

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre 2019 Annual Report



5458

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2019 is provided to the community of Wetlands 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.

School contact details

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School background

School vision statement

Environmental and Zoo Education Centres NSW (EZEC)

Leading environmental learning to empower learners for a sustainable future.

At **Wetlands 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

Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC)

The 25 NSW DoE Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC's) are leaders in environmental and sustainability education.

Our Centres provide authentic, curriculum-based fieldwork learning experiences for exploring, investigating, understanding and connecting with the natural and made environments.

Our programs provide opportunities to understand concepts and systems and develop values that empower learners to become environmentally sustainable citizens.

By building strong partnerships and developing teacher capacity, Centres enable schools to integrate sustainability education into all aspects of school operations including curriculum, teaching and learning, physical surroundings and relationships with the local community.

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre (established 1986) located at Hunter Wetlands Centre is one of the 25 Environmental Education Centres and Zoo Education Centres supported by the NSW Department of Education (DoE). Although 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.

Visiting students benefit from access to a range of ecosystems and high quality educational programs directly linked the NSW Curriculum. The focus is on 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 to Wetlands Environmental Education 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 does not have enrolled students. Community partners include local teachers and schools, local groups and organisations such as environmental groups, local council, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, 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

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 and participated in an external validation. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. 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.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our school plan and annual report. Every five years, our school undergoes an external validation process.

During the external validation process, an independent panel consisting of a Principal School Leadership and a peer principal considered our evidence and assessment of our school's progress against the School Excellence Framework.

Our self-assessment and the external validation process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/school-excellence>

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2019 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Delivering
LEARNING: Curriculum	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Assessment	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Excelling
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Excelling
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School resources	Excelling
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Excelling

Strategic Direction 1

Empower Learners

Purpose

To develop students environmental knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in creating environmentally literate citizens. This is accomplished through providing engaging and stimulating learning environments and by developing the capacity of staff as empowered learners, teachers and leaders to think and communicate creatively, collaboratively and critically to achieve positive environmental impact.

Improvement Measures

Increase the number of students engaged in environmental education and leadership programs run by Wetlands EEC from 2017 baseline data.

Increase the variety of environmental education learning experiences for students by developing further programs at various locations.

Overall summary of progress

New fieldwork locations and opportunities have been investigated, developed and implemented. Staff have undertaken necessary professional learning to develop their skills for program delivery. Increased opportunities for students to engage in environmental and sustainability education is now apparent and reflected in demand from local teachers and schools.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: PROGRAMMING

The school adopts a coordinated approach to student learning and leadership in environmental education. This will be achieved through the careful evaluation and improvement of programs currently in place while new and innovative programs will be developed to engage students.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>QUESTION: How successful was this event? How was this success gauged? Any feedback? Any adjustments to be made? Where to in 2020?</p> <p>DATA SOURCES: Analyse data from evaluations and feedback from teachers / students.</p> <p>FINDINGS: Determine adjustment required for 2020 and how to grow the event across the area. Consider schools may return with the same students so another location/version may be required.</p> <p>IMPLICATIONS: Staff to continue refinement of the trial event and ensure this can be repeated in other locations for 2020 and allow for changes to accommodate returning schools and students.</p>	

Process 2: INNOVATION

In order to provide a wider variety of environmental education fieldwork experiences for students, staff will research and investigate new fieldwork locations across the Hunter and undertake required professional learning.. The result of this will be a greater variety of student learning opportunities for environmental fieldwork and learning experiences.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>QUESTION: Has the new program been implemented? How was it received? What adjustments are required and who will undertake these? Where to from</p>	

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

here in 2020?

DATA SOURCES: Examination of any feedback or data obtained from evaluations of the program.

FINDINGS: The new Stockton Beach program has been developed and implemented with 3 high schools. Explicit feedback was sought after each and program modifications were made to ensure high quality.

IMPLICATIONS: This successful implementation resulted from consultation with stakeholders, investigation, delivery and improvement. Another new location to be considered for 2020.

Next Steps

- Continue the process of program evaluation, review and improvement
- Investigate further fieldwork locations and opportunities for learning
- Develop and implement further sustainability learning and leadership opportunities for students, teachers and community

Strategic Direction 2

Strengthen Partnerships

Purpose

To extend and strengthen partnerships with our networks and communities through effective communication and a culture of collaboration. The impact of these relationships drives the provision of authentic, relevant and unique experiences, which enable students to be confident and creative environmental citizens.

Improvement Measures

Increased participation and engagement by all Wetlands EEC staff and local teachers.

Hunter area school staff and those in our partner Environmental Education Centres are engaged and benefitting from learning and network opportunities.

Overall summary of progress

Gains have been made in strengthening existing partnerships and developing new alliances which are to the benefit of our school, local students, local teachers and student outcomes.

Particular gains have been made in developing stronger collaborative networks among many of the EEC's across the state. This has allowed EEC staff to develop skills and improve teaching pedagogy.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

All staff are engaging in professional learning as part of their career development and for the development of high quality environmental education fieldwork experiences for visiting teachers and students.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>QUESTION: What have we achieved throughout this process? What were the barriers to success? What can assist in the process for 2020?</p> <p>DATA SOURCES: Opportunities for staff to participate in meaning PL.</p> <p>FINDINGS: Limited success during 2020 due to staff absences and replacement staff shortages along with suitable PL.</p> <p>IMPLICATIONS: Work collaboratively with the EZEC community of schools to develop and deliver appropriate PL in 2020.</p>	

Process 2: PARTNERSHIPS

All staff are working cooperatively with our partner EEC's across NSW and other community agencies in order to network, streamline processes and develop quality educational experiences.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>QUESTION: Which partnerships have been successfully developed and where have we not succeeded? What else can be done to assist? Where to in 2020?</p> <p>DATA SOURCES: Staff discussion</p> <p>FINDINGS: Perhaps stronger partnerships among our EZEC community of schools would be a better starting point before continuing our quest for</p>	

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

further stronger partnerships with local agencies and groups.

IMPLICATIONS: Continue building and strengthening partnerships in 2020.

Next Steps

- Continue to develop new partnerships with local agencies which add to student learning
- Continue to work collaboratively with our partner EEC's to strengthen learning opportunities and staff knowledge and skills

Student information

Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	1.4
School Administration and Support Staff	1.39

*Full Time Equivalent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The Department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2019, 3.9% of the Department's workforce identify as Aboriginal people.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2019 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.30%	7.20%
Teachers	3.30%	2.90%

Note 1 – The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014–17 introduced an aspirational target of 1.8% by 2021 for each of the sector's salary bands. If the aspirational target of 1.8% is achieved in salary bands not currently at or above 1.8%, the cumulative representation of Aboriginal employees in the sector is expected to reach 3.3%.

Note 2 – Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice.

Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and departmental priorities.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2019 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	172,599
Revenue	709,964
Appropriation	561,274
Grants and contributions	146,256
Investment income	2,434
Expenses	-645,588
Employee related	-567,358
Operating expenses	-78,229
Surplus / deficit for the year	64,376

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Financial summary - Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2019 Approved SBA (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	476,820
Base - Per Capita	16,894
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	459,279
Other Total	24,678
Grand Total	501,498

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

As an Environmental Education Centre, there is no parent or community body to survey satisfaction levels. Visiting teachers are surveyed at the conclusion of each educational fieldwork program in an attempt to gain feedback on the suitability of the program, delivery by EEC teaching staff, achievement of curriculum outcomes and whether the teacher would recommend that program to others. This information is utilised by EEC teaching staff to guide program evaluation and improvement.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all Departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. Principals are responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. All schools have an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers address the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. Principals are responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.