

Riverina Environmental Education Centre Annual Report



2016



5734

Introduction

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

Darron Watt

Acting Principal

School contact details

Riverina Environmental Education Centre

Cnr Sturt & Olympic Highway

Wagga Wagga, 2650

www.riverina-e.schools.nsw.edu.au

riverina-e.School@det.nsw.edu.au

6932 9134

School background

School vision statement

To be a leader in the provision of quality enrichment programs that enable students, teachers and their communities to become confident and empowered environmental citizens who are socially, environmentally and culturally aware.

School context

The Riverina Environmental Education Centre (REEC) is a facility of the Department of Education located within the grounds of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in Wagga Wagga. The centre sits on Wiradjuri land and most of the studies are conducted on Wiradjuri land.

REEC is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) run by the Department of Education. REEC provides programs to support Department of Education schools with environmental and sustainability education.

The Riverina Environmental Education Centre is committed to supporting Public Education in the Riverina. The Centre's teaching programs are cross curricular with an emphasis on science and geography reflecting the partnership with the Office of Environment and Heritage.

REEC has support from the local Aboriginal community to teach Aboriginal cultural programs. A strong Aboriginal focus provides opportunities for all students, staff and the wider community to acquire knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and experiences. REEC utilises a re-constructed traditional campsite at the centre to conduct studies that educate students about the traditional Aboriginal inhabitants of the area, their relationship with the land and their use of bush resources.

Aspects of Aboriginal culture and knowledge are integrated into the centre's programs.

Programs are designed to strengthen student engagement by encouraging the use of digital learning pedagogies that encourage collaboration, interactive learning and knowledge creation.

Programs are conducted on site at REEC, at sites in Deniliquin, Griffith, Temora, West Wyalong, Corowa, Adelong, Thredbo, Yarrangobilly and other local sites.

REEC also provides support, training and resources for DoE teachers.

REEC is used as a training and meeting venue for schools and other organisations.

A key goal of REEC is to provide students with high quality learning experiences in natural environments.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

For all schools (except those participating in external validation processes):

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 to inform, monitor and validate school improvement. Time was provided at executive and staff meetings to map school progress in the achievement of milestone and alignment of each element of the SEF.. 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 focused on culture, wellbeing and curriculum. Positive and respectful relationships across the school community underpin a productive learning environment, and support students' development of strong identities as learners. The school has in place a comprehensive and inclusive framework to support the individual and collective need of our community schools and their students. The diversity of teaching and learning program support the learning needs of students from Infants, Primary and Secondary schools whilst also incorporating strategies supporting ATSI, Gifted and Talented and Disability school groups. The school encourages

students to recognise and respect cultural identity and diversity. A strong working partnership with the Aboriginal Education Unit and local Aboriginal community ensures cultural awareness and vibrancy in learning activities and programs. Curriculum Provision is enhanced by learning alliances with other schools and organisations. The school uses data collated at the community schools to inform future learning activities, initiatives and programs that meet the specific needs of their students who utilise our resource.

In the Teaching domain, our main focus has been on effective classroom practice, data skills and usage, collaborative practice and Learning and Development. All classes at Riverina Environmental Education Centre (REEC) are well managed so that students can engage in rich and productive environmental education activities with minimal disruption to their learning. Teachers regularly review and revise teaching and learning programs to ensure that the specific learning needs of visiting schools and students are met and that opportunities for future improvement can be implemented. Teachers take responsibility for changes in practice required to achieve improved school performance and are using data on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of their own efforts. In our school context, standardised student performance data is not available for evaluation. Localised data is identified and used to inform improvement of school performance during the small learning windows that exist at Riverina Environmental Education Centre. Inter-school relationships with the Amaroo community of schools provide mentoring and coaching support to ensure the ongoing development of all staff in this small educational setting. Riverina Environmental Education Centre staff are actively engaged in planning their own professional development to improve their performance. Participation in targeted and specific professional learning opportunities strongly support the school priorities and the needs of staff to enhance their professional needs.

In the domain of Leading, our priorities have focused on leadership and school planning, implementation and reporting. Riverina Environmental Education Centre is recognised as a valuable teaching and learning resource centre that supports educational programs in the areas of Environmental education, Sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. We are committed to building sustainable partnerships with our community of schools, external organisations and Aboriginal community leaders and members to ensure that our schools vision, values, purpose and strategic directions align with provision of quality educational outcomes for our students.

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

Environmental Sustainability

Purpose

Improve environmental and sustainability outcomes for students. Support schools by providing educational experiences and opportunities that will engage and motivate students to learn, discover and critically analyse their knowledge, to equip them to become informed citizens of the future who are socially, environmentally and culturally aware.

Overall summary of progress

REEC programs were mapped and evaluated against new syllabus in the area of Science, Geography and History to reflect the mandatory changes required to meet NSW Syllabus for Australian curriculum compliance. Liaison with our community partner schools identified the opportunity to incorporate alignment of REEC studies with their individual teaching scope and sequences. REEC community partner schools utilise the Primary Connections program to support the delivery of Science curriculum with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy engagement in K– 6.

New teaching units at REEC have been developed across the infants and primary areas to support science in schools. New units implemented at Riverina Environmental Education Centre include Needs of Living Things (early stage one), Minibeasts (stage one), Friends or Foes (stage two), Beneath our feet (stage two) and Alternative Energies (stage three). New teaching strategies to support sustainability across all teaching stages have been developed to support our core business area for sustainability education.

New teaching units now contain pre-visit activities to support the required background knowledge for a REEC visit; comprehensive information for visit activities and a extensive bank of post-visit activities that support Sustainability and ATSC histories and experiences across the curriculum areas. Visiting teaching staff have provided positive feedback for the comprehensive set of new teaching programs that now allows for the reinforcement of knowledge and understanding upon return to their local schools.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture now shape our context for teaching sustainability to all students. Contemporary science, knowledge and practice is linked with the traditional Aboriginal science practices that are still in use today by our Traditional owners.

Students see sustainability as the practice of recognising, listening to and caring for the Country they walk on. Aboriginal histories and experiences shared by local Aboriginal Elders and community members help reinforce the notion of shared responsibility and custodianship as the core mechanism for sustainability education.

Strong working partnerships with external agencies (Office of Environment and Heritage, Wagga Wagga City Council, Department of Primary Industries – Water and the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre) allows for the access to current and emerging scientific research and trends that supports the enhancement of our teaching practice and programs.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

| Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years) | Progress achieved this year | Funds Expended (Resources) |
|---|---|--|
| REEC programs reviewed and modified to support cross-curriculum priority in sustainability education | REEC teaching programs have been reviewed, evaluated and adjusted to support cross-curriculum priorities in Sustainability education. New teaching strategies have been embedded into teaching programs to support Sustainability education with an Aboriginal Education focus. | Short Term relief for iBook resource development (\$1170) |
| Increase the proportion of NSW students in the top two NAPLAN bands by eight per cent in Amaroo Community of Schools. | REEC established baseline school data from the Amaroo community of schools. The data has been analysed to establish key areas in Literacy and Numeracy that REEC can support visiting schools who access studies across stages two, three, four and five. | Primary Connections Resources (\$770) |
| Students who realise their full potential as global citizens who are socially, environmentally and | Envirochamps students demonstrated the capacity to design, implement and evaluate local solutions to meet the concerns identified as globally and | |

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

| Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years) | Progress achieved this year | Funds Expended (Resources) |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| culturally aware measured by student feedback demonstrating knowledge, skills and positive values towards the environment. | environmentally aware students in their local settings. | |

Next Steps

The 2017–2019 school plan will strongly reflect the recommendations from our community of local schools, Aboriginal Community and partnerships with external agencies.

Citizen science initiatives will be the vehicle that helps include and engage students, parents and community members in becoming socially, environmentally and cultural aware of the environments they live in.

Strategic Direction 2

Cultural Engagement

Purpose

Provide opportunities for students and staff to acquire authentic knowledge and develop deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture

Assist schools with improving engagement of Aboriginal students

Overall summary of progress

Aboriginal community members, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the Aboriginal Education Unit have assisted in the development, delivery and evaluation of programs at the Riverina Environmental Education Centre.

Cultural programs at the Riverina Environmental Education Centre have been delivered via school excursion visits to the centre and incursions into local schools. A close working relationship with Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Education Unit staff, Community Cultural Officers and local Aboriginal Elders have ensured the delivery of authentic Aboriginal content to support the cross curriculum area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across all NSW syllabuses for the Australian curriculum.

In 2016, teacher professional learning workshops held in collaboration with the Aboriginal Education unit produced a stage 5 History teaching unit to support the Black ANZAC iBook. Wagga Wagga Directorate schools implemented this program into their teaching scope and sequence to allow students to engage in studies on World War 1 through the experiences of an Aboriginal serviceman. Staff co-ordinating this program have also presented these materials at the 2016 state Aboriginal Studies Association conference.

This program has been celebrated with a NSW schools Nanga Mia award. The NSW Schools' Nanga Mai Awards celebrate and recognise innovation, excellence and achievement in Aboriginal education in NSW public schools, school communities and department regional and state offices.

Strong conversations and connections with local Aboriginal Elders and community has resulted in Aboriginal people, working collaboratively with Riverina Environmental Education Centre staff, now delivering their culture in a rich, authentic and connected way.

The core responsibility for Environmental Education Centres, Sustainability, is now delivered through a traditional Aboriginal science perspective of "Caring for Country". Students are now able to identify the land that they walk on as Country and that it was, and is, successfully managed by Aboriginal people through their knowledge of custodianship of country for sustainability.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

| Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years) | Progress achieved this year | Funds Expended (Resources) |
|--|---|--|
| Positive feedback and evaluations from visiting teachers of use REEC teaching programs and resources for Aboriginal knowledge authentically and productively with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students | Feedback from visiting teacher surveys indicates a very high satisfaction rating for REEC Aboriginal Education teaching programs. Visiting schools have requested additional Aboriginal programs be implemented to support a wider range of student stages. | 4 x casual relief days Black ANZAC Stage 5 writing day (\$1850) |
| REEC Studies address the cross-curriculum priority Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures | Evaluation of REEC studies and their teaching programs reflects that all address the cross-curriculum priority area for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. REEC community schools have accessed incursion and excursions that have been designed, in collaboration, to meet the local needs of each school. | Teaching resources from cultural artists to support Aboriginal education programs (\$1480) |

Next Steps

Riverina Environmental Education Centre looks to build on the conversations that have been held with Aboriginal people, external providers and educational stakeholders to explore new initiatives to enhance on the already strong bonds that exist in our partnerships.

The key area of reengagement for Aboriginal students into education settings is an area that the Riverina Environmental Education Centre can support the schools of the Wagga Wagga Directorate. Through facilitating conversations that connect schools, students, community and external agencies and hosting innovative programs the Riverina Environmental Education Centre can play a role in the improvement of learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Strategic Direction 3

Dynamic educational community culture

Purpose

To build stronger relationships as an educational community by leading and inspiring a culture of collaboration, engaged communication, empowered leadership and organisational practices

Teaching staff in EZECs collaborate to overcome geographical and professional isolation

Overall summary of progress

Networking with Lake Cowal Conservation Centre and other Environmental Education providers and organisations have developed strong authentic partnerships that improve student learning outcomes through engaging learning experiences. Lake Cowal Conservation Centre and REEC ran the year 5 Envirochamps Leadership program with 27 schools participating. The students undertook leadership training and implemented an environmental project at their school.

A strong working partnership is fostered with the many agencies that share the site that REEC is located on. Collaborative practice with Office of Environment and Heritage Ecosystems staff ensures the provision of current and emerging scientific knowledge is embedded in REEC programs for Sustainability and Aboriginal Culture.

In partnership with Wagga Wagga City Council and other community organisations. REEC played a collaborative role in identifying, implementing and the evaluating of educational strategies to support the Marrambidya Wetlands opening as a new environmental education setting for all schools.

REEC staff attended the annual Environmental and Zoo Education Centres annual conference and EZEC Principal conference to collaborate with professional learning community & share professional practice. REEC personnel conducted two workshops at the conferences in the areas of Premier's Priorities for Literacy and Numeracy in Environmental Education Centres and "Black ANZACS".

REEC staff presented professional learning workshops at the annual Aboriginal Studies Association conference at Sydney University, providing educational resources to teachers and graduate teachers.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

| Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years) | Progress achieved this year | Funds Expended (Resources) |
|--|--|---|
| Strong partnerships and collaboration providing expertise, financial or physical resources | Strong authentic partnerships with Environmental and Zoo Education Centres, Lake Cowal Conservation Centre, Office of Environment and Heritage and Wagga Wagga City Council exist. Student learning outcomes are enriched through engaging learning experiences supported by our educational partnerships. | Environmental and Zoo Education Centre western conference presentation (\$700 for 2 staff) Environmental and Zoo Education annual conference presentation (\$900 for 2 staff) Environmental and Zoo Education principals conference (\$540 for 1 staff) |
| Visiting Teacher surveys show positive feedback based around program outcomes | Teacher feedback shows a very high satisfaction rate with REEC teacher delivery of programs, program linkage to new syllabus and strengthening classroom learning outcomes. Staff value the teaching programs that now support pre-visit and post-visit learning support materials. | |

Next Steps

Evaluation of REEC practice for 2017 will utilise a wider set of survey and self-evaluation assessment tools to provide access to data sets measuring high quality educational outcomes linked to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

External evaluation through an Aboriginal Educational Snapshot will be sourced to survey school and community stakeholders. Information gathered will be used to support the review of the School Excellence Framework self assessment in preparation for the development of the 2018 – 2020 school planning cycle in collaboration with our community.

Ongoing collaboration with the local management committee to ensure the practice at REEC is in alignment with the shared vision of all Public Service agencies on our shared site to provide support for all Wagga Wagga directorate schools.

Student information

The Riverina Environmental Education Centre supports community schools through the provision of programs supporting Sustainability and Environmental Education. This is achieved through the visitation of students from other schools. The Riverina Environmental Education Centre has no enrolled students.

Management of non-attendance

In 2016 the Riverina Environmental Education Centre supported 3070 students across the Wagga Wagga Operational Directorate schools.

Students from early stage one to stage 6 actively engaged in a range of student learning activities across 56 schools.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

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

*Full Time Equivalent

No members of staff at the Riverina Environmental Education Centre have an Aboriginal background. The Riverina Environmental Education Centre works closely with the Department of Education Aboriginal Education Team and consult with the Wagga Wagga Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, local Aboriginal elders and local Aboriginal community members for knowledge, experiences, advice and assistance.

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

Staff at Riverina Environmental Education Centre have completed training in the areas of:

Mandatory Child Protection Training

Child Protection Update

Red Cross Apply First Aid

e-Emergency Care

Anaphylaxis e-learning

Emergency Management and Return to Work

Preparing and responding to bushfires

Recognition and management of anaphylaxes training

Work Health and Safety Induction for employees

NSW Public School Leadership and Management Credential

Staff at Riverina Environmental Education Centre have attended conferences presenting workshops for

2016 Annual state Environmental and Zoo Education Centre conference

2016 Annual western Environmental Education Centre Conference

2016 Aboriginal Studies Association conference

In 2016 the Riverina Environmental expended \$5726.50 on teacher and school administrative staff professional learning.

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

Financial information

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

| Income | \$ |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Balance brought forward | 100 574.39 |
| Global funds | 31 086.37 |
| Tied funds | 26 607.47 |
| School & community sources | 12 248.98 |
| Interest | 1 843.84 |
| Trust receipts | 0.00 |
| Canteen | 0.00 |
| Total income | 172 361.05 |
| Expenditure | |
| Teaching & learning | |
| Key learning areas | 29 340.07 |
| Excursions | 0.00 |
| Extracurricular dissections | 0.00 |
| Library | 590.25 |
| Training & development | 695.00 |
| Tied funds | 24 984.44 |
| Short term relief | 1 169.94 |
| Administration & office | 11 136.62 |
| School-operated canteen | 0.00 |
| Utilities | 1 644.36 |
| Maintenance | 4 848.97 |
| Trust accounts | 0.00 |
| Capital programs | 0.00 |
| Total expenditure | 74 409.65 |
| Balance carried forward | 97 951.40 |

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

Evaluation data collected in 2016 from Wagga Wagga directorate schools indicated:

- Organisation through office – 92.5% rating
- Facilities and equipment – 95% rating
- Provision of positive learning culture – 97% rating
- High expectations of student behaviour and learning – 97% rating
- Teaching programs strongly linked to curriculum – 100% rating
- Teaching programs strong enhanced the student knowledge about the environment – 97% rating
- Promotion of positive environmental values and attitudes in students – 97% rating
- Enhancement of professional learning of visiting teaching staff – 90% rating
- Provision of quality pre and post visit support to extend classroom learning – 83% rating

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

REEC has support from the Wagga Wagga AECG, local Aboriginal community and Aboriginal staff in schools to teach Aboriginal Cultural Programs.

REEC utilises Aboriginal community members to support Aboriginal cultural programs at a re-constructed Aboriginal campsite. The campsite was built and is maintained with the support of Aboriginal students and community members. Aboriginal Elders work together with REEC staff to provide authenticity to studies via Welcome to Country ceremony, story, song, dance and practice.

REEC continues to work collaboratively with the Riverina Aboriginal Education team members to develop and support the delivery of Aboriginal Educational outcomes. The Black ANZACS unit developed in partnership with Aboriginal Learning and Engagement Officer, Alison Johnstone has been recognised with a Nanga Mia award for outstanding educational achievement. Local Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers work collaboratively with REEC staff to deliver approved programs at REEC and local schools.

Schools value the Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal Education Team staff and Aboriginal students who support programs at REEC identifying the Professional Learning benefit it provides in giving them confidence in embedding authentic Aboriginal content into their own teaching programs and practice.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

REEC staff have evaluated all teaching programs to ensure their cultural sensitivity for all multicultural groups. All teaching programs are suitable for students who represent the diverse range of cultures.

REEC promotes a racism free learning and working environment and is represented by an Anti-Racism Contact Officer.