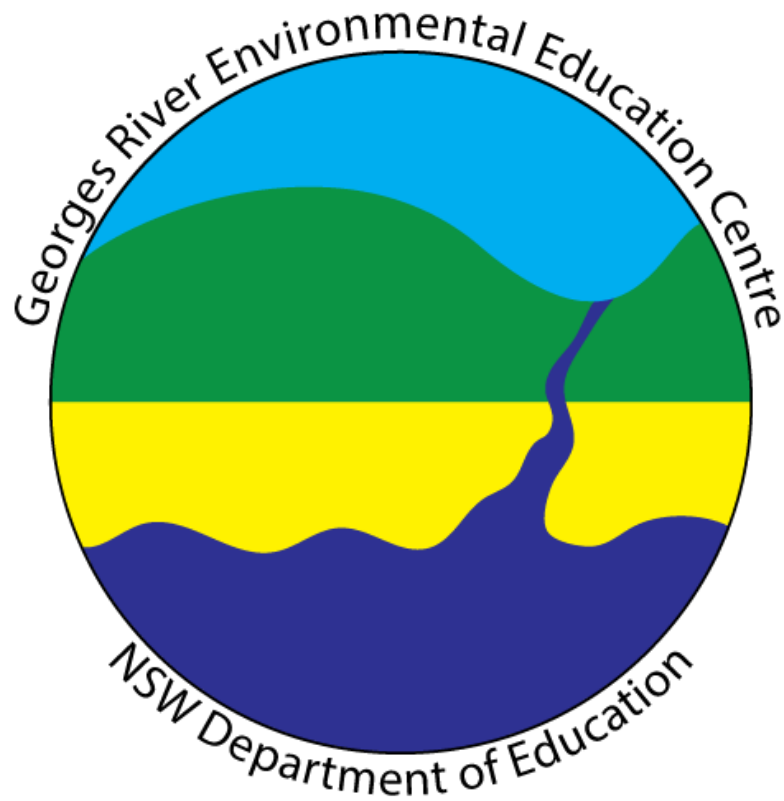


2023 Annual Report

Georges River Environmental Education Centre



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2023 is provided to the community of Georges River 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

Georges River Environmental Education Centre Vision Statement

We are a specialised centre providing enhanced learning opportunities. Georges River Environmental Education Centre (GREEC) is a highly valued sustainability and environmental education hub for our school communities. Empowering students, teachers and the community to become active citizens for a sustainable future.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centre's Vision Statement

Leading environmental education for a sustainable future.

School context

Georges River Environmental Education Centre (GREEC) is a facility of the Department of Education located near the constructed Chipping Norton Lake. The centre sits on Darug land and acknowledges the Cabragal clan as the traditional custodians. GREEC is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) run by the Department of Education.

GREEC provides high quality teaching and learning programs that enhance and support our schools with environmental and sustainability education. Georges River Environmental Education Centre is committed to supporting school communities to experience and connect with the natural world whilst fostering the development of positive behaviour changes towards its protection. Georges River EEC offers a variety of high quality field work and environmental and sustainability education programs for school students K-12 with an emphasis on cross curriculum priority areas. The Centre's programs are delivered on and off site, as incursions, program enhancement experiences or online interactive lessons. Our offsite locations are located throughout the Georges River Catchment. We also work with key council stakeholders to develop programs that can be delivered in local school communities. Taking students into their 'backyard' and teaching them a variety of history, science and geography outcomes with a specific focus on local content and context.

GREEC is a proud and active member of the NSW Environmental and Zoo Education Centre network, working collaboratively with our lead sustainability education teaching and learning programs and high quality professional learning with Department of Education schools and staff. Professional learning opportunities for visiting teaching staff are provided at both the centre, within school grounds and in the natural environment through in-field experiences. Delivering professional learning to whole school staff, individual curriculum areas and specialty program training ensures that Georges River Environmental Education Centre is a crucial and integral part of our wider school community.

As part of the situational analysis Georges River Environmental Education Centre has identified improvement focus areas. GREEC has consistently surveyed visiting staff and students about their participation in centre programs. However, an opportunity to dive narrow and deep into program impact and enhancement has not been achieved at a centre wide level. With focused technology and sharpened data collection methods we aim to better measure growth and attainment attributed to our quality environmental education programs. Georges River EEC has also been on an individual journey of learning around Aboriginal Education. The situational analysis highlighted the importance of the centre developing this future direction and sharing the related learning with the broader learning community. This includes our Chipping Norton network of schools as well as the schools that engage with our programs and resources.

Being a specialised learning centre, GREEC has significant alliances and partnerships. We are connected to the Georges Riverkeeper and work closely with their water scientists and education team. Georges River EEC has a long relationship working with the councils that are along the Georges River. As part of the Georges River Combined Council Committee we work with each council to provide enhanced learning opportunities to students, working alongside our council stakeholders. GREEC has a history of working with universities such as New South Wales, Macquarie and Western Sydney. Our programs employ the expertise of university scientists, lecturers and content experts. We have set up alliances with our local arts community. Building a hub of organizations that can be drawn upon to display, judge and inspire students.

Georges River Environmental Education Centre is not an excursion destination. We are a specialised centre that is dedicated to delivering programs that enhance learning opportunities. We are connected and contributors to our learning communities and are a resource that schools and teachers tap into when enhancing their own teaching and learning programs.

Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. 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	2023 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Student growth and performance	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School resources	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Excelling

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Purpose

Improving student growth and attainment through participation in quality environmental education programs resulting in increased engagement with a key focus on technology

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.

- Optimizing student opportunities with GREEC
- Measuring learning enrichment and program enhancement
- Exemplary technology integration

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

Georges River Environmental Education Centre (GREEC) has experienced another successful year when analyzing our growth and attainment. The number of students accessing programs combined with the number of teachers attending professional learning led by GREEC has maintained stable at 8000. The main area of student growth has been in our programs that have multiple teaching sessions, a delivery model that in 2023 represented 15% of our programs being adopted by schools. The benefits of this shift in delivery mode is that learning growth of students and the potential for evidence of impact are increased dramatically when the GREEC teacher is able to revise, expand and drive learning outcomes specific to the student needs and settings.

Throughout 2023, the GREEC team has continued to take responsibility for content in each teachers subject of strength. These areas of strength were then aligned with new curriculum content and program requests from schools. This focus also allowed for the enhancement of team capability through the sharing of these programs and targeted training of GREEC staff. Alongside our curriculum driven programs, GREEC has been developing and delivering quality storm-water and waste programs with our partner councils. These programs provide community links and cross curricular learning opportunities for the schools we work with. One of these programs in particular the 'Zero Litter in Georges River' won an award from Keep Australia Beautiful for its efforts in litter prevention and contributions to cleaner waterways.

Continuing our improvement into 2024 will rely on our ability to maintain the training of GREEC staff. This will be done through the deliberate delivering of whole staff reorientation days, the including of GREEC casual staff in key staff development day training opportunities. Programs will also be reevaluated and reassessed before having the re branding applied. The purpose of the re branding will be to create consistency in the expectations of a GREEC program, improve digital knowledge of our programs to support schools in knowing what we offer, and for clarity in the GREEC office so that GREEC can be more precise in supporting schools when preparing for an excursion or incursion.

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
Establish centre programming model for both high and primary. Review existing programs with GREEC staff and increase the number aligned to the improved program model.	The aligning of programs to the improved program model as designed by GREEC continued to happen throughout 2023. This process of program improvement has led to the developing of program run sheets for our most popular programs as an extra support component of the GREEC program model requirements. The next development in this space has been the branding/imaging that will make the aligned programs easily identifiable. Towards the end of the year an artist was engaged to commission an artwork that could be used across the centre as part of a licencing agreement.
Embed new data collection and evaluation methods to increase GREEC's ability to capture student	With the goal of measuring impact 'Survey Monkey, Survey Anywhere' has been pivotal in creating consistency across GREEC data collection. In 2022 GREEC was using both Survey Monkey, Google Forms and Kahoots to

<p>learning enrichment and enhancement.</p>	<p>measure program impact, collect teacher evaluations and content relevance. Moving forward into 2023, it was decided to move away from Kahoots and focus on the remaining two methods. As a result of this change GREEC staff didn't notice the difference. Staff created more surveys using Survey Monkey and refined programs to include more engaging check ins for learning. These changes were deemed better by GREEC staff and as positive adjustments that will be carried forward into 2024.</p>
<p>New and existing technologies have been incorporated into centre programs and staff trained in their applications.</p>	<p>Technology plays a vital role in ensuring that GREEC stays relevant and current. The technology that is incorporated into our programs was reviewed as part of our reorientation process for all teaching staff and this allowed for the refinement of the technology and its applications. Through a whole staff review we were able to discuss the technology that was no longer relevant, reinforce the technology that we all needed to know how to use, and refine the techniques that were needed for the effective use and teaching with current centre technologies. This progress measure is particularly important for GREEC as we need to balance our programs with both future focused learning and present, authentic, hands on experiences. The technology that we used in 2023 is continuing to evolve and will need reevaluation to remain cutting edge going into 2024.</p>

Purpose

To increase student and school engagement in authentic Aboriginal Education initiatives, developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders

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.

- Pedagogy, ethos and capacity

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

In 2023 Georges River Environmental Education Centre (GREEC) developed and delivered an increasing number of local cultural professional learning days for teachers and student centered On Country celebration days. Due to the success of our pilot days in 2022, we were able to expand our opportunities for staff development days. GREEC was asked to run these whole staff sessions after promoting these to our surrounding network groups. Throughout the year we ran five sessions for both high and primary settings. We worked with a number of Aboriginal groups to deliver learning that was relevant to where each school was at on their journey. The groups engaged to enhance experiences included Bankstown and Liverpool AECGs, Gandangarra Land Council, Coonamble Primary School and the Bankstown Koori Elders Group.

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
<p>Aboriginal Pedagogies as a teaching professional learning program is able to be hosted by GREEC and centre staff are able to support in the programs delivery.</p> <p>GREEC is developed as a facility that respectfully represents and displays the knowledge, history and practices of Aboriginal people for all visiting students.</p>	<p>In 2023 GREEC strengthened the professional learning programs offered to schools from our surrounding networks. Georges River EEC is now recognised as a centre that offers opportunities for teachers looking to increase their local Aboriginal knowledge and connection to the environment/Country that their students are immersed in. With the support of network Directors of Educational Leadership GREEC has been able to host key meetings and attend local AECG sessions throughout the year. As a result of increased principal and key leadership team exposure, the programs that have been developed are being regularly requested by both primary and high schools for a variety of twilight, Staff Development Days and key group learning sessions.</p> <p>Georges River EEC had the biggest display improvement with the goal of improving our learning space for all visiting students in 2023. The request from the Bankstown Koori Elders Group to consider hosting their Cherbourg exhibit was an honor and privilege. Hosting the large installation required the hiring of removalists, moving of many centre displays and redesigning of what an experience with GREEC involves. We have created a thought provoking moment for all that enter the centre. The continued partnerships with our elders group, mens group, land council, AEOs and AECGs has led to the important connections with both Aunty Margaret and Uncle Bob. Both Aunty and Uncle are regular visitors to the centre and participants in programs and activities. Their guidance and support is key in the development of new programs.</p>
<p>The network initiative is developed and implemented for Liverpool network with collaboration and enhanced outcomes as learnt from the Chipping Norton</p>	<p>The network initiative as developed with the Chipping Norton network provided a variety of experiences and programs that could be offered to other networks. A presentation of these experiences and programs was delivered to neighboring Liverpool and Fairfield networks. This resulted in</p>

experience.

Aboriginal student leadership programs are developed in consultation with consolidated partnerships and delivered to the Chipping Norton Network Aboriginal Students.

bespoke packages being built for each network and over 400 teachers attending the centre throughout the year. Another aspect of the Chipping Norton network initiative saw GREEC supporting an experience to Coonamble in regional NSW for five principals and five teachers. This partnership provided a variety of learning experiences and skill sharing opportunities. A positive flow on from this event was the connection formed with Coonamble Primary School. GREEC was able to host students as part of a Belonging Day, and conduct an 'On Country, in city' experience for educators who reciprocated the tour to our network.

The focus on cultural connection days in 2023 led to an increased number of networks choosing to plan a day or multiple days (for big groups) with GREEC. Due to the success of these days in 2022, increased awareness of key cultural leaders in our school networks and support from the AECGs throughout the Georges River catchment there was a 100% growth in number of days delivered.

Attendance

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to other 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 from 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 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.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2022, student attendance was impacted by a range of factors:

- * Families evacuating and relocating due to NSW floods
- * Sick students staying at home until a negative COVID-19 test was returned
- * Household members testing positive to COVID-19
- * The easing of COVID-19 border controls at the beginning of 2022 which allowed families to travel inter-state and overseas.

While there were no lockdowns or learning from home periods in Semester 1 2023, there was still a high prevalence of sick attendance codes as students were encouraged to stay home if they were even slightly unwell. Advice for families were still in place, recommending students and staff to stay home when sick and only returning to school when they were symptom free. (See <https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/covid-19/advice-for-families> for advice).

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
School Administration and Support Staff	1.03

*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 2023, 2.5% of the department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school workforce composition

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2023 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.00%	3.60%
Teachers	3.00%	3.40%

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 2023 to 31 December 2023. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with department policy requirements.

	2023 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	76,574.73
Revenue	448,845.34
Appropriation	332,490.70
Grants and contributions	20,300.00
Investment income	3,935.89
Other revenue	92,118.75
Expenses	-471,902.47
Employee related	-438,198.74
Operating expenses	-33,703.73
Surplus / deficit for the year	-23,057.13
Closing Balance	53,517.60

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.

	2023 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	311,577
Base - Per Capita	7,808
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	303,769
Other Total	6,184
Grand Total	317,761

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

Georges River Environmental Education Centre recognises the importance of teacher, student and community feedback. The data gathered is displayed below in response to visitor participation in learning experiences and programs facilitated by GREEC staff.

Two particular areas of strength identified through visiting teacher evaluations have been engagement and linked learning to the curriculum. Visiting teachers commented on the quality of resources incorporated and used in-conjunction with well planned lesson progressions. Comments from teacher surveys assessing the Georges River EEC staff on the day included; "The day was full of interactive activities, students were enthralled", "Today was incredible, every child was interested and participating", "What a treat, an incursion that complimented our terms learning perfectly", "Engaging learning that led to surprising student success".

In 2022 feedback data highlighted a drop in 'High expectations for student behaviour and learning'. Efforts were made throughout 2023 to improve these results. GREEC participated in Quality Teaching Rounds and asked staff to analyse their teaching to ensure their expectations remain high when presenting tasks. As a result of this targeted approach 82% of the visiting staff placed their response in the highest ranking. This was an increase of 12% from the previous year.

Community feedback has recognised the importance of connectedness between our centre, schools and stakeholders. After the Community Garden launch, a survey was conducted to gain insight into areas of strength and future improvement. Overwhelmingly, respondents were impressed with the centre space and layout. 80% of visitors surveyed would like to do more Community Garden Workshops and attend workshop/talks in the centre learning spaces. Only 50% of visitors felt the centre website adequately represented the centre. This will become an area of focus for 2024.

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.