

2021 Annual Report

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre



5458

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2021 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 Strategic Improvement 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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School vision

Discover, Investigate, Learn is the vision for **Awabakal Environmental Education Centre** and **Wetlands Environmental Education Centre**. These principles guide all learning in our two schools.

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.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centres NSW (EZEC)

Leading environmental education for a sustainable future. **Awabakal Environmental Education Centre** and **Wetlands Environmental Education Centre** form part of the **Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC)** network across NSW.

School context

Awabakal Environmental Education Centre (established 1975) located at Dudley and **Wetlands Environmental Education Centre** (established 1986) located at the Hunter Wetlands Centre Shortland, are two of the 25 Environmental Education Centres and Zoo Education Centres operated 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 services provided to locations across NSW. Students from all school sectors are accommodated.

Each year approximately 15000 students benefit from educational programs and activities provided by Awabakal Environmental Education Centre and Wetlands Environmental Education Centre. Visiting students are able to access 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 Awabakal Environmental Education Centre and 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.

Awabakal EEC and Wetlands EEC do 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.

In 2020, our school undertook a comprehensive situational analysis and have identified the need for a continued emphasis on embedding quality teaching practices. Using high impact teaching strategies will provide opportunities to improve teaching practice and ensure students achieve growth and attainment in learning. This will be achieved through highly effective and engaging learning opportunities for all students and through staff collaboration. Support for students and teachers in schools will be expanded to engage students in sustainability education pre and post excursion. There will also be a strong focus on the development of incursion programs for schools as well as supporting student learning in other locations.

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 Strategic Improvement Plan and annual report.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our Strategic Improvement 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	2021 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Delivering
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
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: Student growth and attainment as environmental citizens

Purpose

In order to maximise student learning opportunities and outcomes, our school will focus on data driven teaching practices using a range of quality teaching elements that engage students and assist growth.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- Quality Teaching
- Pre and post excursion opportunities

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

School support allocation (principal support): \$17,000.00

Summary of progress

Embedded Professional Learning has supported teachers in refining teaching pedagogy. Further opportunity for face-to-face teaching is required to allow teachers to fully embrace the elements from professional learning. Data from visiting teachers and students is required to analyse the impact of this activity. Teachers have taken the opportunity of implementing the Quality Teaching Model by coding learning tasks in place of lessons.

The school was able to pivot during 2021 to support student learning and assist teachers by the development of a comprehensive suite of resources which were available via the Learning from Home Hub. These resources were designed to compliment virtual fieldwork experiences which were made available during the lock-down period. Evidence supported engagement with these resources pre and post virtual learning experience. Further resources pre and post are required across all educational programs and the data to indicate student engagement.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Teaching staff have been engaged in professional discussion during twilight sessions with a focus on ' <i>What Works Best</i> ' and other high quality resources. Quality Teaching Rounds have taken place for permanent and temporary staff. Planning for interschool QTR has commenced for 2022. Teaching and Learning programs have begun to be evaluated and improved to ensure the QT elements are evident to guide teaching pedagogy.	Staff have participated in twilight professional learning sessions in order to maintain and improve practice. The <i>What Works Best</i> documents were the focus of these sessions with topics covered integrated into teaching practice. Quality Teaching Rounds were postponed till 2022 due to COVID restrictions halting all excursions for a considerable part of the year. Staff received training and development on the Quality Teaching Model, Quality Teaching Rounds and Coding of tasks against the QT model in partnership with the QT Academy at the University of Newcastle. Program evaluation and improvement has begun with the inclusion of the QT elements where apparent to guide teaching pedagogy.
Staff have worked collaboratively to begin the process of investigating, developing and implementing educational resources to support schools pre and post excursion. Google sites have begun to be developed which will include resources and guidance for teachers, pre and post learning for students, support to prepare and build on learning from the	The development of a Google site for every educational program has begun. Each Google site is designed to provide pre and post excursion support. These sites contain individualised resources and support material to assist teachers and students while providing extension opportunities.

excursion. Every educational program will eventually have a dedicated Google site to support it.

Strategic Direction 2: Innovative Practice

Purpose

In order to achieve excellence and develop engaging sustainability education programs for students, we will be developing and integrating innovative products and practice.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- Incursion program development and implementation
- Sustainability program expansion

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

School support allocation (principal support): \$7,000.00

Summary of progress

During 2021, adjustments were made to deliver priorities contained in the Strategic Improvement Plan while operating in a period of uncertainty and restrictions on core business. Significant progress was made on activities planned to enhance learning opportunities for students, teachers, and schools.

The investigation and development of incursion programs to be rolled out has begun. These educational programs now need to be trialed with feedback sought before further improvement and expansion to other stages of learning.

The concept of sustainability learning being taken closer to schools and in other locations has begun. Following investigations, a multi-site program has been developed for trial. Following a trial feedback will be sought before further expansion can occur.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Staff have investigated incursion opportunities offered by partner EEC's for consideration in the development of appropriate programs for our school. Staff have begun the process of incursion program development which will then be trialed in schools and feedback sought from teachers and students.	Staff have investigated incursion opportunities and begun the development of programs. One incursion was to be trialed but this was postponed due to COVID restrictions. Further incursion development and trials will occur in 2022. Feedback will be sought for further improvement where necessary.
Staff have investigated new locations and opportunities to develop fieldwork programs for Hunter students. The programs are being developed following consultation with local teachers to determine the needs of their school and students closer to their location.	The ability to take sustainability education programs to locations closer to schools has been investigated during the year. One comprehensive program which can be delivered in a variety of locations has been developed and will be trialed now that restrictions have been lifted. Once feedback has been gathered from this trial further remote programs will be investigated and developed.
Development of a new post program survey to gather feedback from school staff regarding the incursion program or other activity they have engaged in.	As the incursion trials were unable to take place, feedback was not able to be collated. Once the trials of incursions have occurred the data will be evaluated.

Attendance

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 2020. 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.

Attendance figures in 2021 were calculated differently to align with the third edition of ACARA's National Standards for Student Attendance Data and Reporting. Changes include treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half day absence (instead of their actual value, calculated as a proportion of a nominal 6-hour day) and covers all weeks during Semester 1. Prior to 2021, the final week of Term 2 was excluded.

Furthermore, the Department implemented an automated attendance feed (AAF) system in Semester 1 2021. AAF transfers data automatically from third-party attendance management systems to the Department's centralised data warehouse every night. The AAF has significantly improved data quality in 2021, which has affected data comparability with previous years.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2021, COVID-19 continued to affect student attendance. Analysis of attendance codes showed a change in the structure of absence reasons in 2021.

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, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2021, 4.3% of the Department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2021 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.30%	4.40%
Teachers	3.30%	3.20%

Note 1 - The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025 takes a career pathway approach in that it sets an ambitious target of 3% Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025.

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 2021 to 31 December 2021. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2021 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	231,955
Revenue	624,588
Appropriation	555,125
Grants and contributions	69,178
Investment income	285
Expenses	-591,844
Employee related	-496,111
Operating expenses	-95,733
Surplus / deficit for the year	32,744
Closing Balance	264,698

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.

	2021 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	505,660
Base - Per Capita	17,749
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	487,264
Other Total	26,467
Grand Total	532,127

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

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre does not have an enrolled student body.

Visiting teachers and students complete an evaluation following participation in a fieldwork education program with the school. This data provides feedback for school staff and assists with 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.

Aboriginal Education - School statement

The school embraces and supports Aboriginal education with perspectives evident in all teaching programs.

Anti-Racism Policy

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

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers are responsible for addressing the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. The Principal is 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.