees the actual cost and even more alarmed when the cost per child is calculated. Kate realises that she could almost employ an extra trainee for the cost of the ink! A discussion follows about the range of documents that are printed and how printing costs could be reduced. By far the greatest use of ink is related to printing daily documentation and photographs for parents, as well as the twice-yearly printing of children’s portfolios. Kate agrees to raise the issue at a team meeting to explore alternatives with the team.

Rethinking ink II
To Kate’s surprise there is almost 100 per cent agreement among the team that printing daily documents and portfolios is a waste of resources. Kate had expected resistance from the educators, but learns that there is a growing concern that printing is getting out of hand. Educators feel that it is too time consuming and a poor use of their time. The organisation’s annual printing cost, while not widely known, is considered by the team to be excessive. It is agreed that a proposal be put to the committee to set up a secure portal for parents to access their child’s documentation. The service will no longer print documents, including portfolios, except in the case of hardship.

Rethinking ink III
It is resolved by the committee to adopt the secure access to children’s documents and cease printing daily documentation and portfolios. The decision is conveyed to parents via email, a notice on the parent information board and in person by educators. Overall, the response from parents is extremely positive. Many parents report that they are aware of the high cost of ink and feel that giving each parent the opportunity to access their child’s documentation is an effective way to share information between educators and parents. Most parents report that they would be more than happy to decide which, if any, documents they will print.
Education and training for sustainability

For an organisation to be environmentally sustainable every member of the organisation must be involved; in children’s services this includes management, manager, educators, support staff, children and parents. Training is an essential component of environmental sustainability. While most people have some knowledge of environmental sustainability, training can provide a greater depth of understanding of the importance of sustainability, as well as practical strategies that can be put into place.

Education may include workshops, in-house or external webinars, providing access to online readings and online networks. Education may focus on a wide range of areas; for example, the benefits of recycling to the environment and its cost-effectiveness for the organisation; the role that educators, children and families can play in supporting sustainable practices; how to be water and energy wise; using equipment for energy efficiency; and making the most of the natural environment.

Managers can promote sustainability by setting targets and rewards. Savings from reduced energy or water costs can be used for educator resources. Managers must also act as positive and proactive role models if sustainable practices are to be embedded in an organisation. Regular monitoring is also essential and can be delegated to various team members. Assigning the task of monitoring sustainable practices to individual employees creates a greater sense of ownership, responsibility and commitment.

An effective way to educate both educators (and children) to engage in sustainable practices is to use signs as reminders of practical sustainability strategies. Employees can also be encouraged to suggest sustainability initiatives or projects that could be implemented in the service with the support of management.

Education programs on environmental sustainability must be linked to the stated principles, goals, policies and practices of the organisation. This ensures that all employees are given the necessary information and skills to work towards continuous improvement based on clearly stated outcomes. In relation to sustainability, underpinning knowledge is particularly important. Starting at a macro level is a good place to begin – What is the impact of human habitation on the planet? Is the current lifestyle of developed countries sustainable? Is the growing dependence on fossil fuels by developing countries sustainable? How is pollution impacting on our ecosystems? The challenge of sustainability training is helping participants to understand how everyone contributes to the macro issues and in turn how everyone can contribute at a micro level to sustainability.

All training should begin by identifying the needs of the organisation and of individuals within the organisation. For example, how can employees contribute to the goals of the organisation? What skills and knowledge are required to achieve the required outcomes? The next step is to analyse the gaps in skills and knowledge so that training can be targeted to the specific needs of each employee. Managers and employees can work together to identify needs and agree on a training plan. This process also assists management to source the required training and set aside sufficient funds to cover the cost of training.

It is also important to evaluate training outcomes. Figure 4.7 (on page 148) provides an example of a simple online form that can be used by the manager and all employees before and after training has taken place.
**Ecological footprint**

As an introduction to a sustainability workshop for staff and interested parents of Blue Bay Early Learning Centre, the facilitator Mathew, uses the World Wide Fund for Nature website to plot an average family’s ecological footprint. Even with a conservative response to each question, it is calculated that each family would need the resources of four planets to sustain its current lifestyle.

The next day the educators all comment on the personal impact of the calculator. Everyone had gone home and used the calculator to generate their own ecological footprint, and were surprised that their results had been about the same as those for the average family.

The exercise has turned out to be a great motivator for everyone to get behind sustainable practices.

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**Qualitative and quantitative evaluation**

The NSW Business Chamber (2009, p. 29) reminds organisations that ‘sustainability should be viewed as a continuous process rather than a destination’. The process of evaluation includes measuring, assessing and comparing practices and outcomes. Evaluating the organisation’s environmental sustainability practices will require the use of both quantitative and qualitative processes. A **quantitative** process of evaluation requires objective tools of measurement using reliable, relevant and understandable data; for example, comparing the cost of electricity before and after the installation of solar panels. A **qualitative** process of evaluation uses informal measurement procedures such as observations, surveys and evaluations. For example, evaluating the training undertaken by educators may include seeking feedback from educators at the conclusion of the training or observing educators’ practices to determine if new sustainability practices have been adopted.

Evaluation must include all processes used by the organisation, including sustainability principles, policies, practices and tools such as a waste audit, sustainability checklists and a cost–benefit analysis. The process of evaluation must also include all key stakeholders: management, manager, educators, children and families.

The organisation may establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure environmental sustainability practices. KPIs identify the current performance level of the organisation in a specific area, as well as future performance goals and how these will be achieved – in other words, where the organisation is at, where it wants to be and how it’s going to get there. For example, what is the current usage rate and cost of utilities such as electricity and water? What is the desired usage? What strategies can be used to achieve the desired target? In order to be measured, KPIs must be quantified by setting a measurable target. In the above example, the service may set a target of a 5 per cent reduction in electricity use over a 12-month period. This is both quantifiable and measurable. The strategies used to achieve the 5 per cent reduction should be documented and evaluated.

Evaluation may require both quantitative and qualitative assessment. Quantitative measures may include a comparison of the amount of electricity used in the previous 12 months, an assessment of the use of appliances, a reduction in printing, or smarter use of the dryer, dishwasher and washing machine. Qualitative assessment may include surveys or comments from employees on their use of energy-saving practices.

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**The electricity challenge**
At the end of a six-month period, employees are asked to comment on the strategies implemented to reduce electricity costs.

‘I found it hard at first not to automatically turn on all of the lights – it took a while to get out of the old habit!’

‘I need to be reminded to turn appliances off at the wall – in the end I made myself some signs as reminders and this seems to be working for me.’

‘I am getting a reputation as the “power police” because I remind everyone if they forget to switch off.’

‘I think the strategies are working well. It’s just a matter of retraining the brain.’

‘I have implemented some of the strategies at home. My teenage children are now threatening to leave home. That will mean even greater savings!’

Cleaning and chemicals
A clean environment minimises the risk of infection from germs on hard surfaces such as tabletops, shelves, door handles and taps. The use of harsh chemicals to clean surfaces is not necessary, nor is it safe for the children and educators, nor for the environment. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2012, pp. 26, 52–3) recommends the use of detergent, warm water and vigorous scrubbing to routinely clean surfaces. After cleaning, the surface should be rinsed with water and dried with a clean cloth. The use of disinfectant is recommended for body substances such as blood spots. Bleach is recommended only for blood spills. Disinfectant (used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions) is most effective when used after the surface has been cleaned with warm water and detergent.

Safety first
Sari, a newly appointed trainee, is surprised to learn that warm water and biodegradable detergent is the safest and most effective way to clean most surfaces at the centre. Sari had assumed that disinfectant and bleach would be routinely used as a way to destroy germs. ‘Wait ’til I get home and tell my mum. She’s a cleaning fanatic. Our house always smells like bleach. Mum says it’s the only way to keep germs at bay. It’s her little chant that she likes to use.’

While biodegradable detergent and warm water is the cleaning agent of choice, early childhood services also use a range of chemicals for various cleaning purposes. Examples of these cleaning products are:

- bleach to remove blood and faecal stains
- disinfectant – used on blood spots and other body substances
- dishwasher powder or capsules, rinse aid and liquid dishwasher cleaner
- cream cleanser for hard-to-shift marks such as dried paint or crayons on walls
- washing powder used in the washing machine
- oven cleaner used to clean the oven, stove top and grill
- stain-removing powder for face washers, bibs and cleaning cloths
- detergent for washing floors
- window cleaner
- dish-washing liquid.

Where possible, most services use green cleaning products. However, determining which cleaning products are genuinely green and value for money is not an easy task. Managers can
access information on certified green products from sites such as Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA), an independent, not-for-profit, eco-labelling program. GECA certifies cleaning products that are:

- **Better for the environment**
  - Limit on substances harmful to aquatic environments
  - Increased biodegradability
  - Reduced and preferable packaging
  - Lower waste generation and resource consumption
  - No phosphorous
  - Support of sustainability sourced palm oil and palm kernel oil

- **Better for human health**
  - Less harmful chemicals
  - Minimised VOC (volatile organic compounds) content
  - Restrictions on fragrances and enzymes
  - No known carcinogens, mutagens or reproductive toxins as ingredients

- **Better for ethical considerations**
  - No unsubstantiated claims (greenwashing)
  - Workers can expect fair pay, equal opportunity, and a safe working environment. (GECA, 2014 © Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd. Reproduced with permission.)

The GECA website provides a list of the certified cleaning products with links to the product websites.

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**Best choice**

Last night Kate, the director of Blue Bay Early Learning Centre, attended a directors’ networking dinner. The guest speaker shared information about sourcing affordable, certified, green cleaning products. Kate is pleased she went to the meeting, as she had been looking around for a new supplier since her previous supplier had ceased trading. Kate was able to talk to several directors who were using products recommended by the speaker. They were able to confirm that they were happy with the products because they were effective, and also because they met the requirements of their service’s environmental sustainability policy.

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**SUMMARY**

This chapter began by considering innovation and creativity in the workplace and how innovation can be supported and encouraged by managers and management. The importance of workplace learning as a catalyst for innovation was explored; this included the importance of using technology as an innovative and creative workplace tool. Change was acknowledged as an integral and inevitable part of workplace innovation that must be carefully managed.

Finally, this chapter looked at the responsibility organisations have in relation to developing policy and practices to support environmental sustainability.