

# Good News Stories

## Sustainable Schools Program

### Implementing innovative approaches

#### Partnerships working together

The Far West NSW Environmental Education Partnership (EEPG) includes representatives from Broken Hill City Council, Australian Inland (now Country Energy), Cool Communities, National Parks and Wildlife, DET and the SSP.

The partnership was formed to assist organisations achieve individual and shared regional project objectives for environmental education. Australian Inland initially managed the Community Partnerships Program as a priority project, helping the community groups and organisations access schools.

The EEPG agreed, "We are an open network of people and organizations interested in meeting to share ideas and working together to make real environmental projects happen."

In February 2004, the group obtained SSP funding to engage a teacher to assist Broken Hill schools implement school environmental management plans. Drawing on an understanding of the education system, the teacher served a vital role in successfully linking community and school objectives.

As a result of the initial success, Country Energy have agreed to fund a part-time position.

#### Students leading the way to environmental citizenship

The SSP developed working relationships with the state Student Representative Council (SRC) to link student leadership targets and initiatives with broader environmental outcomes. The SRC identified conservation of energy and water as a priority focus for 2004 and grounds management for 2005.

Working closely together, the SRC and SSP are raising the profile of environmental citizenship.

It also recognises the valuable contributions students can make towards developing, implementing and evaluating the SEMP.

As a result of this successful pilot, the SSP is now also supporting training for SRC initiatives on a regional and state basis.

#### Tahmoor Public School involving students

Tahmoor Public School has established consultative processes with students from the environment portfolio of their school's parliament to support the SEMP. As part of their parliamentary process, students have the opportunity of raising and debating environmental issues. The school's student parliament has ministers' for conservation and environment. In 2004 this has been made into two portfolios to address the increase in responsibilities and growing issues raised. More info: [www.tahmoor-p.schools.det.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tahmoor-p.schools.det.nsw.gov.au).

#### Students working for the future

A student leadership initiative implemented in the Riverina enabled local schools to work together to develop joint paper and cardboard pick-up services. One student presented on the need to establish recycling in Deniliquin, at the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW Annual Conference in 2004. This has been achieved.

In Western Sydney, St Helen's Park Primary School, enabled students to choose to participate in the environmental education groups that most reflect their personal interests. The school also has developed a popular "Gardening for all seasons" unit. As part of its SEMP it has established Junior and Senior Park Ranger Programs, which focus on grounds management.



## Development of creative and critical thinking skills through sequenced activities and practical applications

In the Riverina, teachers from North Wagga Primary School have developed an environmental peer support program.

The program is a shining example of an innovative approach to environmental education and student welfare programs. Stage 3 student leaders discuss environmental issues with student groups in the context of their school. They assist students to identify issues and negotiate recommendations that can be made by students to support the SEMP.

In northern NSW, Hillvue Public School has established the Kidco Council. A team of student leaders have focussed on environment related activities. They raise funds through the collection and sale of aluminium. Kidco have provided money for prizes in the school waste reduction drive and conducted lunch box audits with younger grades. Kidco members negotiated with the school canteen contractor for 'no waste' specials to be offered on canteen days.

## Whole school participation

Heaton Public School has taken a whole of school participation approach to environmental management, with all students forming the student environment committee. The school conducts annual audits on biodiversity, energy, water and waste. The audit processes are incorporated into the school's curricula on environmental education.

Each audit is also related to learning stages across the school with biodiversity linked to the Stage One Science unit Kids Care. As part of the audit process, the students survey the entire school grounds, mapping and identifying problems, considering possible recommendations and comparing results with previous years' audits. The latest survey identified the Big Field and Urban Creek as valuable biodiversity assets to the school.

The school has attracted 40 commercial sponsors who have contributed in excess of \$10,000 to the school's grounds.

This year, the school is focussing on waste management, including grey water, litter, utilities and recycling as part of its environmental management plan.



## Manly Village Public School

Manly Village Public School is an example of students engaged in a curriculum that is clearly based in current social and environmental issues.

The student environment committee successfully petitioned the Parents and Citizens Committee to remove a product from sale at the canteen due to its non-recyclable nature and consequent litter and disposal issues.

Students from the school also urged Manly Council to classify the Manly area as a plastic bag-free community and to stop using plastic bag liners in street bins. The council formed a Plastic Bag Free Working Party. The council also agreed to stop using bin liners and implemented a new system of collection.

With the support of Manly Councillors, the students also held a Plastic Bag Famine Weekend, where volunteers approached shoppers handing them calico bags in return for their plastic ones.

Shortly afterwards, Year 4 students also held a four-hour plastic bag collection rally in Manly's main shopping district. They collected 1,070 bags, 500 of which were from fashion stores.

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