

# 2023 Annual Report

Red Hill Environmental Education Centre



# Red Hill

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION CENTRE** 

5750

# Introduction

The Annual Report for 2023 is provided to the community of Red Hill 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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## School vision

Leading environmental education for a sustainable future as students learn from our past to inform our future.

## School context

Red Hill Environmental Education Centre (EEC) is a facility of the NSW Department of Education (department) located within the Mudgee Network in Central West NSW.

Red Hill EEC's motto is, 'Learning from our past to inform our future'.

We acknowledge that Red Hill EEC is on Wiradjuri Country. We thank the Wiradjuri people for sharing their country with us. Together with our students, we action our respect to Elders, Past, Present and Future by teaching, listening, learning and caring for land, rivers, animals and people of Country.

Red Hill EEC was established in 1995 as a specialised Urban Field Study Centre in rural NSW, with a focus on supporting the teaching of history. With our location in the historic Gold Rush town of Gulgong, many of our programs work to support the NSW history syllabus with experiential, hands-on activities that lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of this pivotal time in Australian history. Red Hill EEC works closely with our local community and the many historical museums and resources within the town to enhance student engagement and improve student outcomes.

In addition, as a department Environmental Education Centre, Red Hill EEC develops and delivers high quality teaching and learning programs that support our community of schools with environmental and sustainability education from Early Childhood Education to Year 12. The focus is on education for sustainability, with a past, present and future orientation and has strong intrinsic links to learning for Aboriginal cultural awareness. Education for sustainability empowers students to feel that they are able to act, individually and collectively, in ways that contribute to a sustainable future.

Red Hill EEC is strongly supported by our local Aboriginal community through the Gulgong Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) as we collaborate to authentically deliver Aboriginal cultural programs and build capacity of teachers to do the same. A strong Aboriginal perspective in our programs provides opportunities for all students, staff and the wider community to acquire knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and experiences.

Red Hill EEC is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) within NSW. Red Hill EEC is a proud and active member of the EZEC Network, working collaboratively with our colleagues across the state to lead environmental education for a sustainable future.

Through the 2020 Situational Analysis process, Red Hill EEC consulted with principals, teachers, students, parents/carers, community partners and the general community to review our achievements and identify areas for improvement. Participants were asked "Which improvement focus areas do you believe will have the greatest impact on student outcomes?" The strongest responses were to 'deepen cultural awareness and culturally safe opportunities for students, teachers and community', 'further enhance site facilities to increase student and community engagement' and 'broaden educational partnerships to enhance 'real-life' learning experiences'.

As these responses aligned closely with our 2019 External Validation results, as well as our continued progress through the domains of the School Excellence Framework, Red Hill EEC has identified the following high-impact Strategic Directions as our focus for the 2021-2024 Strategic Improvement Plan:

- Authentic Connections to Culture
- Authentic Connections to Community

Through this process, Red Hill EEC has also identified the need to further enhance the ways in which the Centre collects, collates and analyses data to inform our practice, and will subsequently focus on this as an additional area for improvement.

Moving forward, Red Hill EEC will continue to provide high quality environmental education opportunities for students, both within the urban and natural environments, and will continue to focus on the strategic improvement of our Centre to support the learning outcomes for all students.

## 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	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Sustaining and Growing
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	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Professional standards	Excelling
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	Sustaining and Growing

## Strategic Direction 1: Authentic Connections to Culture

### Purpose

To embed a whole-school approach to wellbeing and engagement that enhances authentic cultural awareness and improves student learning both at Red Hill EEC and in Mudgee Network Schools.

### 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.

- Wellbeing
- Learning and Development
- School Resources
- Data Skills and Use

### Resources allocated to this strategic direction

#### Professional learning

Per capita

Location

### Summary of progress

Red Hill EEC's focus for 2023 was on the continued strengthening of Authentic Connections to Culture for our visiting students, teachers, and schools.

This involved the delivery of Aboriginal perspectives through all our programs, from curriculum-based to wellbeing-focused activities. The Wiradjuri way of being is now embedded in our programs, with the concept of 'Yindymarra' - to respect, go slowly, be gentle, be polite, to honour - also now embraced in the learning communities of many of our visiting schools. The wellbeing target moving into 2024 will be to embed Aboriginal perspectives into all new and revised programs delivered at Red Hill EEC.

Red Hill EEC delivered fewer Aboriginal Education professional learning courses this year. Nonetheless, many schools who have previously engaged with us have reported an increase in confidence to lead Cultural Safety within their own schools. Moving forward, Red Hill EEC will investigate the existing learning and development needs of our Network Schools to determine what support is now required.

Red Hill EEC continues to use our environment and our school's physical resources to meet the unique needs of our programs. A major learning space resource was completed in 2023 with the construction of our largest yarning circle, accommodating up to 60 students in a beautiful sandstone landscape and native garden. In 2024, Red Hill EEC will reassess the remaining Landscape Design Master Plan projects to determine our priorities based on time and funding opportunities.

In 2024, data skills and use will remain at the forefront of Red Hill EEC's activities to ensure we continue to improve our Authentic Connections to Culture.

### 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
35% increase in the number of Red Hill EEC programs that deliver Aboriginal perspectives in a culturally safe environment.	There has been a 250% increase, since 2020, in the number of Red Hill EEC programs that deliver Aboriginal perspectives in a culturally safe environment.
Increase the number of Mudgee Network Schools engaging in Red Hill EEC Aboriginal Education professional learning courses to greater than 30%.	The number of Mudgee Network Schools engaging in Red Hill EEC Aboriginal Education professional learning courses has remained the same at 42%.

Complete 75% of the Red Hill EEC Landscape Design Master Plan projects.

There has been a delay in completing the Red Hill EEC Landscape Design Master Plan projects, however, there has been an 11% increase on activities since 2022. 58% of projects are now complete.

## Strategic Direction 2: Authentic Connections to Community

### Purpose

To develop an integrated approach to curriculum planning and delivery, enhanced by learning alliances with other schools and/or organisations, so that all students can access 'real-life' learning experiences through educational partnerships that promote learning excellence.

### 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
- Learning and Development
- Data Skills and Use

### Resources allocated to this strategic direction

#### Professional learning

#### Summary of progress

Red Hill EEC's second strategic direction focus for 2023 was on the continued strengthening of our Authentic Connections to Community to enhance real-life experiences for our visiting students, teachers, and schools.

Red Hill EEC's Eco-Schools program continued to grow in 2023, with the intake of 3 new Mudgee Network Schools as well as 1 additional Lithgow Network School. Participating schools' environmental projects were rewarded through the Eco-Schools accreditation process, with one school earning their Silver Award and another school reaching Green Flag status. The program will continue in 2024 with the aim of supporting more schools in attaining Eco-Schools accreditation.

In 2023 Red Hill EEC has been successful in increasing the number of active partnerships with industry, community organisations and early childhood education providers. New partnerships in 2023 included Mudgee Preschool, the Mid-Western Regional Council Environment Team, and performance company The Storey Players. The Centre now offers visiting schools numerous opportunities for students to connect to real-life situations, from historical organisations, to science and agricultural bodies and with performing arts providers. These partnerships will be sustained moving into 2024, whilst the need for a tertiary education partnership will be further investigated.

In 2024, data skills and use will remain at the forefront of Red Hill EEC's activities to ensure we continue to improve our Authentic Connections to Community.

### 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
Increase the number of Mudgee Network Schools engaging in Red Hill EECs Eco-Schools program by 50%.	There was a 70% increase in the number of Mudgee Network Schools engaging in Red Hill EEC's Eco-Schools program since 2020.
Increase the number of active partnerships between Red Hill EEC and community organisations/industry by 50%.	There has been a 130% increase in the number of active partnerships since 2020, including 9 industry partners and 13 community organisation partners.
Initiate and develop active partnerships between Red Hill EEC and local Early Childhood Education providers.	There has been a 130% increase in the number of active partnerships since 2020, including 3 local Early Childhood Education providers.
Initiate and develop an active partnership between Red Hill EEC and one Tertiary provider.	Red Hill EEC continue to investigate potential partnerships with a Tertiary provider.

## Attendance

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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

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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	1.24

\*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 <sup>1</sup>	2023 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation <sup>2</sup>
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 (\$)
<b>Opening Balance</b>	129,830.17
<b>Revenue</b>	599,905.86
Appropriation	492,886.41
Sale of Goods and Services	-200.00
Grants and contributions	7,882.50
Investment income	6,456.40
Other revenue	92,880.55
<b>Expenses</b>	-663,826.14
Employee related	-546,329.96
Operating expenses	-117,496.18
<b>Surplus / deficit for the year</b>	-63,920.28
<b>Closing Balance</b>	65,909.89

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

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The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2023 <b>SBAR Adjustments</b> (\$)
<b>Targeted Total</b>	0
<b>Equity Total</b>	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
<b>Base Total</b>	466,906
Base - Per Capita	15,616
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	450,644
<b>Other Total</b>	11,596
<b>Grand Total</b>	478,502

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

At Red Hill EEC, satisfaction data is obtained predominantly through evaluation surveys completed by teachers and support staff who have participated either in our student learning programs, event programs, such as Eco-Schools, or our professional learning programs. Satisfaction data is also captured through Red Hill EEC's Community Partners Survey.

### Authentic Connections to Culture

In 2023, Red Hill EEC received 49 evaluation responses from participating staff through Program Specific Evaluation Surveys.

From these 49 responses, we received highly positive feedback regarding our improvements to wellbeing and engagement through cultural awareness, including:

- 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Welcome to/Acknowledgement of Wiradjuri Country was culturally appropriate, relevant, and inspiring.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program left them with an understanding of 'Yindymarra' - to respect, go slowly, be gentle, be polite, to honour, take responsibility.
- 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the program provided opportunities for students to connect with Country.

Furthermore, the success of Red Hill EEC's strategic focus on Connection to Culture and the impact of these achievements on teaching and learning is resounding in these visiting teachers' comments:

"(the program has) created a higher engagement in connection to Country".

"We have done some follow-up writing from this excursion and the recall from all the students and what they gained from the experience has been excellent. We have embraced 'Yindymarra' in our classroom as it is such a powerful and all-encompassing word that is readily understood by the students. I love learning from the amazing knowledge of the Red Hill staff and strive to emulate their patience, passion, and knowledge in my own teaching".

"Students were provided with a variety of knowledge about the history of our area and the importance of the First Nations. Most students are still asking questions and discussing learning experiences".

"This program deepened my knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture and allowed me to feel more confident in teaching Aboriginal perspectives to my students."

"Students feel more comfortable asking questions about Aboriginal connections".

Although only one Cultural Awareness professional learning course was delivered in 2023 at Red Hill EEC, feedback from participants through the Teacher Professional Learning Evaluation Surveys demonstrated:

- 100% of responses were positive in nature, selecting either agree or strongly agree to each question.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program addressed the importance of 'Acknowledgement of Country' to First Nations people as well as provided practical ideas to implement 'Acknowledgement of Country' in your school and classroom

When respondents were asked 'how will this program will impact your teaching?', responses included:

"I will continue to create more visible culturally safe practices at school".

"I will be more aware of the importance of making culture and cultural awareness part of every Key Learning Area, not as stand-alone lessons. Involving students in the cultural aspects of learning will make the awareness and respect of Aboriginal and other cultures greater and more meaningful".

When respondents were asked 'how will this program impact student learning?', responses included:

"Students will feel acknowledged, safe and willing to engage in learning experiences".

When respondents were asked "what impact will this program have on your school?", responses included:

"A greater awareness of the responsibility we hold as leaders in our community to embed and promote culturally safe practices".

Furthermore, data collected from the Program Specific Evaluation Surveys indicated highly satisfied teachers and students regarding Red Hill EEC's creative approach to learning through the use of the physical environment.

- 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the learning spaces accessed by the students were safe, engaging and inspiring, including the Red Hill EEC Welcome Circle, Yarning Circles, Gnangirra (Aboriginal Learning Centre), Discovery and Sensory Garden, Environmental Classroom and the Historical Classroom.

### **Authentic Connections to Community**

Red Hill EEC's core purpose is to engage students through 'Learning from Our Past to Inform Our Future'. This concept directly links to Red Hill EEC's strategic goal to engage students in their learning through real-life connections. These real-life learning experiences are enabled through the strong community partnerships Red Hill EEC has with numerous community organisations and industry groups.

In 2023, Red Hill EEC received 49 evaluation responses from participating staff through Program Specific Evaluation Surveys.

From the 49 responses:

- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the learning spaces accessed by students were safe, engaging and inspiring e.g. Ganguddy Dunns Swamp, Prince of Wales Opera House, Gulgong Pioneer Museum and Gulgong Holtermann Museum.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the program provided opportunities for students to interact with authentic educators and resources.

In 2023, Red Hill EEC received 8 responses from the Community Partnership Survey. Partnership programs included visits to local historical museums, art and theatre workshops, mentoring through the Red Hill EEC Eco-Schools program as well as large environmental events such as Watershed Landcare Green Day and the development of the Mid-Western Regional Council Koala Education Day.

From the 8 responses:

- 100% of respondents rated the importance of their relationship with Red Hill EEC as extremely important.
- 100% of respondents stated that Red Hill EEC worked 'extremely well' with their organisation on partnership programs and/or initiatives.

When asked for the key benefits of having a relationship with Red Hill EEC, community partner responses included:

"Excellent connections to schools and understanding of school curriculum".

"Increased awareness of the unique history of Gulgong as a significant gold rush community of the 1870's and how, through local grass roots conservation, much of this history has been preserved and promoted".

"Working together to produce local stories with the students. The clear vision that both our organisations have when creating stories".

"Insight into working with young people and environmental education. Access to amazing Red Hill facilities, knowledge trust of personnel and collaboration on steering committees".

Overall, the 2023 feedback from parent/caregiver, student and teacher satisfaction data indicates that our Strategic Direction goals to authentically Connect to Culture and Community through teaching and learning have been successful. The significantly positive feedback Red Hill EEC continues to receive indicates that students, teachers, support staff, schools and communities are benefiting immensely from Red Hill EEC programs, building on their knowledge and understanding whilst gaining the confidence needed to deliver high quality environmental education in the region.

# Policy requirements

## Aboriginal Education Policy

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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

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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

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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.