

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre Annual Report



2016



5458

Introduction

The Annual Report for **2016** is provided to the community of **Wetlands Environmental Education Centre and Awabakal Environmental Education Centre** as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

Peter Jones

Principal

School contact details

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre
Sandgate Rd
Shortland, 2307
www.wetlands-e.schools.nsw.edu.au
wetlands-e.School@det.nsw.edu.au
4955 8673

School background

School vision statement

At Wetlands Environmental Education Centre and Awabakal Environmental Education Centre, we believe in the importance of students engaging with the environment as part of a life-long learning process. Our guiding principles are Discover, Investigate, and Learn. We endeavour to build student knowledge and skills about the environment through investigation in the field in order to equip them to become active and confident citizens who are ready to embrace a more sustainable world.

School context

The Wetlands Environmental Education Centre (established 1986) located at Hunter Wetlands Centre and Awabakal Environmental Education Centre (established 1976) at Dudley are among the 23 Environmental Education Centres and Zoo Education Centres supported by the NSW Department of Education (DoE). Wetlands EEC is responsible for the management of Awabakal EEC. Although the Centres are located in the Hunter we are a state wide resource with schools benefitting from the provision of the services provided from locations across NSW. Students from all three school sectors are accommodated by the two Centres.

Students visiting each Centre benefit from access to a range of ecosystems and leading educational programs directly linked the NSW Curriculum. The focus at each Centre is learning through practical fieldwork experiences in order to build a depth of understanding of various curriculum areas.

Support for local school staff is also an important function central of each Centre. Professional learning for school staff and networking opportunities as well as in school support and incursions all form part of the overall focus on building understanding and awareness of environmental sustainability for teachers and students.

Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC do not have enrolled students. Community partners include local teachers and schools, local groups and organisations such as environmental groups, local council, Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia, National Parks and Wildlife Service along with interested individuals. These groups play an important role in delivery of environmental education services.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our schools undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

In the domain of Learning, our efforts have primarily been focused on development of a Learning Culture and Curriculum and Learning. There has been significant progress made in developing the expectation of learning and development of a learning culture for the students and teachers that visit our school each day. Staff have actively driven the development of an expectation of productive learning and a learning culture for all all students visiting our school for the day. The result of this cultural change has been evident in the engagement of visiting students in their learning and the value placed on our teaching and learning programs by visiting teachers. A focus on program evaluation and development throughout the year by all staff has enabled the development of high quality fieldwork experiences which are engaging for students and embed quality educational outcomes.

Learning and Learning Culture via curriculum is an ongoing process for our two schools. As the new curriculum is implemented in NSW, opportunities for learning experiences and educational development for our visiting students will be investigated and developed.

In the domain of Teaching, staff have demonstrated a commitment to improvement and collaborative practice, particularly when striving to develop quality teaching and learning programs which embed quality teaching pedagogy. Staff working together in cooperative teams has been a key feature of this process. Staff have engaged with team teaching opportunities to observe, reflect and improve on their teaching practice. Staff have also enthusiastically participated in Quality Teaching Rounds during 2016. The result of this is a growth in awareness and integration of the

quality teaching elements as part of their teaching pedagogy. The next steps in this process will see casual staff members participating in a simplified version of Quality Teaching Rounds in 2017. Quality teaching is now in the process of being embedded throughout all teaching and learning programs at each school site with a definite positive impact on student learning opportunity.

In the domain of Leading, our priorities remain the promotion of environmental education by developing and providing opportunities for student leadership and modelling best practice for our local teachers. Staff have continued to evaluate, refine and develop new opportunities for local schools to embrace environmental education and learning. Local students and teachers are supported in their leadership journey by committed staff at our schools.

School staff make connections with other environmental education centre staff in order to maintain high quality education delivery and to ensure professional learning opportunities are realized. Through this community of schools, educational program deliver remains current, engaging for students and state of the art.

Clear practices are in place to ensure the continuous improvement of school staff to maximize the educational opportunities for visiting students. Staff are actively engaged in professional learning opportunities in order to further their teaching capabilities. Staff actively engaged in the performance and review process which supports their professional growth.

Resource allocation and use at each school site is planned carefully to maximize educational opportunities for visiting students. Resources are also allocated to support elements identified in the school plan and department priorities.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine the strategic priorities in our School Plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

Strategic Direction 1

Curriculum Development

Purpose

Develop quality educational programs which are aligned to the NSW curriculum and provide engaging, quality fieldwork experiences for students in learning about environments and sustainability.

Overall summary of progress

Significant progress has been made in this strategic direction during 2016. The pace of curriculum change and implementation throughout NSW has ensured a focus on this area for Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC, particularly in from K-10. Teaching and learning programs from K-12 have been reviewed and evaluated with either adjustments made or new programs developed. In each case the aim was to ensure that all programs were tightly aligned to NSW curriculum outcomes, particularly in the focus areas of Science and Geography at each site. New sites were also investigated for fieldwork education and programs were developed for these. All teaching and learning programs now focus on student engagement through learning and the development of global citizens.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaching programs have been evaluated and adjusted to reflect new curriculum in NSW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All school programs have been evaluated and are aligned to current NSW curriculum outcomesNewly developed Stage 4 and 5 Geography and Science programs have been trialled, implemented and utilised by schoolsA re-write of Stage 6 Geography programs implemented and utilised by schoolsA new program for Stage 6 Geography at an offsite location has been trialled and implementedA new Stage 6 Biology program has been written, trialled and successfully implemented.	12000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">New teaching programs have been developed to increase environmental education fieldwork opportunities available to students.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">All staff aim to engage students in learning about environmental sustainability.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff actively seeking professional learning opportunities to enhance their curriculum knowledge and capacity.		

Next Steps

Curriculum changes in Stage 6 are currently underway which will require adjustments and new program development in this stage of learning. At the same time there will be a need to investigate new locations to conduct fieldwork which will best suit the learning needs of our visiting students. Program development will also continue K-10 as new opportunities and locations are developed to engage students in sustainability education and meet educational outcomes.

Strategic Direction 2

Teacher Quality

Purpose

Develop teacher quality and capacity in order to maximise student engagement and learning opportunities through the development and provision of unique and practical learning experiences in the field with specialised equipment and methodologies.

Overall summary of progress

A focus area for Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC in this three year strategic plan was teacher quality. During 2016, staff were engaged in focused professional learning around the quality teaching framework. All permanent staff and some casual staff participated in collaborative discussions of the framework before participating in Quality Teaching Rounds over a period of time. This professional learning activity was extremely beneficial to all staff involved. The result was that teaching and learning programs were then evaluated and improved with the QT elements highlighted and embedded throughout. Teaching pedagogy of these staff members has now improved and all staff are very aware of the elements of the framework in their teaching.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaching programs embed the Quality Teaching elements, variety of teaching strategies and are engaging to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff now have a depth of understanding of the Quality Teaching Framework and are actively engaging with it in their teaching pedagogyAll permanent teaching staff and some casual staff have participated in Quality Teaching RoundsTeaching programs at each site have begun to be re-written utilising a new program template with the Quality Teaching elements evidentEvidence of improved student engagement as a result of teachers engaging with the Quality Teaching Framework in their pedagogy	10 000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students achieve environmental sustainability cross curriculum KLA outcomes through the completion of fieldwork Quality		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaching is part of core business with staff using a wide repertoire of pedagogies		

Next Steps

For 2017, the involvement of those staff in stage 1 of the process will continue and they will share their experiences and increased awareness with other casual staff in the school. All casual staff will have the opportunity to participate in a structured professional learning on quality teaching. This will be led by the team from Phase 1.

The process of program evaluation and improvement with the highlighting and inclusion of the quality teaching elements will continue.

Strategic Direction 3

Leading Sustainability Education

Purpose

Involve and support students, school staff and the local community in the process of building successful learners, confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens and future leaders of a sustainable world.

Overall summary of progress

During 2016, Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC continued to evaluate and improve opportunities for student educational and leadership initiatives. Improvements were made to existing student leadership programs. Improvements to existing school support programs have been discussed although further development of this area will need to occur.

Both school sites have actively engaged with local agencies, groups and partners during 2016. A particular focus has been the development of stronger links with local AECG groups in the Hunter. EEC staff have been involved and led cultural training and awareness events throughout the year. This closer relationship is reflected in the deep knowledge staff are now integrating into their teaching pedagogy and the cultural authenticity of programs run at each school.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New and improved opportunities for student leadership of environmental sustainability have been developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New partnerships have been developed with government and community organisations to develop quality educational programs for students• Each school has developed stronger ties with various local AECG groups to strengthen partnerships in educational delivery• Evaluation of current school support has been undertaken with development of this area to occur in 2017	3000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools are provided with further opportunities and support for environmental sustainability.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff actively promoting environmental sustainability education in local schools and the community.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local agencies and community are engaged in the providing environmental sustainability opportunities for schools.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved consultation and involvement of the local AECG in sustainability education initiatives.		

Next Steps

As additions and improvements to the methods of school support and student opportunities were delayed somewhat in 2016, this will be a focus for 2017. Staff will be closely examining ways to engage schools and students in environmental education events and initiatives which have an educational grounding. The current methods of school support will again be examined with the aim of improving this delivery.

Key Initiatives	Impact achieved this year	Resources (annual)
Support for beginning teachers	Beginning teacher and mentor have worked productively throughout the year. Beginning teacher has developed their professional capacity by attending professional learning, being released for planning time, and working with mentor to build capacity.	9279.00

Student information

There are no enrolled students at Wetlands Environmental Education Centre or Awabakal Environmental Education Centre.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	1.4
School Administration & Support Staff	1.19

Principal 1.0

Classroom Teachers 1.4

School Administrative and support staff 1.192

There are no permanent Aboriginal staff members

Workforce retention

A new permanent teaching staff member was appointed in late 2015 and began in 2016. This occurred following the retirement of a teacher.

All other staff remained constant.

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	2
Postgraduate degree	0.4

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

During 2016 staff participated in professional learning in the following areas:

- curriculum
- quality teaching
- ICT
- Aboriginal education
- sustainability education

School development days provided staff with professional learning opportunities in line with the school strategic plan and compliance training requirements.

There are no permanent teachers working towards

accreditation. Some casual teaching staff were working towards accreditation and these staff members were assisted in this process.

Financial information (for schools using OASIS for the whole year)

Income	\$
Balance brought forward	202 644.00
Global funds	36 807.00
Tied funds	26 292.00
School & community sources	104 066.00
Interest	3 486.00
Trust receipts	0.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	373 296.00
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	62 659.00
Excursions	0.00
Extracurricular dissections	2 544.00
Library	0.00
Training & development	10 964.00
Tied funds	21 005.00
Short term relief	3 690.00
Administration & office	57 621.00
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	6 705.00
Maintenance	14 145.00
Trust accounts	0.00
Capital programs	95 575.00
Total expenditure	274 914.00
Balance carried forward	98 382.00

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Each visiting school at Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC is asked to complete an evaluation of the program. The evaluation gathers information about the booking process, relevance of activities to curriculum and delivery by EEC teaching staff.

A **Net Promoter Score** in the evaluation is used to gauge teacher, and student satisfaction with educational programs.

The total **Net Promoter Score** in 2016 for **Wetlands EEC** was:

PROMOTERS % 0.92

PASSIVE % 0.07

DETRACTORS 0

The total **Net Promoter Score** in 2016 for **Awabakal EEC** was:

PROMOTERS % 0.83

PASSIVE % 0.16

DETRACTORS 0

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC do not have enrolled students and therefore did not receive Aboriginal background funding in 2016.

All school programs embed Aboriginal perspectives and Aboriginal community members are consulted where possible in program development and delivery.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Culturally inclusive classroom and school practices are embedded at both schools. An Anti-Racism Contact Officer was appointed and trained in 2016.

Other school programs

Wet & Wild

Wetlands EEC has again delivered Wet & Wild during 2016. This is an annual on-line competition for students in Stages 2 and 3, integrating technology, research and environmental education. Students learn about Australian wetlands and the plants and animals that depend on them for survival.

Approximately 160 teams from across New South Wales participated in this exciting event during 2016.

Planet Savers

Planet Savers once again ran in Term 2 2016. Approximately 200 Stage 2 and 3 students attended and participated in a series of workshops on environmental sustainability to celebrate World Environment Day. These workshops were presented by Wetlands and Awabakal teaching staff, local environmental education experts and Year 10 students from Callaghan College Waratah Technology Campus. Planet Savers is an important event for Wetlands EEC and very popular with local schools and students and will continue in 2017.

Envirothon

Envirothon is a one-day challenge competition managed by Wetlands Environmental Education Centre and Awabakal Environmental Education Centre. Teams of four students from various Hunter high schools participate in fieldwork activities to gather data and interview local community members before presenting their findings to a panel of judges. The 2016 Envirothon Challenge involved eight schools and was held on Kooragang Island for fieldwork activities and then later at Wetlands EEC to complete interviews and present findings and recommendations.

ClimateCam

ClimateCam is a well-established program supporting local schools in developing rich, environmental practices within their school. Participating schools receive a ClimateCam plaque to recognise their achievements. As each milestone is achieved, the school is recognised with a ClimateCam star. EEC staff supported ClimateCam schools and provided training days for teachers and students along with in-school support.

Incursions and School Support

Wetlands EEC and Awabakal EEC staff have continued to provide support for schools during 2016. Support has been provided to schools when conducting environmental audits, holding environmental events, meeting curriculum needs around the cross curriculum area of sustainability and to initiate student leadership opportunities for students and teachers. EEC teachers have also held professional learning events to assist teachers develop teaching and learning programs in Geography and Science. Both Awabakal EEC and Wetlands EEC have supported and delivered learning and engagement opportunities in conjunction with local Aboriginal groups and agencies.