

2020 Annual Report

Brewongle Environmental Education Centre



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2020 is provided to the community of Brewongle 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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Message from the principal

2020 was a challenging year for Brewongle EEC as it was for the world. The year began with the continuation of devastating bushfires in the region, followed by a minor flood for the Hawkesbury River which inundated half of our river block. If this was not enough of a challenge, we then faced the problems of a national shutdown during the Covid 19 crisis. Brewongle staff rose to the occasion and all developed skills to enable them to work from home and utilise the array of G-suite software to design learning tasks. A tremendous amount of support for schools was created in a very short time. This included a vast array of online learning and a social media campaign to assist the learning from home phase. The success of this and our Environmental and Zoo Education Centre (EZEC) network support earned us a Secretary's Award for Excellence. Much grateful feedback was received from schools. Our resources were even spotted on an ABC news report being used in Melbourne by a student and family.

Brewongle also participated in the Catalyst Lab innovation program with the EZEC network. This intensive process produced some interesting insights into how the EZEC network could assist schools in the area of wellbeing. During term 4 we provided the perfect wellbeing program for schools - "Get Outdoors" was fully booked and received rave reviews by students and staff who attended from visiting schools. The design process of the Catalyst Lab also provided the foundation for our own Situational Analysis.

We received a Sustainable Schools grant in 2020. This grant was utilised to revamp our composting, gardens and helped to design some new programs for stage 1 students around kitchen gardens.

After 4 years of negotiations and waiting, our cabin upgrade was finally started and by the end of the year we had two new student cabins that included higher ceilings, larger floor space, better insulation, an outside deck and awning as well as new student stretcher beds to replace the previous floor sleeping mats. We also constructed a new awning over the camp eating area to allow for larger groups to stay undercover in wet weather.

Brewongle spent considerable time in discussions with our partners on our future school plan. We held focus groups with Brewongle staff, teachers, students, the Darug community, local councils, the United Nations RCE and Western Sydney University. These provided valuable insights for our Situational Analysis and have dictated our planned innovations into the future.

By the end of the year, we were still impacted with Covid 19 restrictions, but were looking forward to returning to 'normal' business in 2021.

I would personally like to thank all the amazing students and teachers who visited our site during the year and our talented, dedicated, passionate and skilful teaching and support staff that make every student feel known, valued and cared for when they visit Brewongle EEC.

Steven Body

School vision

To connect every learner to the natural world and inspire change for a sustainable future.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centre (EZEC) Network vision: Leading environmental education to empower learners for a sustainable future.

School context

Brewongle Environmental Education Centre is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres supported by the NSW Department of Education. We are located in the forest above the majestic Hawkesbury river at Sackville North, NSW on Darug Country.

The Centre supports schools with curriculum implementation and wellbeing across a range of subjects with an emphasis on sustainability and environmental values. Student centred /inquiry based learning techniques form the basis of our hands on, authentic learning programs. We offer teachers and students pre and post excursion tasks to provide context and extend the learning beyond the field trip experience. We offer both day and camp programs for students from K-12 and work with many outside agencies to achieve excellence in our program delivery.

By building strong multi-sectoral partnerships and developing teacher capacity, Brewongle enables schools to create sustainable futures; integrating sustainability education into all aspects of school operations including curriculum, teaching and learning, physical surroundings and relationships with the local community.



Under the wisdom tree at Brewongle EEC

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. 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.

Our self-assessment 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>

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2020 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Excelling
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Reporting	Excelling
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Excelling
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Excelling
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Excelling
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Excelling
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 to create environmentally literate citizens. This is accomplished through providing engaging and stimulating learning environments. These environments empower learners to think and communicate creatively, collaboratively and critically to connect to nature and achieve positive environmental impact. Brewongle EEC programs will align to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Improvement Measures

Brewongle EEC will implement an assessment program that will measure student achievement. This will be measured by increased environmental literacy, improved curriculum outcomes.

Existing infrastructure through targeted planning to support our aims of igniting curiosity, wonder and knowledge of the natural world and our interactions within these environments as evidenced by student surveys.

Brewongle EEC teaching programs will utilise best practice and research, be designed based on syllabus outcomes and regularly revised to ensure delivery of our aims.

Overall summary of progress

All the above improvement measures have been achieved.

We have designed, implemented and tested an assessment program to measure student achievement in a number of popular programs and this online template is now ready to be utilised in other curriculum programs.

An infrastructure plan has been developed, with a cost vs benefit analysis carried out on all planned spending. The impact on student learning is assessed to prioritise projects.

Brewongle teaching programs are extremely dynamic, this was highlighted during the learning from home period when we received the Secretaries award for Excellence for our new online learning resources.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Training and implementation of a strategic project to assess student learning that is linked to the scope and sequence of Brewongle Programs

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
Brewongle EEC has trialed a digital assessment task that provides data on student improvement in knowledge and skills as a result of completing a Brewongle program. Assessment needs to be able to be completed on an iPad during the course of excursion to Brewongle EEC. Staff have iterated and improved after trial in 2020 ready to adapt to further programs in 2021 and beyond.	Teaching staff to complete during any downtime or office days.

Process 2: Targeted approach to improving infrastructure to support teaching and learning.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
That Brewongle EEC has a targeted, consultative infrastructure plan for the future to assist teaching and learning that is constantly revised and updated as needed.	

Process 3: Designing a scope and sequence summary of BEEC programs that supports a learning pathway for each KLA.

Evaluation	Funds Expended
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Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Evaluation

(Resources)

Have we completed a scope and sequence to ensure continuity of learning across stage groups and subject areas?

Next Steps

Into the future we need to continue to include assessment tasks in more popular curriculum programs - using the template created as a base. Targeted infrastructure is an ongoing priority and is a feature of the next school plan to ensure innovation and future focused thinking continues. Teaching programs will need to be constantly revised - with a focus on content and wellbeing elements over the next years.

Strategic Direction 2

Develop Teacher Capacity

Purpose

To improve student outcomes through a formalised professional learning program at Brewongle EEC. Strategic Direction 2 will focus on internal staff growth with the development of a program to foster quality teaching. Additionally a structured, directed professional development program for teachers in schools and others in the wider community will be implemented. This will be measured by increased environmental literacy for teachers and students, external and internal evaluations, collegial sharing and reflective practice.

Improvement Measures

Brewongle EEC staff will utilise lesson evaluations, staff reflections, learning journals and pre and post student quizzes to measure improvements in teaching against the teaching standards.

Regular sharing will occur with meetings and a program of professional learning for all staff written into our school calendar and linked to PDP's and School plan.

Brewongle EEC will measure Improvement in targeted teaching standards by individual staff over a three year period by self reflection and lesson observations by colleagues.

Overall summary of progress

Quality teaching rounds were trialled and implemented during 2018-2019. Permanent staff found value in the process. Temporary staff did not embrace the process as much as permanent staff, and as a result we have a modified version of Quality Teaching Rounds to implement in 2021.

Covid 19 highlighted the need for regular professional learning and sharing. This was completed via Zoom meetings and when possible, face to face learning. Staff were up skilled in the use of G-suite software to enable the design on effective online teaching resources for students. PDP's. are written and linked to the school plan and teaching standards.

Lesson observations did not occur in 2020 due to Covid 19 restrictions, but are planned for 2021.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Develop a formalised structure within Brewongle EEC for professional sharing, learning, collaborating and improving teaching practice that is linked to the school plan and individual Performance Development Plan's.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
Principal has synthesised staff feedback and created a structured program for the future for new and existing staff	

Process 2: Develop the capacity of external teachers in other schools through the provision of explicit professional learning that improves teaching practice resulting in the development of environmental citizens.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
Brewongle EEC has a planned TPL calendar ready to advertise and roll out in 2021. This calendar has been developed based on needs and consultation with school community	Principal to complete

Next Steps

The school needs to implement the new formal plan for internal professional learning during 2021. This will need to be adjusted based on feedback and collaboration with staff. Continued forward planning will be required to meet the professional learning needs of external teachers.

Student information

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, we were only able to host excursions early in term 1 and for terms 3 and 4. Camping programs were only able to recommence in term 4, however most schools had cancelled their bookings and opted for our Day Camp program.

Overall visitation numbers were down by about two thirds of our numbers from 2019. Professional Learning events were unable to be held due to Covid 19 restrictions.

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.

Brewongle EEC experienced a marked drop in attendance due to Covid 19 restrictions. Please see the figures in the attached table.

67 schools attended the site bringing 3896 students from K-12. This was down from nearly 10,000 students in 2019.

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.

TOTALS BY TERM	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	TOTAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE	TOTAL ATTENDANCE (Inc. TPL)	DAYS VISITED	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	OTHER (TPL)	ONSITE	OFFSITE
1	9	760	760	13	0	111	117	422	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	19	1217	1217	19	273	519	97	199	0	129	0	19	0
4	39	1999	1999	43	73	601	516	168	190	93	0	36	3
YEARLY TOTALS	67	3896	3896	75	346	1231	730	789	190	222	0	64	3

2020 visitation numbers

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.

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	88,867
Revenue	563,725
Appropriation	457,988
Sale of Goods and Services	3,000
Grants and contributions	102,676
Investment income	62
Expenses	-612,628
Employee related	-524,817
Operating expenses	-87,811
Surplus / deficit for the year	-48,903
Closing Balance	39,964

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.

The deficit for 2020 was due mainly to staff expenses incurred during the Covid 19 period. Brewongle was unable to host excursions from 16th March until 20th July 2020. Casual and temporary teaching positions are mostly funded from income received from visiting schools and these wages were still payed, despite a lack of income. Usual yearly income was reduced to less than half the figure that was received in 2019. Brewongle received no support from central funding to cover these Covid related staff costs. As a result of this extra staff spending scheduled infrastructure spending was put on hold.

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	429,607
Base - Per Capita	14,430
Base - Location	324
Base - Other	414,853
Other Total	12,393
Grand Total	442,000

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

Due to Covid 19 disruptions we did not collect as many student and teacher evaluations as in a normal year. Our online learning program received the Secretary's Award for excellence and below are some of the comments from schools that visited or used our resources in 2020.

Comments on virtual Biology excursion resource:

It was overall an interesting and new experience. However, some of the data could not be collected as we could not gain the data physically at the site. Gaining data for the other activities (such as vegetation height and structure) that worked were relevant and fun!

I felt as though some of the activities were hard to navigate and often I found myself wondering what I was supposed to be doing (so maybe a worked example or a guide would have been helpful).

Day visit student comments:

The teachers were quite knowledgeable and tasks such as finding species in the boxes and measuring abiotic factors were quite interesting and different.

Activities were well made and simple to follow, fun, and interactive. Although I felt that I didn't get enough information for the results for the post-visit questions. I needed to research them myself to answer.

It was fun to travel to a different place and take in the scenery of the bush however the activities that we performed were interesting but no high concentration was needed.

Principal comment on the 'Get Outdoors' program:

Thank you for your email. You have provided our students and staff with respite from what has been a challenging year and an opportunity to be together in an alternative setting to strengthen the bonds that have been weakened by the restrictions brought on by the pandemic. Both the students and the staff spoke very highly of their experiences.

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.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, Brewongle EEC was not able to deliver any of our usual teacher cultural professional learning courses. However, we did complete a Reconciliation Action Plan ready to implement in 2020 and we engaged in wide consultation with the Darug community during our Situational Analysis for the new school plan.

Our commitment to Aboriginal Education and integrating culture into all that we do is still strong and ongoing and Brewongle EEC prides itself as a leader in implementing cultural education in schools.

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.

Other School Programs (optional)

In collaboration with the Environmental and Zoo Education Centre (EZEC) network we designed a wide array of online resources to help students negotiate the learning from home period during Covid 19. These resources received the Secretaries Award for school excellence.

At Brewongle EEC we also focused on student, family and community wellbeing during the pandemic with a much valued social media Wellness campaign. This was aimed at helping people to venture outside and improve wellbeing and nature connections.

During Term 4 we changed our focus to helping schools through another wellbeing program - "Get Outdoors". This program was booked out in term 4 and we introduced many students to kayaking, campfires, bushwalking and the benefits of being outside.