

Submission to the Education and Health Standing Committee
Inquiry into the response of Western Australian schools to climate change

Canning River Eco Education Centre, City of Canning

The Canning River Eco Education Centre (CREEC) is a City of Canning facility located within the Canning River Regional Park that has established itself as a key facility for the delivery of structured environmental education programs, events and resources for primary and secondary students, and associated professional learning activities for teachers. CREEC also facilitates effective partnerships between schools, other education providers and local communities to support education for sustainability.

CREEC provides environmental education programs focused on the Canning River and surrounding wetlands and catchment. The natural and built environments co-exist to provide a unique outdoor classroom for primary and secondary students. The Department of Education WA supported the delivery of CREEC education programs from 2008 to 2019. Since 2019, the education programs have been delivered in partnership with Nearer to Nature, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

All CREEC school programs are designed to encourage environmental awareness, positive behaviour change towards sustainable living, and promote respect for Noongar culture. The programs help students to understand human impacts on the Swan-Canning River Catchment and the wider environment, the consequences for biodiversity and the actions that people can take for sustainable change. CREEC school programs support implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum in HASS, STEM, Literacy, Critical & Creative Thinking, and Intercultural Understanding, Sustainability and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Histories & Cultures.

Djarlgarra Yarning (Canning River Stories), the Noongar histories and cultures program at CREEC, is presented by an experienced Noongar Cultural Presenter in each school term. CREEC also presents an annual professional learning workshop on A&TSI Histories and Cultures.

The annual Earth Day Expo at CREEC is a special event for five hundred primary school students. Since the Expo's inception in 2011, it has been run in partnership with the Australian Association for Environmental Education - WA Chapter (AAEE-WA). The event showcases Education for Sustainability by inviting external organisations to present hands-on activities for students. Organisations from the Sustainable Schools - WA Alliance are always strongly represented. Outcomes are linked with the WA Curriculum with a strong focus on the cross-curricular priorities of Sustainability and A&TSI Histories and Cultures.

CREEC and AAEE-WA jointly ran a National Science Week Community Expo from 2009 to 2019. CREEC also supports the Turtle Watch project to encourage schools and community to take action for the conservation of snake necked turtles in local waterways. In 2021, CREEC and City of Canning Sustainability supported Willetton Senior High School's Big Day Out by running sustainability themed activities for students. CREEC also ran activities at the Lynwood Senior High School Sustainability Expo in 2021.

CREEC continues to provide an important local focus for school communities (teachers, parents, administrators, students) to share examples of good practice in education for sustainability (EfS) via the South Metro Regional Network which meets once per term. This teacher network helps to build support and expertise for EfS within the context of the Sustainable Schools WA framework.

Other professional learning activities that are supported by CREEC are the Catchment Corridors and Coasts course run by AAEE-WA, Canoeing on the Canning with the South East Region Centre for Urban Landcare, and Little Green Steps workshops for early years educators.

Changing Your World Youth Conference

The City of Canning host a bi-annual Changing Your World Conference including a one-day Youth Conference, with the first conference held in March 2020 and the next conference coming up in May 2022. The youth conference was run in partnership between the City of Canning and Millennium Kids

and primary and secondary schools across Canning and the Perth Metro area, and was supported by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Young people were invited to share their ideas for change / reimagining their future and in 2020, there were 75 young people across 10 different schools who participated. Young people were supported to co-design opportunities and set a vision for change across a variety of key sustainability and climate action topics including, but not limited to, carbon reduction and energy transformation, circular economy, sustainable transport, biodiversity and local economy and sustainable business.

The youth delegates then presented their findings and pitched their ideas for change to the City Executive and CEO as well as to the adults at the plenary session of the Changing Your World Conference. More information can be found [here](#). The young people also created a vision for the future at the 2020 Youth Conference with Seantelle Walsh, an indigenous artist, creating a visual representation of their ideas. In May 2022, the Changing Your World Youth Conference will run similarly to 2020, with future collaborative City projects planned to help these visions and re-imaginings be realised.

Little Green Steps Project for the City of Canning

The Little Green Steps WA (LGSWA) Education for Sustainability program to early years communities has been in WA since its inception in 2011 when the need to support and empower early years communities became apparent (children from 0-8 years old - up to Year 2 in WA primary schools). This not-for-profit program of the Australian Association of Environmental Education (AAEE-WA) aligns with the Sustainable Schools Framework and involves engaging early years educators with hands-on and research-based ways to embed 'reaching out and treading lightly' through the concepts of the "Social Handprint and Ecological Footprint".

By linking to the National Quality Standard (NQS), Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and Western Australian Curriculum, sustainable practices become a part of the embedded and daily routines with children and do not add more to educators' existing busy schedules. Educators are shown how to empower themselves and children through action and 'language' focussed workshops across both the hand & footprint, with the 'Day to Day Sustainability' workshop beginning to feature as a whole school Professional learning methodology for planning and embedding sustainability in a holistic way. Meanwhile educators are supported to explore ways to make sustainable infrastructure and operational changes especially through the specific 2020 designed LGS 'Planning for Sustainability workshop'.

Within the City of Canning, the Little Green Steps program supports and engages with all primary schools within area through workshops, visits, incursions and advice. LGSWA has supported numerous pre-kindergartens and early childhood school spaces with hands-on sustainable engagement; putting in compost bins and other closed loop organic recycling through 20-minute child engagement activities such as decay detectives, grotty bags & making compost cake and supporting their connections to community to thrive.

Our focus is to 'learn and do' and to provide the agency in children at a very young age to 'rescue this resource' and 'only use enough to get the job done'. LGS case studies in early years spaces demonstrate abundant potential for 2 - 3 year olds to take 'citizen science action' in their spaces for example contributing to the 'Backyard Bird Count' & 'Frog ID' monitoring on a regular basis. Our reach has grown since 2011 and now extends to over 2000 early years educators in Western Australia with engagement into the regions as far as the Kimberley in the north, Kalgoorlie in the east and Albany in the southwest.