

Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre Annual Report



2016



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2016 is provided to the community of Observatory Hill EEC 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, including equity funding.

Glen Halliday

Acting Principal

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Message from the Principal

Observatory Hill EEC continues to deliver high quality environmental and sustainability education programs to an increasing number of teachers and students. The center consistently receives excellent evaluation feedback on its programs in such diverse areas as curriculum integration, teacher expertise, and the ability to enhance student's environmental and subject specific, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

With a positive school culture focusing on distributed leadership and flexibility, the Centre is able to offer a wide variety of programs catering to multiple class groups. The Centre's physical transformation also continues as it transitions to a shared campus with Fort St PS as part of the Observatory Hill Education Precinct.

A number of special environmental projects were conducted throughout the year celebrating environmental green dates including World Environment Day and World Town Planning Day. These events help develop positive values and attitudes towards the environment and focus student's attention on the importance of acting sustainably in their everyday lives.

With the introduction of the new K-10 Geography syllabus, the Centre has introduced a number of new fieldwork programs that add authenticity to the subject and help students master important geography fieldwork skills. These new programs are enriched by the input of a number of program partners such as the City of Sydney, Urban Growth NSW The Barangaroo Delivery Authority, The GreenWay and Lend Lease, who all support the Centre with physical, financial and human resources.

This year, school visitation has again increased due to the staff's focus on quality teaching and learning and the increased marketing of the center's services to schools. It is anticipated this future growth will continue despite the expected reduction in Centre teaching space in 2018.

OHEEC has been a keen supporter of the strengthened collaborative practices of the Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC), which has resulted in greater networking and resource sharing opportunities, particularly with student environmental leadership programs.

I have been privileged to be able to lead the school through this exciting transformative period and I look forward to continued improvements in delivery of sustainability and environmental education programs.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school's achievements and areas for development.

Message from the school community

Observatory Hill Environmental Educational Centre is on the cusp of extraordinary change. After more than 25 years, this EEC is now operating out of a very small space and will likely relocate to temporary quarters, before returning to the hill in a state of the art facility. I congratulate the Department of Education for its attention to the growing needs of both the EEC and its neighbour, Fort Street Public School. Within a couple of years, our EEC will sit in a showcase building on its current and most perfect location for studies of the urban Environment. As I reflect on the year that has gone, it is clear that this EEC remains an asset to the children of New South Wales. Its teaching and professional staff are world-class, delivering inventive and immersive learning experiences to both students and teachers. I congratulate Glen Halliday for his leadership during the year, particularly as his role has grown to include the consideration of the EEC's needs in the design and delivery of the new school infrastructure on the hill.

Adrienne Keane, President, Observatory Hill EEC School Council

Sample testimonials below, from visiting teachers, are typical of feedback received about how we meet the needs of students and add value to classroom teaching and learning.

- “Excellent understanding of the topic, and an engaging presentation that helped to facilitate worthwhile fieldwork”.
- “Our EEC teacher was extremely patient, knowledgeable and engaging. I would strongly recommend this program”.
- “Our EEC teacher was a fantastic educator. It was clear she had deep knowledge of this area and its history and she had wonderful ability to share this knowledge and engage the students”.
- “The program was very well structured and run. Our teacher was able to address the needs of the students and cater for students with special needs”.
- “Thank you for providing my students with an engaging and informative day”.
- “Our teacher was very knowledgeable and communicated clearly to the group. It has been a very positive learning experience”.
- “Both teachers were extremely patient and approachable. Students found the program and teachers very beneficial and helpful”.
- “Great that our teacher constantly asked challenging open-ended questions to engage students. Loved the story activity at the beginning of the day. Students were engaged throughout the excursion”.
- “Our EEC teacher was very knowledgeable and kept the learning at a very interactive level. The bursts of learning, discussions and activities catered well for my Yr 2 class”.
- “Thank you Observatory Hill EEC. Great knowledge about the bays area, and an awesome introduction for our Assessment Task”.

Message from the students

The following are a sample of student comments about the Center's programs which demonstrate the value of experiential outdoor learning in improving environmental and sustainability learning outcomes.

- I enjoyed the whole day. Urban planning is something I want to do when I leave school, so I thoroughly enjoyed it.
- Our EEC teacher was very helpful and knowledgeable. I liked getting the ferry and experiencing different areas and learning about history. This has definitely helped me for my HSC task.
- I liked learning about the sustainable environmental aspects of buildings and how the process of urban planning works.
- I liked learning and discovering information in the field in person, instead of from a textbook.
- I liked that we could walk around the city and explore different places that have different meanings to different communities.
- There was a lot of content delivered and discussions started, and our teacher got us involved in conversations.
- Our teacher did a fantastic job and I wish we could have spent more time in the museum looking at artifacts. Learning in the classroom is one thing but actually seeing it is more interesting. I learnt so much about the convicts, settlers and Aborigines. We learnt about them in class, but seeing the actual thing was amazing. It was loads of fun.
- I learnt that The Rocks is a very historical place and that it is important to look after the environment.
- I learnt that our environment faces many issues that can affect the wildlife, the scenery, and the heritage of different locations.
- I learnt about convicts and Barangaroo. It was so interesting and I learnt so much.

School background

School vision statement

Centre Vision Statement

To promote Sustainability Education, provide diverse learning experiences in an urban context and inspire schools and their communities to act responsibly towards their environment.

Environmental and Zoo Education Centers (EZEC) Network Vision

To support NSW Public Schools to implement sustainability education through meaningful learning experiences in and about the natural, built and cultural environment. We strive to be the leaders in providing students with the skills, values and opportunities to act as responsible citizens.

School context

Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre (OHEEC) is one of 25 Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) operated by the NSW Department of Education (DOE).

These specialised schools make up a learning community that lead schools in the implementation of environmental and sustainability education through experiential learning opportunities in both built and natural environments. They also provide support and advice to teachers and school communities (including professional learning opportunities) to assist them to integrate environmental education objectives across *Key Learning Areas* and sustainably manage school grounds and resources.

The Centre is located within the *Observatory Hill Education Precinct* in the *Millers Point Heritage Conservation Area*. Due to its location, adjacent to Sydney's CBD and historic Rocks precinct, the Centre:

- Provides unique, authentic and engaging experiential learning opportunities focussed on the urban environment
- Works with a variety of local commercial, government and community partners to enrich these learning opportunities
- Is easily accessible via public transport resulting in a wide drawing area of client schools from across Sydney and regional NSW

OHEEC also uses other inner urban sites, works in schools and presents at educational events. The Centre delivers environmental programs and professional learning opportunities to thousands of K–12 students and teachers per annum.

OHEEC caters for all students including Aboriginal students and/or students from areas of socio-economic disadvantage. The Centre also offers differentiated learning experiences to schools to provide for a range of learning needs including gifted and talented, mental and physical disadvantage and students at risk of disengagement.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

For all schools (except those participating in external validation processes):

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 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.

Learning

The Centre mainly uses an outdoor learning pedagogy to improve learning outcomes in specific subject areas, and in the cross curriculum focus area of sustainability. Outdoor learning is experiential learning involving guided, integrated learning in natural and built environments and is intrinsically cross-curricular. It uses the natural and built environment to develop physical skills; increase understanding of self, others and the environment; and learning about subject-specific content across the curriculum. The Centre is committed to strengthening and delivering on school learning priorities

through equitable academic opportunities, and there is a school wide collective responsibility for student learning and success. Curriculum provision is enhanced by learning alliances with other organisations, and the centre's curriculum provision meets, and often exceeds, community expectations.

Teaching

The centre is fortunate to share its permanent teaching role amongst two specialist environmental education teachers, and a number of experienced casual teachers. This flexibility allows the Centre to cater for larger class groups to meet school expectations. Centre teachers regularly review and revise teaching and learning programs and the centre has a strong collaborative practice ethos resulting in staff regularly providing and/or receiving planned constructive feedback from peers, school leaders, visiting teachers and students. Teachers collaborate to ensure consistency in curriculum delivery including strategies for differentiation.

Leadership

Centre staff are committed to the school's strategic directions, and the school's leadership strategy is to promote distributed leadership and organisational best practice. The administrative practices effectively support the Centre's operations. The Centre is recognised as excellent and responsive by its visiting school community as a result of its effective engagement with visiting teachers and students, and members of the local community including government and business partners. The school leadership team makes deliberate and strategic use of its partnerships and relationships to access resources for the purpose of enriching the school's standing within the local community and improving student outcomes.

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

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/school-excellence-framework>

Strategic Direction 1

Improving environmental and sustainability learning outcomes for all students

Purpose

To support all students develop positive knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards the environment by engaging in meaningful and contextually relevant experiential learning that inspires them to become environmentally responsible citizens, and environmental leaders, in order to help sustain and improve natural and cultural environments.

Overall summary of progress

The centre has been active in improving student learning outcomes in environmental and sustainability education by offering a variety of engaging programs that are highly valued by visiting teachers with particular emphasis on the new and revised Geography programs for K–10 that are aligned to the new Geography curriculum. The Centre's casual teachers have been effectively trained in the Center's programs, evidenced by positive post program teacher and student feedback. The center continues to develop pre and post program activities that help to embed the learning in the student's class work, and is committed to working with teachers and professional networks to improve the professional learning opportunities of teachers in environmental and sustainability education.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in bookings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitation has continued to increase to 8,140 despite the reduction in teaching spaces.• Observations by the Principal, and positive evaluation feedback by visiting teachers, indicates Centre staff are effectively trained in the delivery of Centre programs and regularly receive positive reviews by visiting teachers.	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student and teacher evaluation data showing an increase in the percentage of students indicating positive knowledge skills, values and attitudes towards the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Centre's programs provided stimulating learning environments and a variety of experiences, to enhance student's engagement with the environment• 89% of students surveyed stated it was important to care for the environment and will do things to help look after it in the future	\$1,422
3. Positive evaluation feedback data regarding pre and post resource support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 99% of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the pre and post resource support helped extend classroom learning.	\$1,422
Centre engages with and contributes to a variety of <i>Community of Schools</i> and professional networks	The centre engaged with a variety of <i>Community of Schools</i> and professional networks, including attending and accrediting teachers at teacher Sustainability Network meetings for four council areas. The Centre also attended and represented EZEC at Science and Geography teachers Network Meetings. The principal attends Principal network meetings, including EZEC collaborative practice meetings.	\$968

Next Steps

The centre will continue to seek out stimulating learning environments and a variety of experiences, to enrich the curriculum in a number of Key Learning Areas and to increase student's engagement with the environment through an experiential learning pedagogy.

Strategic Direction 2

Fostering quality teaching and leadership in environmental and sustainability education

Purpose

To build the capacity of OHEEC and NSW school teachers to lead their school communities towards a culture of sustainability, and support the development of environmentally responsible citizens by modeling best practice Environmental Education (EE), and Education for Sustainability (EFS), offering professional learning opportunities and working with teachers to improve sustainability learning outcomes for all students.

Overall summary of progress

The centre has helped foster quality teaching and leadership through a variety of environmental programs like the Environmental and Zoo Education Centre's GoMad Challenge (Go Make A Difference) Youth Leadership Project, and the provision of professional learning courses (including fieldwork courses that run concurrently with centre excursions). These programs help to drive student environmental leadership and quality teaching around sustainability education.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in student leadership opportunities	<p>Over 140 students attended the GoMad Challenge launch from 18 schools. 11 schools entered the Challenge and 5 schools completed and documented their projects, which they presented at the 2016 Youth Eco summit. Over 1,300 students attended the Summit from 29 schools.</p> <p>In addition, over 30 classes participated in the Centre's Primary School incursion programs which focus on increasing students knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards the environment in order to create more sustainability focused citizens.</p>	\$783
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in number of teachers undertaking professional learning courses (including fieldwork courses)	<p>164 teachers were offered professional learning opportunities in aspects of environmental and sustainability education, including 328 teachers that participated in the Centre's professional learning programs.</p> <p>Professional Learning courses and meetings were well attended with positive teacher evaluation data.</p>	\$2852

Next Steps

The Centre will continue to support the EZEC GoMad Challenge and investigate ways to enhance environmental leadership opportunities for primary schools. The centre will also offer targeted professional learning opportunities that foster quality teaching in environmental and sustainability education including at teacher environmental and professional network meetings.

Strategic Direction 3

Building stronger partnerships for delivery of environmental and sustainability education

Purpose

To improve the quality and quantity of environmental / sustainability education experiences offered by the centre in order to support the development of environmentally responsible citizens.

Overall summary of progress

The Centre has continued to develop partnerships with industry and government organisations to enrich its programs. Key partnerships have been established with Urban Growth NSW, The Barangaroo Delivery Authority, Lend Lease, The GreenWay and the City of Sydney. In addition, the centre utilises a wide variety of museums, businesses, community and public spaces to further enrich its programs. The centre is also working collaboratively with the Environmental and Zoo Education Centre (EZEC) Network through its collaborative practice arrangements. This collaboration has involved working on shared projects that benefit the entire EZEC network. This includes developing the EZEC Principals Conference in order to share strategies for Centre leadership for more effective delivery of environmental and sustainability education programs.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Progress achieved this year	Funds Expended (Resources)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increasing partnerships developed involving financial, physical and human resources to enrich programs.	The Centre actively engages with around 28 partners to enrich teaching and learning programs.	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">EZEC collaborative practice team formed, common projects developed and Centres' collaborate to improve systemic efficacy.	The Centre Principal is part of the EZEC collaborative practice team and has led common EZEC projects like the EZEC Principals Conference, a common evaluation strategy across EZEC's, and the promotion of EZEC services at professional network meetings.	1,900
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Positive evaluation feedback from EZEC Principals Conference	Conference evaluation data indicates positive benefits for systemic environmental and sustainability education across the EZEC Network.	0

Next Steps

The Centre will continue to seek out partnerships that help to enrich the programs on offer. We will continue to support teacher environmental and professional networks to promote the services of EZEC's and we will work collaboratively with other EZEC members, including support for an EZEC spokesperson / leader to coordinate the network's activities. This role will strengthen and promote environmental and sustainability education across the Department of Education.

Student information

This year, 8,140 students participated in Center programs.

This participation involved:

4,260, K – 6 Fieldwork Excursions

3,200, 7 – 12 Fieldwork Excursions

680, K – 12 Special projects / Incursions.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	1
School Administration & Support Staff	1.19

*Full Time Equivalent

There are no Aboriginal employees

Workforce retention

100%

Teacher qualifications

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

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	66.3

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

The Acting Principal and one teacher are accredited at Proficient. One teacher is seeking accreditation at Proficient. All staff completed professional learning as part of their Professional Development Plans and all staff participated in the delivery of registered professional learning courses.

All staff at Observatory Hill EEC accessed a range of professional learning opportunities and courses throughout 2016 including:

Mandatory Training (Permanent and casual staff) in Emergency Care including CPR and anaphylaxis

Annual Environmental and Zoo Education Centre Conference

Implementation of the new Geography Syllabus K–10

Principal Network Meetings

Performance and Development Training

EZEC Principals Conference

Training of new casuals in all Centre programs

Social Media Masterclass

Outdoor Education and school Gardens

EZEC Collaborative practice across a community of schools

MyPL Basic user training

Primary STEM Showcase

Teacher Sustainability Network meetings

Financial information (for schools using OASIS for the whole year)

Financial information

This summary financial information covers funds for operating costs to 30th November 2016 and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Income	\$
Balance brought forward	111 116.61
Global funds	34 002.61
Tied funds	18 936.01
School & community sources	61 931.21
Interest	2 250.51
Trust receipts	0.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	228 236.95
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	41 232.78
Excursions	0.00
Extracurricular dissections	0.00
Library	86.36
Training & development	3 302.55
Tied funds	9 779.34
Short term relief	1 970.92
Administration & office	18 746.34
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	9 114.71
Maintenance	3 192.93
Trust accounts	0.00
Capital programs	0.00
Total expenditure	87 425.93
Balance carried forward	140 811.02

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Teacher evaluation feedback showed the following percentages of teachers that **agreed or strongly agreed** with the following statements.

- 81% – The program provided a stimulating learning environment, and a variety of experiences, to enhance student's engagement with the environment.
- 99% – The Centre had high expectations for student behavior and learning, and addressed the needs of identified student groups including students with special needs.
- 99% – The program was strongly linked to the

curriculum and supported and strengthened classroom learning outcomes.

- 100% – The program enhanced student's knowledge about the environment, and skills in interpreting the environment.
- 100% – The program promoted positive environmental values and attitudes in the students and contributed to students self awareness and capacity to act in a positive way
- 100% – The staff were knowledgeable about the topics being taught, and interacted well with the students.
- 98% – The program enhanced by professional learning for integrating sustainability education in the curriculum
- 99% – The program included good pre and post resource support to develop deep knowledge and extend classroom leaning.
- 98% – Booking planning and communication procedures prior to undertaking my program helped me with program preparation.

Student

Evaluation feedback showed the following percentages of students that **agreed or strongly agreed** with the following statements.

- 89% – I think it is important to care for the environment and will do things to help look after it in the future
- 72% – I liked learning about the environment and doing the different activities in the program.
- 69% – My environmental education teacher helped me to better understand the environment and a subject I have been studying.
- 61% – The program helped me to understand a subject I have been learning about (or will learn about) in class.



Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

The Centre acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and endeavors, where possible, to include Aboriginal content into its teaching and learning programs. An example of this is the Centre's Barangaroo – Stage 2 History program, which focuses on the first contacts between Gadigal Aboriginal People and the European colonists. Students learn about traditional Aboriginal culture in Barangaroo Reserve,

and about the nature and consequence of contact between the two cultures.

The centre also supports the Environmental and Zoo Education Centres' (EZEC) Reconciliation Action Plan, which was developed by the collaborative practice team. The EZEC vision for reconciliation is for all Australians, particularly young Australians to recognise, understand and be proud of the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as Australia's First Peoples, have strong connections culturally, physically and spiritually, to the lands and waters of our nation.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

The centre abides by the Department's Multicultural and Anti-Racism policies and is committed to the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. The Centre regularly works with students from diverse ethnic and socio economic areas and has a trained Anti Racism Contact Officer (ARCO).

Other school programs

In addition to the Centre's 25 incursion and excursion programs, the centre:

- Worked with the Greenway Primary Schools Sustainability and Active Travel program to support the Inner West Council's GreenWay Education programs for 120 students.
- Delivered Grime Scene Investigation, an environmental science project event in Georges River for 90 students and 11 teachers, in order to celebrate World Environment Day
- Supported Teacher Sustainability Networks in Randwick, Woollahra, Waverly, Inner West and Canada Bay Councils.
- Delivered workshops on sustainable housing at the Youth Eco Summit for over 220 students
- Ran workshops for students at the GoMad Summit on school energy efficiency
- Presented to International study groups (68 Korean and 18 Japanese teachers) on environmental education across the NSW Department of Education
- Coordinated and delivered Mastering the Bays, a workshop and design competition focussing on town planning as a career and showcasing the Bays precinct in partnership with Urban Growth NSW. The workshop celebrated World Town Planning Day and involved 41 students and 7 teachers.