

Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre

Annual Report



2016



5691

Introduction

The Annual Report for **2016** is provided to the community of **Royal National Park 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.

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School background

School vision statement

School Vision

Learning and working together for a more sustainable future.

Provide students and teachers with confidence, skills and knowledge to contribute in a positive and meaningful way towards the environment.

School Motto

Enabling environmental citizens

Encouraging students, teachers, school executive, school environment committees and school communities to become more environmentally literate and actively engaged in sustainable improvement. The focus is on building their capacity to act more sustainably through learning in the environment.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centre EZEC Vision

To support NSW Public Schools to implement sustainability education through meaningful learning experiences in and about the natural and cultural environment. We are the leaders in providing students with the skills, values and opportunities to act as responsible citizens.

School context

Located in the Royal National Park, south east of Sydney. The Centre is located at Audley Heights on a plateau, 120 m above the Hacking River.

Centre staff facilitates fieldwork experiences for K–12 in a wide range of ecosystems and unique locations, mainly within this reserve. Students are immersed in nature through experiential learning, in curriculum focussed programs.

Public school students from SE and SW Sydney access the Centre for fieldwork and incursions. Some rural students utilise the Centre fieldwork programs, with video conference participants P–12 from across NSW.

The Centre is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centre's (EZEC) in NSW Department of Education. RNPEEC actively collaborates across this network to set directions for planning, curriculum development, student engagement, organisational effectiveness, professional learning, sustainability education, literacy, numeracy and Aboriginal education.

Through the local Community of Schools on the Park the Centre collaborates in professional learning, sustainability and Aboriginal programs.

The Centre is connected to other small schools with teaching principals in the Sutherland Shire networking through the Small School Alliance.

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 school 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.

There has been progress across the domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading in 2016.

In the *learning domain* RNPEEC focussed on learning culture and curriculum and learning. Our staff value student

engagement and are sensitive to adapting the learning culture when required to differentiate curriculum to meet needs of students. The learning alliances occur daily as we facilitate programs with and for other schools. The visiting teachers know their students and our staff optimise their student's learning. Accommodations are planned to ensure all students can participate to their maximum ability. Through the COSOTP there are learning alliances through special programs such as the Science Sustainability and the Koori Kids on the Park program. In the later program parents of students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander are involved in the planning of cultural days.

Through the *teaching domain* our Centre focus was on learning and development, collaborative practice and professional standards. The Performance and Development Plan (PDP) process has been embraced by more teaching staff. This has been enriching through both the process of professional conversations and the evidence teachers have produced. This has benefited the school. Teachers participated willingly in professional learning, both in-house and externally provided. Teachers share learning they received through day and conference programs. Where possible professional standards have been managed through the MyPL system, with non-registered courses being used to track teaching standard delivery.

We work collaboratively as a staff, plus work in collaboration with staff from other schools, networks and student leaders. There is ongoing communication from administration, teacher through to the principal interrogating visiting teachers to determine their fieldwork needs. Interpreting syllabus outcomes, school requests, programming from cross KLA experiences and identification of what best suits the developmental stage of students requires discussions between the class teacher/coordinator and our staff. In addition we collaborate across a number of communities of schools and local sustainability networks. We utilise the school website and social media to communicate broadly across the community. Professional learning courses have been aligned to the teacher and principal standards. Curriculum outcomes from existing and new syllabi are being constantly interrogated to ensure our teaching and learning programs align and support syllabus outcomes. This year has seen an increase in program writing aligned to the Australian Curriculum as schools implement geography and history syllabi. The centre has developed non-registered courses, including the Sustainability Network that is used across the state and the EZEC Annual Conference supporting and providing evidence for teachers across the EZEC network that are undergoing accreditation. One temporary teacher has achieved accreditation to proficient level.

In the *leading domain* the Centre focussed on the elements of Leadership and School Planning, Implementation and Reporting. All staff are highly committed to providing quality public education. Linkages across COSOTP, EZEC network in addition to the Office of Environment and Heritage, Council and non-government agencies. There have been stronger links developed with other communities of schools, through gifted and talented and leadership programs.

Staff are encouraged to use their skills to mentor and lead others. Student environment leaders are developed through workshops. Our staff also share the facilitation role with student environmental leaders. Succession planning continues to build on the leadership capabilities of staff both at our school and others with which we network.

Evidence to inform our improvement and innovation was derived from:

- analysis of student visitation data, student numbers, Key Learning Area or subject, location, program, day visit and/or workshops.
- evaluation comments from teachers for teaching and learning programs or professional learning.
- feedback from students and community
- reflections and meetings about RNPEEC vision, purpose, strategic directions, Professional Development Plans, collaboration, needs of students and resource allocation.

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.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/school-excellence-framework>

Strategic Direction 1

Empowering learners

Purpose

Empower students as they are our hope for the future.

Inform and empower students to act as responsible citizens to sustain and improve natural and cultural environments.

Provide opportunities for students to connect with the environment in an increasingly nature–deficit society.

Provide opportunities for students to shine and become agents of change both now and in the future.

Overall summary of progress

RNPEEC supported various student leadership initiatives. Students have also been empowered through skill development during fieldwork. There has continued to be a student mentoring model applied in the COSOTP.

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">• Improved engagement with natural environment• increased capacity and desire to improve sustainability practices in school and in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs for Stage 4, 5, 6 have incorporated time to be engaged in an ecosystem in an unstructured way. ES1–St 3 students have been involved in nature play activities..• SLIPS supporting primary and high school students across two COS'• Kids Teaching Kids – two high schools completed program• Number of citizen science programs actively promoted,• Application of social media to link schools to programs.• RNPEEC supported the collaborative EZEC student leadership initiative Go Make A Difference (Go MAD), for 18 schools, 141 students. Completing the program were 11 schools, and 5 videos were submitted. SLIPs, Sustainability Science, In school programs supporting sustainability teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forest School texts, Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature, teachers sharing Professional learning with colleagues, iPads, phones for photo evidence• staff, professional learning sessions, social media. Global funds, teacher relief

Next Steps

- incorporate more self directed activities
- hands on activities linked to inquiry questions
- expand geographic tools used, including map reading, sketching, GPS and compass skills

Strategic Direction 2

Building teacher capacity

Purpose

Curriculum needs are evolving. Dynamic modification of programs is required to support schools.

Increasing staff skills will ensure they are equipped to extend sustainability and environmental education.

Developing teacher confidence and expertise in sustainability education and management will deepen the culture of sustainability within schools.

Overall summary of progress

The Centre has a wide range of expertise available through the teaching staff. There is also a wide range of experience in the field. The culture of sharing practices is strengthening, with collegial sharing and mentoring occurring on a daily basis. PDP goals have been supported through teacher professional learning courses and inspirational references.

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">Professional learning courses developed and delivered related to fieldwork skills and sustainability.Staff can deliver a wider variety of programs with confidence.More school communities are supported through professional learning to improve resource and grounds management and curriculum opportunities.	Increase in sharing between staff. Observation of peers teaching. Increase in PDP sessions and completion of PDP's. Teaching programs for ES1–S3 devised around geographic inquiry process. Teacher surveys and feedback from fieldwork excursions. Increase number of teaching programs supporting sustainability actions. K–6 kitchen garden programs reviewed by colleagues and used in registered professional learning workshops.	Regional consultant, EZEC expertise, teacher professional learning, EZEC State Conference, Program builder, teacher relief, global funds

Next Steps

- link PDP goals to teaching standards
- formalise classroom observations sessions
- induction of newer staff and sharing by experienced staff
- expand repertoire of sustainability programs staff can facilitate

Strategic Direction 3

Doing better.

Purpose

Formalise systems at the Centre in order to run more effectively and enable smoother induction of staff. Improve communication with and exposure to teachers in schools.

Provide opportunities for staff to be innovative and engaged with sustainability program development and delivery.

Work within networks to develop systemic leadership in environmental and sustainability education.

Overall summary of progress

Improvement in systems within the Centre's operations has begun a new phase. There is more reliance on digital sharing and storage of resources. Major upgrading of the website and increasing social media profile has begun to increase the awareness of the Centre's activities.

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">Improved systems.Smoother induction of staff.improved communication with visiting staff	Website updated for mobile devices. Increased website activity. Facebook account started. Syllabus linked programs developed for worm farming, composting and kitchen gardens. Some shadowing has occurred and limited staff development of sustainability program delivery skills. # MyPL hours, # of teachers participating in meetings. Energy audits carried out in 3 schools, waste sort 3 schools, provision of resources for self delivery of programs in 5 schools.	TPL funds, Community Engagement funding \$2,000. Program builder, teacher relief time. Energy audit kits, waste sort equipment, compost and worm farming displays.

Next Steps

- streamline communications with schools and teachers
- raise profile of the Centre in the community
- gather more evaluative feedback from visiting teachers and students

Student information

Management of non-attendance

Through 2016 the Centre supported 10,693 students. There was a continued increase demand for fieldwork programs and some new in school programs were trialed.

The distribution of students across the year was:

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
2572	2307	3428	2386

In 2016 there was an increase in the range and number of participants involved through in school programs.

The fieldwork:in school program ratio was 8:1.

Primary School student gathering first hand weather data



Workforce information

Workforce composition

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

*Full Time Equivalent

The Centre is supported by 14 experienced and passionate casual teachers, four of which have been on temporary appointments this year. One casual teacher identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Workforce retention

The substantive teacher position has been recently permanently filled. All other permanent staff have remained at the Centre in 2016.

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	12.5

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Staff from the Centre participated in a range of professional learning, including: EZEC State Conference, Sustainability Networks, Apply First Aid, Cardio Resuscitation Refresher, Anaphalaxis awareness training, Principals Conferences, EZEC Principals Conference, Growth Coaching, Oasis Training, LMBR, ICT Update Sessions, Annual Financial Statement and Oasis, Financial Rollover, Child Protection Update, Configurator training, Geography, EZEC SAM conference. APTs Anaphalaxis online, Oasis network meetings, COSOTP SAM and Stage meetings,

One temporary teacher and one casual teacher have achieved accreditation at Proficient level in 2016. Three other casual teachers are currently working towards accreditation at Proficient level, and one is in maintenance of Proficient status.

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

Financial information

This summary financial information covers funds for operating costs to 30/11/2016 and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Income	\$
Balance brought forward	60 182.00
Global funds	29 548.00
Tied funds	10 760.00
School & community sources	64 612.00
Interest	1 078.00
Trust receipts	0.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	166 180.00
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	92 784.00
Excursions	91.00
Extracurricular dissections	117.00
Library	118.00
Training & development	2 027.00
Tied funds	5 455.00
Short term relief	0.00
Administration & office	7 237.00
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	3 077.00
Maintenance	1 398.00
Trust accounts	0.00
Capital programs	0.00
Total expenditure	112 304.00
Balance carried forward	53 876.00

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Each year schools are required to seek the opinions of the school community, including parents, students, teachers and executive from client schools about whether our Centre is satisfying their needs.

Principal feedback

Koori Kids on the Park "Thanks for organizing this great day. A big treat for our kids!"

"I would like to express our sincere thanks for your incredible cooperation and support of our excursion in a fortnight of adverse weather conditions."

Executive feedback

"Congratulations to the COSOTP Yr 4 Sustainability Science Student Conference 2016 team. The event provided an engaging 21 century learning experience...Jill Bell has proven a valuable asset to our COS in the development and implementation of the event. Her grasp of technology and communication skills are example of best practice...."

Early feedback from student and staff participants supports that significant student outcomes in science and environmental education were achieved."

Teacher feedback

High School Geography Teacher following in school professional learning – "Thank you for such an awesome afternoon, I feel so excited about including Fieldwork into our program and one thing (Upon a zillion of others I learnt from the lovely afternoon) was to apply the KISS procedure – keep it simple.....usually when I take kids out I have 3 hours of research to cram into an hour and race around and rush it all –going out with a few activities makes it so more realistic and less stressful...Looking forward to ... moving forward on this I'm sure to reinvigorate our staff"

Primary Teacher – Fieldwork "We loved it. We will be back next year."

Primary Teacher – In school program "Thanks for coming. We love it when you come to our school."

High School – School Learning Support Officer "... THANK YOU for a wonderful National Parks experience today. Staff and students thoroughly enjoyed the day and it was great first hand learning and social skills opportunity for our students with special needs. We intend to visit again."

School for Specific Purposes Teacher "We had such a lovely time at the Teddy Bear picnic excursion...Thank you so much, you are all so kind and generous and took such great care of our staff and volunteers and gave the students a wonderful experience!"

Sustainability contact "Thank you ... for organising the worm farm...Really appreciate your help.....I will certainly be calling on you for advice and support next year."

Student Feedback

1H "Our excursion to the Royal National Park was fantastic even though it rained and we got wet and soggy" "The walk was amazing because we got to see the waterfall and it was fun walking in the rain."

Parent Feedback

"Thanks for the day. I learnt a lot that I didn't know before".

"My son did the nature photography here at school last week. He was so enthusiastic about it I took him out to the rock platform on the weekend. It was great. I got him away from the computer games.."

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Teaching programs incorporate aspects of Aboriginal education, where appropriate.

Our Centre staff have been involved in planning and running of two COSOTP Aboriginal Cultural days Koori Kids on the Park, in consultation with parents, students, Aboriginal community representatives and DoE Aboriginal Education team. The Centre has supported an AECG STEMs enrichment program as well as supporting the Koori Kids by the Sea cultural day. A Language other than English (LOTE) Aboriginal languages program was also developed and trialed..

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Programs are inclusive of students from varied cultural backgrounds.

Other school programs

Sustainability

Through the local sustainability network and contact with other teachers through our programs we support teachers who have the responsibility of enabling environmental leaders in schools.

COSOTP Sustainability Science program Camp 16 high school mentors were trained and supported as workshop facilitators for Year 4 students.

Our Centre has supported the high schools through the Youth Enviro Network (YEN) in collaboration across the EZEC network in Sydney. The GoMAD program in 2016 supported 141 students from 18 high schools.

We encourage the involvement of the Student Representative Council or environmental leaders of schools to participate in a leadership role during school audits, such as the Waste Sort in school program. Sylvania PS, Lindsay Park PS, Woronora River Biodiversity survey Sylvania PS.

St George Girls High School Green Day our Centre facilitated two workshops, in Energy and Waste plus provided resources for a third workshop, Mobile Phone Recycling. Our staff trained Year 9 and 10 student mentors building their capacity as peer mentors throughout the day delivering workshops for Year 7 and 8 students.

Cover image: Investigating heath vegetation on the coast track.