Rumbalara Environmental Education Centre

Annual Report

2015
Introduction

The Annual Report for 2015 is provided to the Rumbalara Environmental Education Centre community 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 school 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.

Mark Attwooll
Principal

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School Code: 5740

Message from the Principal (optional)

During 2015 Rumbalara EEC maintained our focus on delivering programs that enabled thousands of students, mostly from Central Coast public schools, to leave their classrooms to engage in learning through investigations and discovery of relevant local environments. I thank them all for their interest and enthusiasm, their co-operation and care for each other and the environment.

We also continued to support environmental education in our schools through teacher professional learning courses and the provision of information and resources. I thank all our ‘school sustainability leaders’, who so generously give their time to coordinate environmental events, run the environment clubs and manage the school’s environmental resources to make their schools models of sustainability in action.

School background (mandatory)

School vision statement

Students become global citizens contributing to the ecological sustainability of planet earth as a result of the experiences in, about and for the environment provided by Rumbalara EEC (REEC).

School context

Rumbalara EEC is one of 25 Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) operated by the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC).

Together these centres form a learning community that lead schools in the implementation of environmental and sustainability education. They provide students with experiential learning opportunities in natural and built environments and professional learning and support for teachers and school communities.

The centre is located at the entrance to Rumbalara Reserve and just a short walk from the central business district of Gosford. Our facilities support the delivery of fieldwork programs and the production of environmental education resources. They include a connected classroom, environmental resource library,
field studies laboratory and bushwalking trails.

The Centre particularly encourages and supports environmental sustainability in Central Coast public school communities. As a result of our services they will be:

- more aware and appreciative of local and global environments;
- more knowledgeable about the causes of environmental problems;
- more skilled in communicating to environmental decision makers; and
- more actively involved in caring for the environment

**Self-assessment and school achievements**

**Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework**

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

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the elements of the School Excellence Framework.

The Environmental and Zoo Education Centres received training and collaboratively considered the School Excellence Framework and its implications for informing, monitoring and validating our journey of excellence. At our School Development Days in Terms 1 and 2 Rumbalara staff thoroughly examined the school plan to determine the elements of the School Excellence Framework most strongly addressed. Throughout the year we monitored progress being made based on the expectations identified in the Framework. This provides an important overview to ensure our improvement efforts align with these high level expectations.

In the domain of **Learning**, our efforts have primarily focused on **curriculum and learning**. With new syllabuses being progressively implemented we saw an opportunity to strengthen the relevance of our programs. Science and technology is well supported in our programs and in addition to clarifying syllabus links, in 2015 we also created links to the ‘Primary Connections’ units of work that many schools have adopted. Our ‘Bright Sparks’ alternative energy trailer is a mobile science laboratory that has been further developed in 2015 to bring a wide range of exciting hands-on science investigations to the schools. We also successfully trialled a new stage 6 local area study in Porters Creek wetland with the support of environment officers from Wyong Council, one of whom had been inspired in her choice of vocation by a field-work experience with Rumbalara EEC as a year 12 student.

We have started to improve our **student performance measurements** by working with the Environmental and Zoo Education Centre (EZEC) network to develop a program evaluation for students that will be available to all centres next year to provide useful data on student attitudes, knowledge and skills. We also developed an on-line pre-and post-visit student evaluation to assist our understanding of student response to our programs.

Our major focus in the domain of **Teaching** has been on **effective classroom practice, collaborative practice, and learning and development**. In 2015 substantial professional learning opportunities were provided for staff with an emphasis on training dedicated casual relief staff. We also contributed to the effective classroom practice of staff in client schools through the provision of extensive classroom resources relevant to our local programs that teachers use to prepare for and reinforce student learning experiences.

In 2015 we further developed our **collaborative practice** with colleagues from the EZEC network through the sharing and joint development of resources and programs. A media strategy, new logo and face book page was developed to improve recognition of the EZEC network and assist in marketing.

In 2015 the EZEC network developed a Reconciliation Action Plan that has been approved by Reconciliation Australia. It will guide and strengthen our commitment to building relationships, respect and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
The Centre also collaborated with Longneck Lagoon to trial a Stage 4 Maths and Biodiversity Program and Worked with local councils to deliver ‘Future Council’ – a mock council meeting based on environmental planning issues.

In the domain of Leading, our priorities have been to adapt to ‘school planning, implementation and reporting practices’ and to support our client schools with resources that build their capacity to advance environmental education. The consistency and effectiveness of implementation of our key strategic directions throughout the year has been due to a strong foundation of leadership capacity building across the school. This approach recognises that leadership development is central to the achievement of school excellence.

Our self-assessment process will further assist the school to refine the strategic priorities in our School plan leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

### Strategic Direction 1

**Learning for Environmental Sustainability.**

### Purpose

Providing experiences in the environment that develop a deep understanding and ability to think critically, creatively and ethically for environmental sustainability.

### Overall summary of progress

Our continued focus on maintaining locally relevant syllabus related programs has produced a wide range of contemporary fieldwork programs to meet the needs of students from Kinder to year 12. Enhanced evaluation of these programs is now possible through the development of two new survey instruments developed in 2015.

### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement measure (to be achieved over 3 years)</th>
<th>Progress achieved this year</th>
<th>Resources (annual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ▪ All REEC programs aligned to new syllabuses and new programs developed. | ▪ All K-6 programs were aligned to new science syllabus and new programs developed to meet the emerging needs of schools.  
▪ A new stage 6 Biology program and a stage 3 local area investigation was successfully implemented and the stage 3 ‘Bright Sparks’ program was further developed. A new stage 4 biodiversity/numeracy program was developed and trialled in collaboration with Longneck Lagoon EEC.  
▪ Consultations with teachers and local historians to develop a new local history program. | $10920.00 |
| ▪ 25% improvement in student environmental knowledge, skills | ▪ The Centre in collaboration with other Environmental and Zoo Education Centres developed a uniform evaluation system aimed at identifying relative strengths and weaknesses. | $9150 (resources and casual relief) |

| ▪ 25% improvement in student environmental knowledge, skills | ▪ The Centre in collaboration with other Environmental and Zoo Education Centres developed a uniform evaluation system aimed at identifying relative strengths and weaknesses. | 1770 (casual relief) |
and attitudes as a result of participation in REEC programs.

- An increase in the return of teacher evaluations has provided more reliable data with which to assess the Centre’s performance.
- On-line student evaluation using pre and post testing was implemented but as yet there is insufficient data to evaluate its effectiveness.

Next steps

- In 2016 we will be consulting with geography teachers and the EZEC network to ensure our programs are aligned to the new geography and history syllabuses. A teacher survey in 2015 indicated demand for a new stage 2 local history program. The review of current programs against the new geography syllabus indicated the need to change the stage 1 ‘Need for shelter’ program and stage 3 ‘Rainforests Program’.
- Field work programs that support Primary Connections units will be identified and promoted through EZEC network.
- The use of iPads and technology will be implemented into programs and a technology/ science room will be developed at the Rumbalara Site.
- Feature of the EZEC Reconciliation Action Plan will be identified and implemented at Rumbalara EEC.
- More on-line student evaluation tests will be developed during 2016. There will also be a focus on enlisting the support of teachers to increase the participation of students in the testing.
- The new joint EEC teacher evaluation process will be implemented in 2016 and there will be continued focus on Increasing the return of teacher program evaluations.

Strategic Direction 2

Fostering quality teaching

Purpose

Building the capacity of teachers to deliver quality environmental education experiences in, about and for the environment

Overall summary of progress

The Centre’s support for our school sustainability leaders through networking forums, resources, funding and regular informative newsletters has created a strong partnership with our local schools.

Teachers participating in our programs benefit from extensive locally relevant background and teaching resources to assist them maximising the benefits from a one day excursion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progress towards achieving improvement measures</th>
<th>Resources (annual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement measure (to be achieved over 3 years)</td>
<td>$10462.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More environmental sustainability professional learning</td>
<td>Rumbalara EEC hosted the Central Coast Sustainability Leaders Forum for 23 teachers from $8562 (includes course fees, casual relief, hospitalities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
opportunities for teachers.
Environmental education resources and advice provided to schools on a regular basis via newsletters and websites.
Professional Learning courses for centre staff
REEC developed and scheduled a non-registered course titled ‘learning outside the classroom’
Unfortunately withdrawn when only 7 teachers registered.

| Increase in the number of schools contributing to the ‘Green Schools’ web based directory of best practice. | REEC provided $500 grants to two schools to assist them in sharing their sustainability initiatives with other schools. | $1000 |
| Improved pre and post excursion resources | REEC created 3 ‘ClassMovies’ to assist teachers in preparing students for REEC programs.
Stage 6 Geography pre visit resources pack was improved and updated.
Stage 2 Aboriginal Studies resource pack was revised. | $900 (casual relief) |

Next steps
This section includes future directions for 2016 and ensures the 3-year plan remains on track to provide high quality educational outcomes.

What are the next steps required for 2016 to ensure Strategic Direction 3 is successfully implemented?

- Include any adjustments to be made to the School plan as a result of reflection and self-assessment
- Include key focus/strategies to be undertaken in 2016 as part of the implementation of the 3-year plan.
- In 2016 the Sustainability Leaders Forum will be hosted by Rumbalara EEC. Rumbalara will work with other EZEC staff through the Strategic Leadership Initiative to develop a registered course in cross curriculum sustainability for all Centres to offer in 2016.
- A ‘Coasts and catchments’ course will be developed and scheduled.
- There will be increased promotion of Rumbalara’s Green School website. Pre and post visit resources will be developed for the ‘Bright Sparks’ program.
- Support pre service teachers through sustainability education workshops at Ourimbah Campus, University of Newcastle.
- Rumbalara EEC will work with DEC Curriculum advisors to deliver professional development on the Geography K-6 Syllabus.
**Strategic Direction 3**

Environmental sustainability through strong connections

**Purpose**

Forging strong networks by leading and inspiring a culture of collaboration and innovation to achieve environmental sustainability

## Overall summary of progress

The Environmental and Zoo Education partnership has created a framework for sharing resources, collaborative programming and strategic planning. Locally the Centre has continued to work with established partners to provide innovative programs for the benefit of students.

### Progress towards achieving improvement measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement measure (to be achieved over 3 years)</th>
<th>Progress achieved this year</th>
<th>Resources (annual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development and implementation of new programs</td>
<td>The ‘Future Council’ program was successfully implemented in collaboration with both Gosford and Wyong Councils. A Stage 4 Maths and Biodiversity program was trialed in collaboration with Longneck Lagoon EEC Planning meeting to develop a ‘local history’ program was held with teachers and Council Historian A Gifted and Talented program was conducted for stage 3 students A survey of teachers was conducted to consider interest in a Youth Environmental Planning Forum</td>
<td>$1770.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More effective delivery of environmental education as a result of EZEC community collaboration.</td>
<td>REEC contributed to the Youth Environment Summit (YES), a two day festival for Young Environmental Leaders. REEC also participated in an EZEC joint planning day to consider means of delivering improved youth leadership outcomes. An EZEC media strategy was created this year which resulted in an EZEC facebook page, planning for an EZEC website and the development of a logo. EZEC was marketed at Science and Geography teachers association professional development days and at the Youth Eco Summit Sydney.</td>
<td>$885 (casual relief)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EZEC network developed a Reconciliation Action Plan that has been approved by Reconciliation Australia.

A strategic leadership grant was obtained by the EZEC community in late 2015 to guide further collaboration and effectiveness in the network in 2016. Rumbalara relieving principal is a member of the steering committee to oversee the project.

**Next steps**

This section includes future directions for 2016 and ensures the 3-year plan remains on track to provide high quality educational outcomes.

What are the next steps required for 2016 to ensure Strategic Direction 3 is successfully implemented?

- Include any adjustments to be made to the School plan as a result of reflection and self-assessment.
- Include key focus/strategies to be undertaken in 2016 as part of the implementation of the 3-year plan.
- Rumbalara will partner with ‘Take 3’ to support delivery of the ‘Green Sea Turtle project’.
- The Future Council program will be further promoted.
- The GATS program will be developed.
- Rumbalara will contribute to the implementation of the EZEC Strategic Leadership alliance, focussing on improving teaching, learning and partnerships in the EZEC community.
- A Youth Environmental Planning Forum will be delivered in partnership with the Department of Planning and the University of Newcastle.
- Rumbalara EEC will deliver a workshop at the ‘Go Mad’ student leadership forum held at Taronga Zoo in partnership with other EZEC’s.

**Key initiatives and other school focus areas**

RAM for Environmental Education Centres has not yet been finalised so the school has received no RAM funding in the key initiative areas. EEC’s continue to be Globally funded until 2017.
Mandatory and optional reporting requirements

Student information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Severe storms and wet weather interrupted the excursion schedule resulting in lower overall number of students in 2015.

A higher proportion of secondary students attended in 2015 than in previous years.

In 2015 tertiary students enrolled in Newcastle University’s teacher training program accounted for all those attending ‘non-specific programs’.

Workforce information

Reporting of information for all staff must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Workforce composition (mandatory)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Australian Education Regulation, 2014 requires schools to report on Aboriginal composition of their workforce.

Teacher qualifications (mandatory)

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>% of staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree or diploma</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional learning and teacher accreditation (mandatory)

The Centre provides professional learning for all staff in order to develop skills, knowledge and understandings that will contribute to improved learning outcomes and safety for students. In 2015 total expenditure on professional learning was $8062.

All teaching staff attended the annual Environmental Education Centre conference held at Macquarie University. This three day conference provided professional learning related to new curricula, current best practice in environmental and sustainability education, innovation in the use of technology and sharing of environmental education programs.

Other professional learning included:

- The annual EEC principals conference;
- Maintenance of staff competency in first aid and child protection;
- Training on implementing the new science syllabus using ‘Primary Connections’;
- Introduction to Excel
- The Centre also maintains a library for the professional development of staff and teachers;
Financial information

Financial summary (mandatory)

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of financial summary</th>
<th>30/11/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>64580.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>26297.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>7312.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>10595.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>1258.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
<td>110044.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenditure**

Teaching & learning
- Key learning areas: 29484.97
- Excursions: 0.00
- Extracurricular dissections: 0.00

Library: 402.10

Training & development: 5615.53

Tied funds: 5808.93

Casual relief teachers: 3098.69

Administration & office: 7234.64

School-operated canteen: 0.00

Utilities: 5501.39

Maintenance: 1371.07

Trust accounts: 0.00

Capital programs: 0.00

**Total expenditure**: 58517.32

**Balance carried forward**: 51527.25

School performance

School-based assessment

Throughout 2015 we assessed the visiting school teacher’s perceptions of how relevant the field work the students were engaged in was to the achievement of syllabus outcomes. The results shown in the above graph indicate that most of the program content was deemed highly relevant.

Further analysis will be conducted to improve relevance of all programs as we move through the process of aligning programs to new syllabuses.

Throughout the year we also asked teachers to survey students after the excursion to find out how well they enjoyed and understood the fieldwork tasks. Their responses shown in the graph above helped us to identify programs that may need to be reviewed. The implementation of new student centered survey instruments in 2016 will provide for more detailed analysis of student responses.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Most of the Centre’s programs include an Aboriginal perspective that provides students with an appreciation of Aboriginal heritage. The ‘Sustaining our Heritage’ fieldwork program which specifically focuses on traditional Aboriginal life and culture is one of the most popular fieldwork programs. It encourages enquiry, interest and appreciation of the traditional way of life on the Central Coast. The EZEC Reconciliation Plan was developed in 2015 and its features will be implemented in 2016.

Multicultural Education and Anti-racism

The Centre’s programs encourage students to consider sustainability as a global issue. They also demonstrate that environmental attitudes and values have a cultural basis. Our regular newsletter to schools and our website encourage participation in worldwide student events.