

Cascade Environmental Education Centre Annual Report



2016



5731

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2016 is provided to the community of **Cascade 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.

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Principal

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Message from the Principal

Cascade EEC provides environmental education, education for sustainability, wellbeing and professional development programs and support to schools on the Mid North Coast. In 2016 Cascade provided programs for 7500 students ranging from rainforest studies, year 11 local ecosystem studies, water education programs and resource education programs.

School background

School vision statement

Cascade EEC aims to provide educational experiences and opportunities that will engage and motivate all students to learn, discover, critically analyse their knowledge and to experience success. That every student that participates in a Cascade program has the opportunity to achieve their personal best through engaged, active learning in a safe, respectful and supportive environment. That every student that participates in our programs is excited to do so, safe when participating, interested in the activity and what will result from it, engaged in a practical and hands on way and inspired to make real change in their local community.

School context

Cascade Environmental Education Centre (EEC) is located in 250 million year old rainforest on the Dorrigo Plateau. Cascade is one of 26 environmental and zoo education centres in NSW. The EEC is both a local school and a regional resource that supports schools to meet their fieldwork requirements, grow as sustainability hubs within their communities, to develop student and staff knowledge and develop knowledge about and a relationship with the natural environment. As part of a collaborative team of EEC's, schools, government and non-government organisations, Cascade provides a broad range of experiences at a number of locations within the Tamworth Group. The Centre continues to support schools in their implementation of the curriculum and the Environmental Education Policy and to provide essential natural and sustainability based experiences both in and outside of the classroom. We aim is to provide quality experiences that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes and to empower students and their communities to become confident and empowered environmental citizens.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework and participated in an external validation. 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. During the external validation process, an independent panel of peer principals considered our evidence and assessment of the school's progress, aligned with the standards articulated in the School Excellence Framework.

On Thursday the 8th of September 2016 our school participated in external validation. In preparation for this meeting the required body of evidence was prepared, reviewed and annotated. The Executive Summary synthesises the annotated information provided in the body of evidence.

Cascade has a long record of working with schools to develop and deliver top quality products aimed at meeting their curriculum, personal and societal needs. The Centre exists for this purpose and thrives on interactions and collaborations with the broader educational community.

This process has allowed Cascade to examine its operations through the lense of the School Excellence Framework. This opportunity has afforded us a deeper understanding of our methods and processes and provides us with a pathway for continued improvement in years to come.

Statements of excellence for each element were reflected upon during the initial phase of the process. This then allowed us to think about our school practices and identify the evidence that we thought would best represent the Centre. This certainly was a challenge as there is so much in any school to pick from. During the analysis phase the strengths or otherwise of the chosen evidence was determined. This did facilitate some relegating of weaker evidence that was replaced with that of a higher quality. Judgements were then made utilising an "on balance" philosophy. It was difficult to satisfy all criteria for each element, however when there was a good spread of satisfied criteria the decision was evident.

Following are the on balance judgments made by Cascade during this process.

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Learning on balance Cascade is **Delivering**. Cascade is performing well in this domain as demonstrated in our evidence. The evidence analysed for this domain included the School Planning Document, Program videos for the ReSourceful Schools (RSS) program and NAIDOC program, Cascade school rules, the Annual School Report and a sample of a partner school newsletter.

An area that can be improved is the process we utilise to record and monitor student performance, especially over the

long term. This is an area of difficulty for an EEC that works with about 7000 students for a period of 1–3 days each year, but one we will continue to pursue.

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Teaching on balance Cascade is **Delivering**. An obvious strength in this area was our collaboration with our educational community. These collaborations have resulted in robust and enduring programs and processes that provide great benefit for the groups we work with.

An area that we could improve is our collection and analysis of data and longer term tracking of student performance post our programs.

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Leading, on balance Cascade is **Delivering**. Cascade's commitment to professional learning and leadership is strengthened by our innovative approach to providing high quality learning experiences for our partner schools and our engagement with our educational community. This community is innovative in many ways especially in sharing knowledge and expertise at a system level.

An area to develop further is in that of professional standards and more so how these can be translated into the specific context of an EEC.

This challenging process, especially for a small school with a teaching principal has been a worthwhile venture and will provide a scaffold for future processes and innovations. Perhaps a scaled submission depending on school size, staffing and purpose would be more suitable for future submissions.

Our self-assessment and the external validation 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

Student Environmental Learning

Purpose

Through a framework of equity and excellence Cascade aims to empower students to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens. Staff at Cascade will be provided experiences to enable them to provide innovative programs and experiences.

Overall summary of progress

Cascade has progressed well in this Strategic Direction in 2017. Schools expressed that camps satisfied their needs via our evaluation forms.

iPads were well utilised in 2016 and teachers are becoming more proficient with them due to exposure and experience with them.

Externally funded programs with Waterwise and ReSourceful Schools were very successful in 2016. These programs will continue to be delivered in 2017.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
Camps are valued as quality learning experiences by visiting schools. Measured through camp evaluations.	This was demonstrated via school evaluation forms	CEEC funds.
Students utilise iPads as part of the ReSourceful Schools program.	The School successfully utilised iPads for in school programs and the ReSourceful Schools Program.	CEEC and Midwaste funds.
Staff trained in development, creation and management of iPad's and the utilisation of iPad's in classroom practice.	Staff were released and / or employed to gain experience with iPads and create lessons.	CEEC funds.
Cascade maintains a partnership with Midwaste.	This relationship is progressing well.	CEEC funds.

Next Steps

During 2017 Cascade will reintroduce written evaluation forms that are handed out to schools. This will improve return rates for evaluation.

Downloading and sharing work from iPads will be a focus for 2017.

The continuation of the relationship with Midwaste will be a focus with continued funding into the 2017–2018 financial years for the RSS program the aim.

Strategic Direction 2

Resources

Purpose

Resources at Cascade provide comfortable, safe and inspiring environment for student learning and engagement.

Overall summary of progress

The purpose of this Strategic Direction is to provide students and teachers with a comfortable and inspiring learning experience during their time at Cascade. Being away from home for a couple of nights presents challenges for all people. If the experience can be comfortable and well managed program participants will gain more from their program and be inspired to learn on arrival back at school.

The only area that has not been totally implemented is the vegetable gardening program based out of Bellinghen HS. This program was offered to schools in the area. Through discussion and research it has been decided that each school would prefer to conduct their learning on this topic at their own school. Cascade will continue to support schools to implement this type of program on their school site.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
Cascade Leaf Adaptation Activity is developed and utilised	This activity was created and is utilised in our new Geography program	CEEC funds.
Vegie Garden program "Planting Ideas – Growing Minds" is launched	This program was developed by a staff member who then left the Centre. The program is still awaiting implementation.	CEEC funds
Cascade Mountain Bike trails are built to the specifications required of SFNSW and IMBA.	These tracks have been built as required.	CEEC funds

Next Steps

Cascade will begin to re-invigorate the Youth Environment Council (YEC), in our area of operations through the GoMAD program.

Cascade will utilise Environmental Trust Funding to develop and improve learning facilities and programs at Cascade.

Strategic Direction 3

Environmental Partnerships

Purpose

To grow existing and build stronger relationships as an educational community by leading and inspiring a culture of collaboration, engaged communication, empowered leadership and organisational practices for the benefit of our partner schools.

Overall summary of progress

The EZEC wide evaluation system was a double edged sword. The system provided great sharing of data at a state level that the EZEC could utilise to enhance its programs. The amount of evaluations that were completed at a Centre level declined.

Staff at Cascade have been involved in workshops, discussions, PDP development and strategic planning to enhance their own skills, their relationships with each other, their knowledge and commitment to the programs and their abilities to deliver high quality programs that meet the needs of all participants.

During the programs at Cascade students are provided with inspiring opportunities to grow as individuals and to improve a range of "school based" skills. This learning is hard to track, but the feedback from teachers (written and verbal) suggests that time at Cascade benefits students in emotional and academic ways.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
An evaluation system is utilised by all EZEC's across NSW	This system was implemented. It was found that it was not as well utilised as the original method. Cascade will investigate a combination of the two methods for 2017.	CEEC funds.
Cascade staff form a high functioning, strategic partnership with each other and Cascades partner schools	The staff at Cascade are displaying ownership and involvement in the programs conducted at the Centre.	CEEC funds.
All programs incorporate a broad range of opportunities for students to gain knowledge, skills and understandings and to further personal, school and community benefit via partnerships created.	Students are truly benefitting from the range of programs and activities developed by Cascade.	CEEC funds.

Next Steps

School evaluations will be conducted utilising previous model and whole of EZEC model.

PDP's will be developed in line with departmental policies to enhance programs at Cascade.

Cascade will continue to empower students to be better able to face problems, show resilience and develop as individuals on a number of levels.

Student information

Cascade has no permanent Cascade provided activities for k–12 students in 2016.

The combination of students in our camp and day trip programs, ReSourceful Schools Program, WaterWise program and Day programs was in excess of 8000 students.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
School Administration & Support Staff	1.03

*Full Time Equivalent

To ensure that we meet our goals in Aboriginal Education, Cascade employs casual staff who are Aboriginal as required.

Workforce retention

There have been no changes in staffing at Cascade.

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	

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional Learning is a vital component of Cascades year. The knowledge, partnerships, teaching and learning opportunities that arise from these experiences underpin the programs conducted. Cascade staff participated successfully in the annual EZEC conference and the EZEC principals conference in 2016.

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

Financial information

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

Income	\$
Balance brought forward	117 697.74
Global funds	31 760.36
Tied funds	19 085.73
School & community sources	114 763.74
Interest	2 282.68
Trust receipts	0.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	285 590.25
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	13 777.24
Excursions	0.00
Extracurricular dissections	102 304.71
Library	487.98
Training & development	255.50
Tied funds	38 660.06
Short term relief	19 599.54
Administration & office	15 050.35
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	8 832.39
Maintenance	5 556.58
Trust accounts	0.00
Capital programs	550.00
Total expenditure	205 074.35
Balance carried forward	80 515.90

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

Cascade was rated as excellent in the evaluations conducted in 2016.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Cascade supports schools to provide high quality experiences for Aboriginal students in an attempt to meet the NSW priorities for Aboriginal students. Cascade partnered with a number of schools, DoE, community and NPWS Aboriginal people to develop meaningful and complimentary partnerships for the benefit of public school students.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Cascade provides a balanced educational experience for all students. The Centre staff are sensitive to program participants needs and cultural backgrounds.