

2021 Annual Report

Brewongle Environmental Education Centre



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2021 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 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.

School contact details

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Message from the principal

2021 has again posed challenges for Brewongle EEC and the community as a whole. Term 1 allowed us to return to some normal operations as Covid restrictions were eased. Flooding then disrupted operations at the end of term 1, with the Hawkesbury River peaking at 10m above normal levels. Our river block was completely submerged and had about 30cm of mud and sand deposited as the water subsided. Many of our neighbours suffered large erosion and inundation problems. Somewhat normal operations resumed after the clean up for most of term 2. Term 3 and some of term 4 were impacted by the Covid 19 lockdown and learning from home period. Brewongle staff created weekly webinars to assist students learning from home. These became popular with hundreds of students joining in each week. When schools returned, we were not able to host camps and many schools did not choose to go on excursions, so Brewongle EEC bookings were very low. This gave staff time to mend, repair, upgrade and organise all our equipment and to work hard at returning our site to the beautiful place we know and love.

Our camp kitchen upgrade was delayed due to Covid 19, but finally commenced in late term 4 2021, we are very excited to see this finished and work was still underway term 1 2022. Brewongle has had some amazing new staff join our team including teachers and two new general assistants. All have brought renewed energy, skills and experience to Brewongle.

2021 also saw a change in some teaching staff as some retired, moved away and pursued other career opportunities. We wish them well in their future endeavours and thank them all for such dedicated service during their time at Brewongle.

During the Covid 19 lockdown, Brewongle EEC continued to employ all our casual and temporary staff and many of them contributed to improving our programs, equipment and helped with delivering remote learning.

I would like to thank all the schools, students and teachers who continue to choose Brewongle for their excursion and camp needs and hope we can deliver our programs in 2022 with less disruption.

I would like to thank all previous and existing Brewongle staff for their enthusiasm, passion and dedication to Environmental Education. I would also like to thank our neighbours and local Sackville North Community for all their help. Especially in rescuing our kayaks from floodwaters! Without the generosity of our neighbours, we could not provide students with the amazing opportunities that are currently available to them.

I would also like to thank the Darug community for all the support they show Brewongle and pay my deepest respects to the ancestors, our current elders and custodians and all the future Darug leaders that are now in our schools. Didgerigural!

Steven Body

School vision

Brewongle 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 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 on Darug Country in the forest above Dyarubbin - the majestic Hawkesbury River at Sackville North, NSW.

The Centre supports schools with curriculum, leadership and wellbeing implementation 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. We design and deliver an extensive array of professional learning events for teachers with a major focus on Aboriginal Education.

During 2020 Brewongle embarked on an extensive situational analysis. This included a review of all our teacher and student evaluations and an extra online teacher evaluation. Consultation and interviews were conducted with Brewongle staff, teachers and students from visiting schools, partners including Western Sydney University, the UN-RCE, Penrith City Council and the Darug community. These yielded many interesting findings that have influenced our future directions.

The outcomes of that review included the following:

- Many current programs are content heavy.
- Student wellbeing/resilience is a prime area of need for schools - EZEC Catalyst Lab research.
- We need to target all learners - inclusive education should be a focus.
- Students felt that a memorable experience was important.
- Day programs could include a dedicated wellbeing in nature element.
- Cultural education is currently excellent, but other areas of focus could include hard topics like frontier wars and dispossession with students.

Our high level areas for improvement have been identified as -

- *Wellbeing.*
- *Inclusive education and integration.*
- *Targeted infrastructure improvements*
- *Auditing curriculum content to ensure effective teaching.*

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	Excelling
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Excelling
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: Student wellbeing and inclusive education

Purpose

To ensure that every student has a strong connection to nature and opportunities to enhance their wellbeing and learning regardless of differing needs or backgrounds.

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.

- Effective Classroom Practice for all students
- Wellbeing and personalised learning for all students

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning: \$2,000.00

6300 School and Community: \$4,500.00

Summary of progress

All available staff have been trained in the Wellbeing Framework through the course "Wellbeing for School Excellence". Principal Steven Body has been trained as a facilitator in this course and has delivered 2 sessions to the EZEC network and local principals. Research and design on special needs education has been completed by Steven Body and Carly Howden through online teacher surveys and interviews held via zoom with 3 schools. Collaboration with BEEC staff is continuing in term 4 2021 and term 1 2022 to ensure special needs students are empowered to attend Brewongle EEC. Due to staff turnover. Some new staff have not completed this training.

Brewongle EEC teaching programs have been audited and High School programs were identified as a key priority for curriculum modification. During learning from home, staff have modified several programs for testing in 2022. Key staff are yet to be trained in inclusive education. This will be delayed due to staff turnover until 2022.

Disability research has been completed and individual school programs are being designed for 2022.

Next steps will include training of existing and new 2022 staff in inclusive and special needs education and the wellbeing framework if needed. Visits to SSP's and support units will be arranged in late 2021 and early 2022. Special needs programs will need to be evaluated after testing and modified as needed. Wellbeing elements will need to be tested and modified as required.

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
First program for students with a disability has been researched, designed in collaboration with partner schools and is ready to pilot in 2022.	This has been completed with modifications that arose from research. It was decided to design individual school programs for students with disabilities as each school needs were specific and advice from teachers was that a multi school project would not suit their needs. Covid restrictions have impacted bookings and also our application for integration funding has not been approved. This means that not all students with special needs can access Brewongle yet.
We will have chosen one popular day program to trial with the inclusion of a dedicated wellbeing in nature activity. This will be tested and evaluated through student and teacher feedback.	This is completed - High School geography program Water in the World has been modified to include a dedicated wellbeing activity located in the Aboriginal cave. This not been tested due to Covid restrictions in 2021. The Ponds HS has booked in for this program in March 2022 and their teachers were involved in collaboration around the program changes.

Strategic Direction 2: Innovative improvements to teaching and learning

Purpose

To plan, prioritise and fund improvements to enhance the learning environments and experience for all learners to ensure effective practice and future focused learning.

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.

- Curriculum provision adjustments to maximise learning
- Educational Leadership for school resources

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

6300 School and Community: \$1,500.00

Summary of progress

Brewongle teaching programs have been audited and several high school programs have been adjusted for program content and inclusion of wellbeing elements. This was facilitated by the learning from home period when casual staff were able to complete them ahead of schedule. A priority list of programs was not completed due to covid and uncertainty about future bookings.

Integration funding and plans have been completed and we are awaiting approval to commence works in 2022.

Teaching areas have been identified in a priority list for innovative improvements. This is related to our integration funding plans which will also help improve our meeting area and access to classrooms for all students. The kitchen upgrade commenced in late December 2021.

Next steps will include school funded projects of an upgrade to the top pond teaching area and welcome area. Plans will need to be re-assessed in 2022 based on available funding post Covid and needs into the future.

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
Popular programs will have been identified for change during a curriculum audit. Evidenced based practice will be considered after professional learning completed during 2021 in inclusive education and the wellbeing framework.	High School programs were identified as a first priority for amendment. Staff partook in training around "What Works Best" over a series of staff meetings after school. Staff also completed training in the Wellbeing Framework. We have exceeded the plans for this progress measure as several programs have already been modified ready for testing in 2021.
Staff have designed in consultation a plan for future changes to teaching and learning spaces that are affordable and achievable within a 4 year timeframe. Meetings with the integration team will have identified future integration infrastructure needs.	Completed. The Integration team was invited to Brewongle EEC in term 1 2021 and met with teaching staff and the Principal to design future needs. A full plan was created by the Learning and Wellbeing Officer and submitted to the AMU for funding and approval. As of end of 2021, approval had not been granted.

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	1.19

*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 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	39,964
Revenue	533,646
Appropriation	446,597
Sale of Goods and Services	-3,300
Grants and contributions	90,296
Investment income	52
Expenses	-549,779
Employee related	-467,448
Operating expenses	-82,331
Surplus / deficit for the year	-16,133
Closing Balance	23,830

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	433,640
Base - Per Capita	14,791
Base - Location	324
Base - Other	418,525
Other Total	12,958
Grand Total	446,597

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

The following are some sample student and staff evaluations:

Student evaluations:

First excursion in a long time. Activities were engaging and interesting.

The teachers were quite knowledgeable and tasks such as finding species in the boxes and measuring abiotic factors were quite interesting and different. It was engaging and taught me a lot about the environment my guide (Kate) was joyful and informative, had a lot of fun doing the activities. It was educational but felt like pretty cold and long day.

Webinar responses - "What did you learn today"

Canoes have different sizes

How to make a net thingy that catches bugs

That dragonflies come from ponds and that they grow inside then they come out of their skeleton.

How to make a worm farm.

All about animals and their scats and introduced animals.

I learned how to create my own canoe out of cardboard

Traditional Aboriginal innovations

Teacher feedback after online Aboriginal Cultural Awareness course:

Thank you to all four of you: Steven, Les, Erin and Sue (a special way to remember the session with your song). It was so helpful that you have included the many links and contact point. Your time and energy was much appreciated by me. A fabulous use of my 4 hours.

Thanks so much Steve for facilitating this excellent PL!

It was very informative and a great presentation. Thank you very much! Lots of useful information. Great video and interesting insights into totems and their significance. Also an interesting explanation of kinship. Thanks Steve for your organisation. The question/answer session at the end was very useful.

Great and would love to do the face to face- the two day sounds like our next step in the future for our development and your assistance in teaching our students.

Outstanding and uplifting and so informative.

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

Warami,

Brewongle EEC continues to be a leader in Aboriginal Education through our close ties to the Darug Community, our integration of culture into all aspects of school life and our delivery of teacher professional learning. We have a fantastic relationship and close collaboration with our local Aboriginal Wellbeing Team and we work together to deliver Cultural courses to teachers. Many of these courses continued online in 2021 during the Covid lockdown and were valued by hundreds of school staff who attended. Brewongle is a member of the local AECG and attends all meetings. Brewongle EEC runs a lauded High School Student Leadership program each year for Aboriginal Students. Unfortunately this was cancelled due to Covid in 2021.

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.