

2021 Annual Report

Wambangalang Environmental Education Centre

WAMBANGALANG



Environmental Education Centre

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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2021 is provided to the community of Wambangalang 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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Message from the principal

While 2021 was an inconsistent year for Wambangalang EEC due to COVID-19 restrictions and staffing changes, it provided our teaching staff with amazing opportunities to support local and distant schools across NSW during periods of learning from home. This support came in the form of free online lessons, Zoom conferences, Video productions, Google classroom activities, and contributions to the state-wide Learning From Home lessons. Our staff gained valuable skills in utilising modern technologies to prepare learning materials and connect with students over long distances, resulting in amazingly positive feedback from students, schools and their communities.

Our leadership team successfully migrated our resource and administrative databases to the cloud, with full Microsoft Teams and Google Drive integration allowing for greater collaboration and flexibility in working from home or other sites.

Late in 2021 our centre was able to again welcome students to our site for excursions, with schools heavily focussing on wellbeing support and giving students opportunities to engage with the great outdoors after so many weeks of housebound lockdown.

School vision

We support students, teachers and the wider community in enjoying, understanding and respectfully sustaining human and natural environments. Our innovative programs provide students with opportunities to reflect on and understand their role within healthy ecosystems. We support the development of culturally inclusive young leaders and we provide students with opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and technology skills, enhancing and transforming environmental studies. Our centre is a hub through which community groups can engage with students and staff from local schools.

School context

Wambangalang Environmental Education Centre (WEEC) is a Department of Education school located on the outskirts of Dubbo, within the broader natural and cultural landscape of Central Western NSW. The land is under the traditional custodianship of the Wiradjuri people. WEEC is set on 12.5ha and is a small dynamic school, within a travelling stock route reserve consisting of a regenerating endangered ecological community of box gum grassy woodland.

Through school bookings, students in K-12 from both government and non-government schools can access the school's programs which aim to inspire young people to experience and connect with the environment at an appropriate level:

1. We support students to live within, appreciate and enjoy the environment.
2. We help students understand how the environment works.
3. We guide students through the process of making a difference at home, at school, or in the community to help sustain our natural environments.

Our school achieves this through the provision of high quality experiential field work and environmental and sustainability education programs for K-12 school students at excursion locations including our school, Macquarie River, Macquarie Marshes, Turtle Rock or through incursion and outreach programs. The capacity of our teachers and those within our local schools as leaders in environmental education are developed through the provision of high expectations and high quality professional learning programs.

Our community includes our patron school students, parents and staff, our local AECG representatives and local Aboriginal Elders, local community groups and professionals who collaborate on specific initiatives and local citizens, some of whom allow us to utilise their land for fieldwork projects.

Our school has undergone a rigorous situational analysis to identify areas of improvement, which has guided the development of the 2021-2014 Strategic Improvement Plan. Our two high-impact strategic directions focus on lifting our ability to support our educational community, specifically by:

- Enriching curriculum delivery and refining administration processes through technology integration.
- Developing innovative new teaching and learning programs, focussing on environmental science and sustainability.
- Embedding strong evaluative practices that allow our staff to responsively support student growth and development.

Wambangalang EEC lies within a network of 25 NSW Department of Education Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZECs) who collaborate as leaders in environmental and sustainability education. The network has a shared vision of "Leading Environmental education for a sustainable future". Our Centres work collaboratively to provide authentic, curriculum-based learning experiences that enable students to explore, investigate and understand our natural and made environments. Our programs provide opportunities to empower learners to become environmentally responsible citizens.

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 Strategic Improvement Plan and annual report. Every four 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 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/school-excellence>

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2021 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Delivering
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Delivering
LEARNING: Curriculum	Delivering
LEARNING: Assessment	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Delivering
TEACHING: Learning and development	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Educational leadership	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Delivering
LEADING: School resources	Delivering
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Sustaining and Growing

Strategic Direction 1: Innovative Practice

Purpose

In order to ensure our students authentically engage with their environment and plan for its future, we will develop innovative new teaching and learning programs that are rich in opportunities for students to utilise modern technologies.

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.

- Innovative Teaching and Learning Programs
- Innovative Technology Integration

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning: \$1,500.00

Eco Schools Grant: \$2,374.00

Summary of progress

Despite significant inhibiting factors related to COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions, our school has seen an increase in booking rates throughout 2021. Our staff have engaged in professional learning to support the expert use of new technology infrastructure including staff and student iPads, Main Learning Displays (MLDs) and digital microscopes, with improved integration and practice evident in all relevant partner school engagements. School administrative systems have been enhanced through a full cloud migration to Microsoft Teams and the development of internal digital management practices that ensure our school site is well maintained and enhancing learning opportunities. A new feedback survey has been trialled and implemented in Term Three to ensure partner schools are providing our centre with constructive feedback, with 85% of partner school staff rating our programs at 5/5 and 15% at 4/5 regarding our ability to meet the aims of our engagement with schools.

Our staff have successfully identified, prioritised and trialled new sustainability programs in the areas of Kitchen Gardening, Sustainable Fishing and Environmental Connections with overwhelmingly positive feedback from partner schools despite setbacks and postponements due to COVID-19 restrictions. All staff have engaged in professional learning with other Environmental Education Centre leaders who have been running similar programs, and our programs are now ready for implementation in 2022, with Kitchen Gardening limited to one local school in 2022 due to complexity, with an aim to expanding to 5 schools in 2023. Community consultation has led to several partnerships with external agencies enthusiastic in supporting sustainability education, including Ozfish, the DPI, TWPZoo, Ozharvest, Inland Waterways and Healthy Rivers. Communication with local partner schools has highlighted an interest in a "Drones in environmental education" incursion workshop, to be further investigated in 2022.

Our staff have successfully explored, trialled and prioritised new technology integration opportunities including the use of digital microscopes, MLDs, iPads, Microsoft Teams, Zoom virtual lessons and online classrooms (Google Classrooms and Google Sites). During 2021 COVID-19 lockdown restrictions our staff coordinated 30+ virtual lessons with feedback from all sessions being immensely positive, and partner school staff noting that our engagements were sustaining student wellbeing and supporting staff professional learning in online delivery. Our staff expertly adapted to online learning by contributing to the NSW Guided Learning Packages with videos and lessons on environmental education, and by directly supporting local schools through online classroom activities. This success has demonstrated that our centre is ready to implement online classroom pre and post workshop support sooner than previously thought, with a new possibility of supporting schools beyond our physical reach through online learning environments.

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
Technology infrastructure is accessible to staff and students. Opportunities to enhance learning and service delivery through the effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High quality technology infrastructure in the form of iPads, MLDs and a 360 camera is completely accessible to staff and students.• Significant opportunities to enhance learning and service delivery have been identified and trialled, with several practices becoming consistently embedded.

use of technology are identified.	
New sustainability programs identified, prioritised and trialled, including community consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through community consultation, new sustainability programs have been identified, prioritised and trialled in the areas of Kitchen Gardens and Sustainable Fishing.
Technology integration options explored, trialled and prioritised including collaboration with partner schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several highly effective technology integration options have been explored and trialled through collaboration with partner schools with Google classroom support and video media production and integration being prioritised based on demand and positive feedback.

Strategic Direction 2: Evaluative Practice

Purpose

In order to support the continuous cycle of teaching and learning improvement, we will embed rigorous evaluative practices that promote evidence-based decision making.

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.

- Embedding Evaluative Practice

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning: \$1,500.00

Summary of progress

Our school was able to quickly adapt to support students learning from home, and this provided us with a remarkable opportunity to trial several online assessment strategies including formal assessment of learning and engaging environmental trivia competitions. Unanimous positive feedback from our partner school staff has focussed our attention on the need to provide students and staff with useful feedback on their learning. By the end of 2021 our staff have embedded several forms of assessment in our online and face-to-face teaching and learning programs. Due to cancellations and postponements of many face-to-face bookings in Terms 3 and 4, opportunities to utilise these assessments has been limited. A return of single day excursions late in the year resulted in a strong student wellbeing focus and a low priority placed on assessment and feedback within bookings. Professional learning opportunities have enabled our staff to better select assessment strategies for each appropriate program, however, a postponement of embedded assessments and formal program evaluations has extended our evaluative practice timeline.

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Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Assessment within WEEC workshops is trialled, including systems for data collection.	• Several assessment formats within online workshops and within online pre and post program support resources have been trialled, with data collection systems being highly effective. Assessment within face-to-face workshops has been significantly postponed.
25% of teaching programs incorporate appropriate assessment of student knowledge, understanding and skills.	• While a majority of online workshops include appropriate formal assessment and more than 25% of face-to-face workshops include informal assessment methods, there is room for improvement in our strategic use of assessment to provide students with the most meaningful feedback.
25% of teaching programs undergo intensive formal evaluation using staff feedback and assessment data.	• Due to COVID-19 restrictions, by the end of 2021 our staff have been unable to complete 3 or more bookings of the same Environmental Science or Sustainability program to allow for a reliable set of assessment data to be utilised in formal evaluations. Our staff have established practices for undertaking reflective curriculum meetings based on partner school staff feedback, leading to effective improvements to school grounds and classroom resources.

Student information

Wambangalang EEC does not have a permanent school enrolment and so cannot comment in this area.

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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
School Administration and Support Staff	1.22

*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	113,728
Revenue	536,855
Appropriation	475,954
Sale of Goods and Services	2,529
Grants and contributions	58,243
Investment income	128
Expenses	-485,496
Employee related	-364,056
Operating expenses	-121,440
Surplus / deficit for the year	51,359
Closing Balance	165,087

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	437,476
Base - Per Capita	14,791
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	422,038
Other Total	27,478
Grand Total	464,954

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

Our staff gather feedback from students, visiting staff, school executives and community members through formal feedback surveys, observations of students, and professional conversations with colleagues.

Student Engagement:

Student engagement within WEEC programs remains extremely high with unanimously positive feedback from students and visiting staff throughout 2021. Team teaching and internal observations of WEEC staff teaching practice allows for a more objective view of student engagement, with professional conversations and formal Performance and Development Framework engagement allowing for the celebration of great successes and the fine tuning of individual teacher student engagement strategies, allowing us to maintain a culture of high expectations across all school bookings.

Visiting School Staff Feedback:

All school engagements are now accompanied by a formal program evaluation including the effectiveness of delivering upon the original learning intentions. This feedback is incorporated into evaluative practices within staff meetings, supporting improvements including:

- adjusted time allocations in daily schedules.
- improvements to school infrastructure.
- strengthening staff repertoires and program flexibility.



Students eagerly exploring the world of bugs and their adaptations for survival by examining rare specimens under the microscope.



Students enthusiastically learning to build worm farms and planning for their incorporation into school sustainability initiatives.



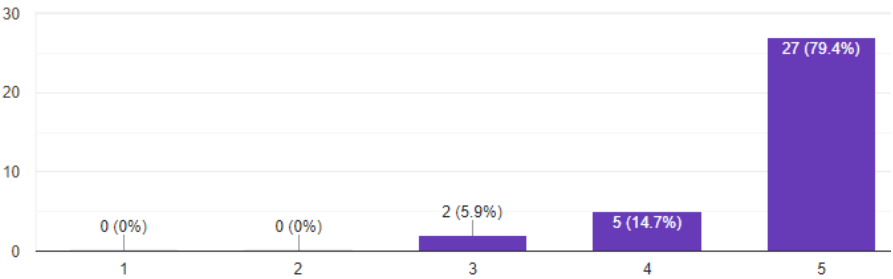
Students independently exploring the rainforest garden at Wambangalang EEC, looking at the different physical features of these tropical organisms.



Stage 6 students learning about the significance of environmental factors on farmlands, supporting the successful completion of their depth study projects.

Did your experience with Wambangalang meet your original aim? [Copy](#)

34 responses



Snapshot from results of feedback survey used with all school bookings, showing a vast majority of positive feedback.

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 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.