

2020 Annual Report

Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2020 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, including equity funding.

School contact details

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School vision

School Vision

Learning and working together for a more sustainable future.

School Motto

Enabling environmental citizens by building their capacity to act more sustainably through learning in the environment.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centre Vision

Leading environmental education to empower learners for a sustainable future.

School context

The Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre (RNPEEC) is located in the Royal National Park, in the Sutherland Shire, southeast of Sydney. We facilitate programs at our centre, throughout the Royal National Park, in other reserves and in schools.

RNPEEC provides authentic, curriculum-based fieldwork experiences which enable students to explore, investigate and understand the natural and human environments. Students are immersed in nature through hands-on inquiry learning.

The centre also provides sustainability support, student leadership initiatives and curriculum based in-school programs.

The centre is one of 25 Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) in the NSW Department of Education. The Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre actively collaborates across this network to set directions for planning, curriculum development, student engagement, professional learning and sustainability education.

The centre works in partnership with local schools and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) with Aboriginal Education programs.

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>

Strategic Direction 1

Empower learners

Purpose

To develop students' environmental knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in creating environmentally literate citizens. Provide engaging and stimulating learning environments that empower learners to inquire and think critically.

Improvement Measures

Student and teacher evaluation data indicating positive knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards the environment.

Students' use of inquiry learning is increased.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Engaging students in sustainability through student leadership, citizen science and skill building programs.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>During semester 2 students have been supported through a range of sustainability themed incursions and aspects of excursions have been modified. Five green teams have been supported with their vegetable gardens, compost and/or worm farm management.</p> <p>COVID-19 had a significant impact on progress in the planned processes in 2020. With restricted access to schools and students our focus has been redirected more to supporting learning. Following our review we have concluded that there is still further work to be done in the areas of student leadership and sustainability skill development.</p> <p>We will continue to make links and promote citizen science programs where appropriate throughout our fieldwork and in-school programs, but are not likely to prioritise building programs around these initiatives. AUSMAP was run with two groups this year for Investigating Science and Earth and Environmental Science.</p> <p>Aspects of this process will be incorporated into the 2021-2024 SIP as part of Strategic Direction of Wellbeing. There will be a concentration on sustainability delivery through the Kitchen Gardens and EcoSchools programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School and Community Funds (\$4000.00) <p>Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional learning (\$800.00)

Process 2: Subject specific inquiry

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>Through 2020 we have incorporated subject specific inquiry in all new programs developed. This has included online learning, incursions and fieldwork programs.</p> <p>We have reviewed our achievements with this process. Inquiry questions are incorporated into program descriptions on our school website and available to both participating teachers and our teaching staff through booking information sheets. Our teaching programs demonstrate a clear connection between inquiry questions and planned activities. High school worksheets explicitly include the inquiry question before the task/s undertaken. This clarity has enabled our teaching staff to ensure that the KLA specific inquiry drives our program delivery throughout the day.</p> <p>We feel we have more than adequately achieved this process. It will continue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School and Community Funds (\$5000.00) <p>Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional learning (\$2000.00)

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

to be a part of our program development and delivery culture, but it will not be included in the 2021-2024 Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP).

Next Steps

In the 2021-2024 Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) the focus on improving student learning will encompass aspects of:

- wellbeing
- caring for students



This student is engaging with nature to develop an ephemeral artwork.

Strategic Direction 2

Develop teacher capacity

Purpose

To develop staff capacity as learners, teachers and leaders in environmental and sustainability education. This will be achieved through participation in, and the provision of, explicit professional learning and fieldwork that improves teaching practice.

Improvement Measures

The range of programs our teachers are skilled in has increased.

An increase in the number of targeted professional learning sessions designed and delivered.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Teaching staff actively pursue current expert content knowledge.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>We have reviewed the process of 'Developing teacher capacity' through staff actively pursuing expert content knowledge. This process, though valuable, falls short of the overall development of teaching staff that has occurred through 2020.</p> <p>There have been opportunities to learn directly from colleagues and develop skills in the delivery of incursions. We have also worked collaboratively to develop and refine skills across the Google platform, constructing Google Sites and Situ 360 tours.</p> <p>Building teacher capacity will continue into 2021-2024 SIP as part of Strategic Direction of Explicit Teaching. Developing teachers will have a direct impact on student learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School and Community Funds (\$4500.00) <p>Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional learning (\$1500.00)

Process 2: Staff are provided with opportunities to share their learning with colleagues.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>We have reviewed the process of 'Developing teacher capacity' through staff sharing their knowledge with colleagues. It started well with the implementation of professional learning reflection, which included a plan for how to share this professional learning with colleagues. A range of teaching staff participated and facilitated activities at the statewide EZEC Conference.</p> <p>This process has been restricted to permanent and temporary teachers this year and has not had the desired impact of building capacity across the casual teaching staff due to disruption and restrictions in numbers. We have not had many casual teachers supporting programs this year. Due to COVID-19 there was no opportunity to participate in mid-year face to face professional learning program.</p> <p>There have been opportunities to share learning on use of different platforms, including video conferences. Rich professional exchanges and mentoring in Google Sites, Situ 360 and Google Tour Builder have enhanced teacher skills and provided high quality student learning resources.</p> <p>Building teacher capacity will continue into 2021-2024 SIP as part of Strategic Direction of Explicit Teaching. Developing teachers will have a direct impact on student learning. Teachers will continue to evaluate the impact of professional learning and reflect on ways of sharing this with colleagues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School and Community Funds (\$4000.00) <p>Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional learning (\$1000.00)

Next Steps

In the 2021-2024 Strategic Improvement Plan one improvement focus will be on explicit teaching, encompassing aspects of:

- effective classroom practice
- formative and summative assessment
- data use in planning
- collaboration and feedback

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May. During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

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
School Administration and Support Staff	1.19

*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, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2020, 3.7% of the Department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2020 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.30%	6.30%
Teachers	3.30%	2.80%

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.

In 2020, an additional School Development Day was included at the start of Term 2 to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, such as online and remote learning.

We employed 2 temporary teachers in a shared 1.0FTE role throughout the year. They were maintained during the COVID-19 shut down, despite restrictions on teaching.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2020 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	158,704
Revenue	488,287
Appropriation	459,581
Sale of Goods and Services	-361
Grants and contributions	28,496
Investment income	572
Expenses	-518,150
Employee related	-501,445
Operating expenses	-16,705
Surplus / deficit for the year	-29,863
Closing Balance	128,841

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.

We retained a school-funded temporary position 1.0 FTE throughout 2020, which was to be covered by student fees. Due to COVID-19 we had a reduced number of participating students. When excursions and in-school programs recommenced in Terms 3 and 4 group sizes were reduced to comply with NSW Public Health Orders.

In support of families from participating schools we reduced our student fee from \$9 to \$4 as many families were under COVID-19 induced economic hardship.

Financial summary - Equity loadings

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

	2020 Approved SBA (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	443,981
Base - Per Capita	14,430
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	429,550
Other Total	10,600
Grand Total	454,581

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.



Student environmental leaders decorated bags during EcoSchools training

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

All participating teachers were provided with an opportunity for a post program evaluation. A total of 54 teachers provided formal feedback. Following are samples of teacher responses to the questions:

How did the program enhance student learning and contribute to learning outcomes?

Through hands on inquiry, exploration and use of equipment in a novel environment. Students were extremely engaged.

Fieldwork allowed students to see first-hand the effect of microplastics. Methodology/process was outlined clearly.

It linked well with the science unit that we are learning about this year. It also provided students with a great depth of knowledge about what they can do to help animals that are affected by the bushfires that directly links with the STEM project that they will be participating in.

The variety of experiences were very engaging and spiralled their learning. The lesson also catered for individuals.

It made the students think about the consequences of leaving rubbish around and how it ends up in the ocean.

All students were positively engaged throughout the day in activities involving critical thinking and hands on experiences related to our unit of living things

.....the practical hands on experiences were invaluable. The children were excited and engaged in their learning.

Teachers knew the content and how to engage students with it.

Students were given the freedom to explore and discover more about their own school grounds.

Students gathered an understanding of Aboriginal culture and lifestyles through this program.

The students were all very engaged and interested. Program was suitable for all capabilities.

Gave them real life experiences

The students were highly engaged and the key messages were simple and repeated.

Authentic and meaningful connections to syllabus content.

Hands-on engagement. Students were able to experience the process of converting energy to electricity. They were able to visualise that process too. Students are engaged in activities where they could be curious and explore forces/energy.

Built upon knowledge the students already had and helped them connect to other areas of learning.

Consolidated the learning that they had been doing in the classroom and gave them hands on and real life experiences.

Activities were interesting, gave students opportunities to contribute and work together to complete activities and reflect.

Exposed them to new processes and environmental thinking.

Better understanding of CAPA and art elements. Supporting knowledge of environment and how to use what we have already in our environment to up-cycle something new, like art.

It covered Sustainable living; local Indigenous area/culture; art-creating/critical thinking; just to name a few.

OPTIONAL - Please make a comment about your environmental education teacher

Teachers were wonderful with students (and staff). We look forward to coming again

..... was very welcoming when we arrived. Both Sue and Laura were very knowledgeable and engaged well with the children. All staff encountered were friendly and went out of their way to assist staff.

.....was fabulous, she had a wealth of knowledge and her kind and calm nature ensured all students were involved in the learning experience.

Very supportive. Calm manner.

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.



Nature photography incursion inspires students to compose engaging images.