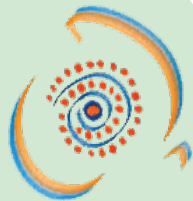




Acting Green

Drama Australia Guidelines for sustainable drama
practice and drama teaching

November 2011



DRAMA AUSTRALIA

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Preamble

This document has been prepared by Drama Australia primarily for its members. While reasonable checks have been made to ensure its accuracy, no responsibility can be accepted for errors and omissions however caused. No responsibility for any loss occasioned to any group or individual acting or refraining from action as a result of material in this document is accepted by Drama Australia. It is envisaged that periodically this document may be reviewed and possibly revised however at the time of its publication (2011) it had undergone an extensive consultative process. Drama Australia welcomes feedback on its guidelines documents. Any feedback can be sent to the Director of Projects, Drama Australia.

Director of Projects

Jo Raphael

The writer

Meg Upton is a drama educator, researcher and arts education consultant with a special interest in sustainable practice in the drama classroom and in theatre making. Meg is a member of the Drama Victoria Executive and their representative at Drama Australia level as Liaison Officer. Meg consults with a range of theatre companies in Melbourne in the development and delivery of education projects and resources. She lectures in Drama Education at Deakin University and is completing a PhD at the University of Melbourne in her other area of interest, pedagogy and live theatre. In a reversal of the usual order, the writing of these guidelines was generated by working on a project at the Melbourne Museum with a group of Year Nine students, their teacher and a sustainable theatre designer, exploring endangered and extinct animals for the Drama Australia Conference 'Footprints' in 2009.

Acknowledgements

Drama Australia wishes to thank the writer of this document, Meg Upton, and Drama Victoria for proposing the Acting Green Special Project in conjunction with the hosting of the 2009 Drama Australia Conference 'Footprints'. We also acknowledge member association presidents, DALOs (Drama Australia Liaison Officers) and other national, state and territory committee members who provided feedback on the drafting of this document and outside individuals and organisations whose provided responses and made valuable contributions.

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Sustainability is the potential for long-term maintenance of wellbeing, which has environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions.

2005-2015 is the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development focusing on...learning how to make decisions that balance and integrate the long-term future of the economy, the natural environment and the wellbeing of all communities, near and far, now and in the future.

<http://www.unesco.org/education>

Why sustainable drama and theatre?

Future generations may well have occasion to ask themselves, 'What were our parents thinking? Why didn't they wake up when they had a chance?' We have to hear that question from them, now.

Al Gore - *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006)

Underlying all our images of a sustainable future is the key principle that sustainability is about 'thinking about forever'.
UNESCO Educating for a Sustainable Future: A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action (1997)

We are educated by and large to 'compete and consume' rather than to 'care and conserve'.

Stephen Sterling, *Putting Relationship Back into Education* (2001)

Despite some areas of significant improvement, Australians still have major challenges in the sustainable use of resources and in the maintenance of our natural and cultural heritage.

Educating for a Sustainable Future: A national environmental education statement for Australian Schools (2005)



Drama Australia believes that sustainable drama and theatre practice, and teaching about sustainability through drama are ways to directly involve students in understanding their connections with their environment and their interconnectedness in the world. Drama Australia believes it is important that its members and member organisations address issues of sustainability in the classroom and this document serves to guide and support classroom practice and performance making. The guidelines contained within this document also seek to directly engage students and educators with contemporary thought and practice, to develop understanding, awareness and capacity, and to offer support to drama educators on ways to address themes, issues and practices around sustainability. With the advent of a new Australian Curriculum sustainability is a cross curriculum priority for all learning areas including the Arts. In addition an ongoing international dialogue towards action on climate change, and it being the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, Drama Australia believes these guidelines to be timely and relevant.

Drama Australia recognises the capacity that drama has to develop ‘ecological citizenship’ (Nicholson 2005) and embraces this concept in these guidelines through the understanding that drama offers participants the opportunity to explore identity as global citizens and to examine the ethical responsibilities that such citizenship involves

These guidelines define sustainable drama and theatre practice in two ways; teaching sustainability through drama, and sustainable drama and theatre practice.

TEACHING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH DRAMA addresses the use of drama to explore the key issues around sustainability using stimuli, stories, content and form, the other addresses how the form itself can be sustainable and green in its practice.

In recognizing the value of drama and theatre in exploring issues of sustainability, Drama Australia acknowledges the power of drama to engage students’ affective and cognitive domains in learning about sustainability. Drama allows participants to imagine other ways of being and possible alternative futures, through creating and performing theatre based on exploration of issues of sustainability, participants are able to make meaning for themselves and communicate to a broader audience.

SUSTAINABLE DRAMA AND THEATRE PRACTICE is concerned with how participants create drama and theatre in a way that is sustainable. It involves a consciousness of the resources used in the process and how they may be used efficiently in balance with a performance aesthetic.

SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION: More generally Drama Australia recognises that sustainable education implies four descriptors: educational policy and practice which is sustaining, tenable, healthy and durable.

- Sustaining: it helps sustain people, communities and ecosystems;
- Tenable: it is ethically defensible, working with integrity, justice, respect and inclusiveness;
- Healthy: it is itself a viable system, embodying and nurturing healthy relationships and emergence at different system levels;
- Durable: it works well enough in practice to be able to keep doing it’. (Sterling 2008, p.65)

Drama Australia recognises that within education and the broader scientific and global community ‘sustainability’ has different meanings. Sustainability in a scientific sense may be defined as the ability of a resource to be sustained, recycled and reused over a long period of time. Sustainable Development refers much more broadly to the capacity of human beings to use resources (ecological, social, cultural, economic) without diminishing the quality of the environment or reducing the capacity of future generations to meet their needs. In constructing these guidelines, Drama Australia draws from both the scientific meaning of resourcing and the development of our capacity to diminish our environmental footprint.

The Australian Government’s *Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian Schools* (Curriculum Corporation 2010) offers some broad guidelines and approaches to learning about sustainable futures including students being able to develop an ‘understanding of the relationships between humans, living things and the natural environment’ and be able to explore resource use and environment sustainability and relate that knowledge to regional and national contexts. *Acting Green* sees this framework document as a good beginning point but aims to address the vital role that drama education can play in building that knowledge and understanding, and transferring it into action.



SUSTAINABILITY: as part of a quality education

Drama Australia believes in the rights of all students to a quality education and that experiences in drama and theatre are a part of that quality education. In addition, we agree that a quality education:

‘...understands the past, is relevant to the present, and has a view to the future. Quality education relates to knowledge building and the skilful application of all forms of knowledge by unique individuals that function both independently and in relation to others. A quality education reflects the dynamic nature of culture and languages, the value of the individual in relation to the larger context, and the importance of living in a way that promotes equality in the present and fosters a sustainable future’ (Pigozzi 2003).

Drama Australia believes that these kinds of knowledge, understandings and values can be effectively explored and promoted through drama and theatre education.

SUSTAINABILITY: as part of an Australian Curriculum

Drama Australia is committed to the development of an Australian Curriculum that addresses the contemporary issues that young people do and will face. One of the three priorities of the new Australian Curriculum is that of sustainability and the imperative that a 21st century curriculum needs to, ...*allow young people to develop an appreciation of the need for more sustainable patterns of living, and to build capacities for thinking, valuing and acting necessary to create a more sustainable future.* (ACARA 2010)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

The *Acting Green* guidelines are underpinned by the belief we are custodians of our world and as such have responsibility for its care and ongoing sustainability. Drama Australia acknowledges the complexity of the contemporary world and the diversity of educational and cultural contexts, believing that through the pedagogy and practice of drama, students have the ability to imagine new possibilities and to bring about change. A world of the future is a world where positive human impact on the environment is acknowledged as achievable through sustainable practice.

Drama Australia acknowledges the connection to land and place held by Indigenous Australians and the spiritual and cultural significance that place holds and that leads to a deep understanding of the importance of using resources wisely and living sustainably. We recognise the potential of experience through the Arts and specifically drama to develop all students’ spiritual awareness, delight, awe, wonder and feelings of empathy in relation to people, place, the environment and acting for sustainability.

The National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools states that ‘students need to understand the complexity of the world in which they live and to have the knowledge, critical thinking skills, values and capacity to participate in decision making about environmental and development issues’. Drama Australia believes that this understanding and knowledge can be achieved through drama education because of the holistic approach to learning through drama.

Drama invites imaginative and divergent thinking, analysis, problem solving, story telling, collaboration, creation and recreation and thus provides a rich basis for challenging current ideas, opening doors to new ones, and providing capacity for action. Citizenship is concerned with ‘...the values, needs and aspirations of individuals, communities and societies’ (Nicholson 2005). *Acting Green* challenges drama educators and students to consider their role as citizens of a developed country, and their responsibility as members of a global community in the light of contemporary environmental sustainability issues. While much drama and theatre practice can become sustainable now, Drama Australia acknowledges that other aspects will be aspirational, and also acknowledges the complexity and scale of the issue.

Guiding Questions

As a drama educator, how can I work with my students to

- Develop students’ thinking with regard to ‘human’ sustainability – peace and human security – in order to develop environmental sustainability and living a sustainable lifestyle.
- Maintain an optimistic view that adopting sustainable practices is possible and that students can be agents of change
- Create locally relevant and culturally appropriate stories and practices that embody sustainable values
- Highlight the ongoing importance of addressing environmental sustainability
- Practice sustainable theatre making
- Engage the school, local and business communities in creating sustainable theatre?



Guideline Statements

These guidelines have been developed around concepts of how we think, communicate and act.

Drama Australia and its member originations are committed to:

Thinking green

- Reflecting on daily classroom routines that are sustainable including use of heating and lighting, rubbish disposal, use of power for technology
- Contemplating what aspects are not sustainable and how we might balance the use of less sustainable product with practice offset
- Considering what can be changed now, what can be changed in time, what we'd like to change
- Imagining ways to create powerful stories through drama

Speaking green

- Articulating sustainability by using appropriate language such as reuse, reduce, recycle, equality, fairness, wellbeing
- Reiterating sustainable classroom practice by using and developing online learning tools
- Communicating to others the importance of sustainability in everyday practice
- Advocating the use of drama as a means for promoting awareness and understanding of environmental issues through drama as direct engagement.

Acting green

- Demonstrating behaviour that clearly addresses sustainability
- Designing performances that are sustainable across all areas of the production
- Creating performances that explore the imperatives of sustainability in the 21st century.
- Presenting work that shares visions for possible and alternative futures
- Integrating the Cross Curriculum priority 'Sustainability' into all Learning Areas

DRAMA AUSTRALIA'S APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY:

As an organisation, Drama Australia is committed to sustainable outcomes and its current organisational practice is committed to a low carbon footprint. This is achieved through:

- The use of teleconferencing to replace face to face meetings and the associated air fares and energy expended
- The use of online communication and documentation to reduce hard copies, photocopying, ink cartridges, printing, mailing and the associated costs and energy.
- The transfer of NJ, the Drama Australia academic journal, onto CD and then to a fully on-line electronic journal thus reducing printing, mailing and the associated costs and energy.

Drama Australia is committed to an ongoing audit of its practices in order to continue to reduce its carbon footprint.



GUIDELINES INTO PRACTICE

Case Studies

The following case studies will provide drama educators and industry with ideas about putting these guidelines into practice. The full case studies can be found under 'Resources' on the Drama Australia web site.

Case Study One: Wild: Amazing Animals in a Changing World

A collaboration between Melbourne Museum, Drama Victoria and Thomas Carr College, Melbourne – creating drama about endangered and extinct wildlife (2009).

Case Study Two: Happiness Project

A Malthouse Theatre initiative that asks students in Years 9 and 10 to respond to aspects of climate change through the medium of theatre. Students are then hosted by the company and they perform and share their process (ongoing).

Case Study Three: The Hobbit

A school based production using recycling, reducing and reusing from the ground up. Created by Scotch College, Melbourne with students in Years 7, 8 and 9 (2010).

Case Study Four: ZEBRA! By Sydney Theatre Company, Education Program

In 2009 the Sydney Theatre Company made a commitment to creating sustainable practice in all areas of its theatres and administrations. The STC Education Program honours this process. *ZEBRA!* By Ross Mueller explores how a major performing arts company approaches sustainable practice both practically and aesthetically (2011).



REFERENCES

Websites

The following websites offer information for research and resources purposes

The Climate Group - <http://www.theclimategroup.org/>

The Sustainable Living Directory - <http://www.slf.org.au/directory//index.php?page=home>

Department for Sustainability and the Environment - <http://www.environment.gov.au/>

Our Cool School.Org – <http://www.coolaustralia.org/>

Plays

Bovell, Andrew (2009) *When the Rain Stopped Falling*, Currency Press, Sydney Australia ISBN: 978086818460

Rankin, Scott (2010) *Namatjira*, The Book Nook, QLD, Australia ISBN: 9780868199160

Waters, Steve (2009) *The Contingency Plan – Two Plays: On the Beach and Resilience*, Bush Theatre, UK

Children's plays: <http://www.artdramascripts.com/environmental>

Feature Films

Soylent Green (1973) (M)

The China Syndrome (1979) (M)

Gorillas in the Mist (1988) (M)

Ferngully – The Last Rainforest (1992) (G)

Erin Brockovich (2000) (M)

The Day after Tomorrow (2004) (M)

Happy Feet (2006) (G)

Hoot (2006) (PG)

Wall-E (2008) (G)

Feature length documentaries

Winged Migration (2001) (PG)

An Inconvenient Truth (2006) (PG)

Who Killed the Electric Car (2006) (PG)

More Documentaries about the Environment - <http://documentaries.about.com/od/recommendeddocumentaries/tp/Environmental-Documentaries.htm>

Children's Literature

Where the Forest Meets the Sea – Jeannie Baker (Walker Books)

Windows – Jeannie Baker (Walker Books)

Dear Greenpeace – Simon James (Walker Books)

Something about Water – Penny Matthews/Tom Jellet (Omnibus Books)

True Green Kids – Kim McKay & Jenny Bonnin (Allen & Unwin)

Just a Dream – Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin)

More suggestions: <http://teachers.net/archive/envirobks.html>

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR OBTAINING INFORMATION

Green Pages – all about the flora and fauna of Australia

<http://www.greenpagesaustralia.com.au/index.asp>

Friends of the Earth - Melbourne community-based activist organization which works towards an ecologically sustainable and socially equitable society

<http://www.green-office.org.uk/audit.php?goingto=factsheets>

World Wildlife Fund – calculating your carbon footprint

http://www.wwf.org.au/our_work/people_and_the_environment/human_footprint/footprint_calculator

PUBLICATIONS & OTHER REFERENCES

ACARA – Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority: *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*

http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/cross_curriculum_perspectives.html

Global Perspectives: A Framework for global education in Australian schools. (2010) Curriculum Corporation. Available free of charge to teachers. Contact the Global Education Office in your state. In Victoria contact geo@gtav.asn.au

Greening the Arts: Think pieces for a Zero Carbon Future (2010), Tipping Point Australia, available at - <http://tippingpointaustralia.com/resources>

Littley, M., Taylor, N., Eames, C. (2009) *Education for Sustainability in the Primary Curriculum: A guide for teachers*, Palgrave MacMillan, South Yarra

Monbiot, G. (2006) *Heat: How can we stop the planet burning?* Penguin, UK

Nicholson, H. (2005) *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, Palgrave MacMillan, UK

Pigozzi, M. J. (2003) *Reorienting Education in Support of Sustainable Development through a Focus on a Quality Education for All*, Presentation to Global Environmental Action Conference, Tokyo Centre for Global Education: Policy & Practice

Sterling, S. (2008) 'Sustainable education - towards a deep learning response to unsustainability' in *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 6, Spring 2008, pp. 63-68, available: <http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue6-perspectives1>

Swingle, S. (2008) *Teaching Sustainable Theatre*
<http://www.thegreentheater.org/TeachingSustainableTheatre.doc>

UNESCO: <http://unesco.org/education>

*1 ream of paper = 6% of a tree and 5.4kg CO2 in the atmosphere
3 sheets of A4 paper = 1 litre of water*



Towards a Sustainable Future - Please consider the environment before printing this document.

